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BEING MULTICULTURAL IN THE WORKPLACE

by

Fiorella Morales

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

January 2023

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ABSTRACT

As the workforce becomes increasingly diverse and organizations elevate their efforts to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), it is critical to engage in a deeper investigation of the experiences of multicultural individuals at work. In this qualitative study, nine multicultural individuals were interviewed using a sociological lens to gain their perspective on the relationship between their identity and their work

experiences. The primary research questions that guided this study were: (a) how do multicultural individuals influence the workplace? In turn, (b) how do their workplace experiences affect their identity and sense of self? Data was coded and thoroughly analyzed for emergent themes. This study provides important insight into how multicultural individuals define their multicultural identity, the personal and professional qualities they feel they bring to the workplace, and the challenges they confront due to their identity. This study also discusses the availability of resources related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and what they feel they need to have a more equitable and supportive work experience. This study clarifies the social construction of inequality that occurs as multicultural individuals interact with their colleagues and employers and the potential impact these interactions have on their well-being and the productivity of the organization for which they work. The participants' stories suggest the need for greater cultural competence among all employees, as well as greater representation of diversity, additional DEI programs, and more effective communication.



DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this dissertation to all the bicultural and multicultural people who feel they are “*Ni de aquí, ni de allá,*” neither from here nor there. We are raised with multiple cultural habits, customs, traditions, expectations, foods, and languages. Explaining to others who we are or where we come from is not always easy. We are a fusion of color, life, and richness in the world. Without people like us, this work would not be possible.



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Every one of you saw something great in me and I could not have succeeded in this challenging and beautiful journey without any of you. My gratitude is boundless.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, which looks at a variety of how people compose the workforce, does not track multicultural or multiracial as an ethnic-racial category in the workplace. It is impossible to learn what industries they have been in, how much they have earned, and what unemployment has been like for multicultural individuals. There is even less information available to understand what their experiences are like in the workplace. Research and statistics look at individual ethnic backgrounds and do not consider how holding various cultural backgrounds could present different experiences for individuals holding just one ethnic or racial background.

While the U.S. workforce does not look at multicultural individuals as a data point, the workforce in the U.S. has increasingly become more racially and ethnically diverse. The Census Bureau (2020) notes that 60.1% identified as White, 13.4% Black, 1.3 % American Indian or Alaskan Native, 5.9% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 18.5% Hispanic in 2015. The U.S. workforce has become more diverse and will continue to do so with time. Generally, however, multicultural individuals or underrepresented cultural groups have been understudied and underrepresented in research, and they require prioritization (Hall et al., 2016). Previous research shows that they face a variety of challenges, discussed in the following section.

Multicultural Challenges

There are a variety of challenges that a multicultural individual may face in the world. Multicultural individuals

do not always belong to mainstream social groups, which causes feelings of not belonging, and impacts aspects of their well-being (Yampolski et al., 2013, 2016). The individuals they interact with may not be culturally competent or tolerant. Multicultural individuals may face various types of discrimination due to their background. Some examples of discrimination that multicultural people may experience include racism, stereotyping, policing, religious intolerance, and bias regarding their national origin, language, and more.

Research notes that multicultural individuals are culturally competent, which means these people know the beliefs and values of other cultures, know the language(s) and other forms of communication (i.e., body language, mannerisms, habits, etc.), and have the ability to view different cultures positively (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Employers often utilize multicultural or diverse individuals to teach others in the workplace about cultural competency. They turn to individuals from diverse backgrounds to leverage and improve workplace communication and efficiency and deepen their understanding of cultural differences. In the absence of policies and practices that support multicultural individuals in the workplace, organizational leaders may put undue pressure on these individuals by expecting them to bring creativity and new perspectives to the organization (Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015; Hong, 2010; Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

The added burden of teaching others how to engage with or understand diversity in their organization can put undue strain on employees. Such demands on multicultural individuals to teach or build cultural competency among others may be unrealistic and unhealthy for those involved. Because someone has a multicultural background does not mean they are willing or able to successfully facilitate sharing their cultural knowledge and developing cultural competency in others. The experiences of multicultural people in the workplace may conflict with their cultural identities as not all multicultural individuals experience what Yampolski et al. (2013) call integration, where people see all their cultural identities as compatible. This lack of identity integration and conflict within a multicultural

person's various cultural backgrounds could place even more unseen costs, such as emotional or mental stress, on the individual when pressure is placed on them to perform highly in the workplace (Yampolski et al., 2013, 2016). Multicultural people already experience challenges in the larger society, which they bring to their workplaces, such as coming from minority and underrepresented backgrounds, cultural and language differences, and having challenges with a sense of belonging. Some studies have additionally contributed to our understanding of how multicultural individuals experience their identity in specific places, such as on multicultural teams, in classrooms, and even in dancing (Alsubaie, 2015; Hong, 2010; Salazar, 2018; West et al., 2017). These studies make a case for the need to be more prepared to support multicultural individuals in these spaces as they also experience similar challenges in these contexts. If workplace leadership or employers do not understand multicultural individuals' difficulties, they will be unable to properly support or provide adequate resources for those types of employees.

Importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As the world continues to become more diverse, organizations of all kinds are giving greater attention to attracting, supporting, and retaining a diverse workforce. They take diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) more seriously. Many leaders are challenged, however, in understanding their employees' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs and how people from diverse cultures experience the workplace. Organizational leaders often do not share the same background as their employees and frequently lack cultural competency. Organizational leaders who are not culturally competent may not understand how individuals view their multicultural identity. Yet, they may have expectations that could have unforeseen consequences for the individual and the organization.

Organizational success will increasingly depend on leaders gaining this understanding, specifically in knowing how and why individuals identify with their cultures, how identity affects their experience in the workplace, and, in turn, how the workplace affects their identity. This is particularly important as leaders seek to build an inclusive

and productive organization. Many workplaces, predominantly in the fields of medicine and education, have turned to experts for DEI training to educate employees better to improve cultural awareness and teach what it is like to practice a healthy curiosity of others. Some of the practices include things such as in-person and online training and development, improved hiring practices that are more holistic to align with DEI, a commitment to DEI in workplace environments and culture, and more nuanced approaches depending on the field or work environment (Butterworth et al., 2000; Cross et al., 1989; Davenport et al., 2022; Gill et al., 2018; Rosenkranz et al., 2021; Ware et al., 2021). Even though there have been over three decades of these practices practiced by organizations in different fields, there continue to be inequities in the workplace which cause disengagement of underrepresented people, higher turnover, and a lack of well-being due to the not feeling that they belong. While organizations work to address DEI, there are problems with the effectiveness of DEI (Alegria, 2020; Jimenez-Luque & Hubbard, 2022).

Challenges of Workplaces and Organizations

As previously mentioned, people spend so much of their lifetime at work; therefore, it makes sense that work would influence aspects of identity and vice versa, making the workplace a rich environment to study. Sociologists tend to treat work as a central aspect of a person's life as it impacts the individual, other aspects of their life, and how they define who they are (Kanungo, 1983; Kirpal, 2004; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Workplaces shape individuals as much as the individuals themselves shape the workplace. This idea reinforces the value of focusing on the workplace as the setting and context for this doctoral research.

If leaders want to lean on multicultural individuals to help with diversity efforts across their workplace, they may need to have a basic understanding of how individuals view their multicultural identity and experience it at work (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2003; Hong et al., 2000; Yampolski et al., 2013, 2016). The more organizations can genuinely understand and appreciate an individual's multicultural background and how those cultures are taken up by the individual and then expressed and experienced in the workplace, the more prepared and

informed they and their supervisors would be to support all employees. Gaining a greater understanding of how multicultural individuals view and experience their multicultural identities in the workplace can help us better understand how they can and want to contribute to the workplace and how they would like to be supported. This understanding is critical to the success of an organization and the well-being of the multicultural worker as we strive to improve practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all people in the workplace.

Research Questions

While current inventories provide some understanding of the cognitive processes involved in integrating cultural identities, they do not explain why or how individuals personally experience multiculturalism in the workplace. This study provides professionals and organizational leaders with a more robust understanding of how multicultural individuals view their multicultural identity and how it impacts what they experience in the workplace. The results of this study highlight how, when, and why an individual's multicultural identity impacts the organization they work in and how the context of their organization, in turn, impacts them. It provides insight into how leaders and organizations may best leverage and support multicultural people in a workplace environment. This understanding is paramount in informing the strategic planning, creation, and practice of effective DEI policies for organizations and informs the research questions for this research.

1. How do multicultural individuals influence the workplace?
2. How do workplace experiences affect the multicultural individual identity and sense of self?

Purpose & Significance

This dissertation study aims to understand how individuals' multicultural identity influences what they do in the workplace and how the workplace affects them. Understanding the experiences of these individuals can give some indication as to the opportunities and challenges that are constructed in the workplace. This research adds to previous research on multicultural individuals by first providing personal accounts of how they feel their identity has shaped their lived experiences. Second, it focuses on

multicultural individuals' experiences in a little-understood context - the workplace.

Earlier research that examined cultural identity mainly utilized psychometric and quantitative methods and has mostly been conducted on bicultural college students and did not focus on the lived experiences of their participants (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Yampolski et al., 2013, 2016). While this doctoral study uses this previous work as the theoretical framework to examine the lived experiences of multicultural individuals, it focuses specifically on how multicultural individuals navigate the workplace. Previous work predominately comes from acculturation research, how individuals engage in cultural frame switching and bicultural identity integration, more generally through quantitative studies that rely on psychometric instruments (Yampolski, 2013). This study uses qualitative research to delve deeper into the lives of these individuals - to provide personal accounts of multicultural individuals and how they experience, internalize, and express their cultural identity.

This research surveyed personal and professional connections in the international education, K-12, and higher education fields, whom I knew would be likely to fit the criteria for the study or who would be likely to know others who identify as multicultural. This larger pool allowed for a sample pool of 14 eligible participants. Respondents were asked for detailed demographics and cultural background information to identify nine individuals that fit the research design criteria, detailed in Chapter 3. These nine individuals were then interviewed to provide their accounts of their workplace experiences. This qualitative study focuses on lived experiences, which cannot be pre-determined or understood in a controlled environment and therefore lends itself to a design where there is room to adapt to new information, concepts, or findings. This emergent approach was embedded throughout the entire process of research (Pailthorpe, 2017). Additionally, this qualitative research allowed for flexibility in determining topics and themes after the data was collected and analyzed rather than concretely determining what they should be in advance, which would have limited the participants' stories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Conclusion

This introductory chapter discussed the need to study the experience of multicultural individuals in the workplace for the betterment of workplaces and their diverse employees. Given the growing diverse workforce and the need for greater attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, it seems increasingly important to understand the different ways individuals experience their cultural identities and how their identities affect organizational success. This research can add significant knowledge to leaders who are challenged in knowing how and why individuals identify with their cultures, how this identity affects their experience in the workplace, and, in turn, how the workplace affects them in their work environment. Understanding the experiences of multicultural individuals can give some indication as to the opportunities and challenges that are constructed in the workplace.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the research that provided a framework and foundation for the need of this study. Chapter 3 covers the methodology, research design, description of data analysis, and procedure of the study, followed by Chapter 4, which presents the collected data and a detailed summary of the results. Lastly, Chapter 5 analyzes the data and the implications and recommendations of this study for workplaces and their organizational leaders.



CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter presented the introduction, the research questions, and the purpose and significance of the present study. This chapter will discuss the findings from a literature review to provide theoretical answers to the research questions: (a) How does a multicultural individual influence their workplace? Moreover, (b) How do the workplace experiences affect their identity and sense of self? The main objective of the research study was to understand and learn about the experiences of multicultural individuals in work settings. The following literature review provides a foundational understanding of current research on the experiences of multicultural individuals,

why they are valuable to study, why the workplace is a context worth exploring, and how a sociological understanding is critical in understanding multicultural experiences in the workplace.

This review begins with key definitions and concepts as they are critical to comprehend for the research in this literature review. The review then includes a brief review of assimilation and acculturation, which is the foundation of cultural frame switching (CFS). CFS is then reviewed, as it provided a basis for researchers in the identity integration of bicultural individuals; therefore, bicultural identity integration (BII) is also discussed. CFS and BII provide the foundation for the research in multicultural identity integration (MII) and how it has been studied up to this point in time. MII is the most recent research that focuses on how multicultural individuals experience their multicultural identity and provides an understanding of its consequences. Therefore, these topics are relevant and integral to this review and critical to make a case for multicultural individuals as valuable participants and the need to study the effect of this identity in a workplace environment. Lastly, this review privileges a sociological focus on this issue over a psychological approach. It provides evidence for why workplaces are an essential context of the study, as individuals and workplaces simultaneously affect each other through social interactions. Understanding these social interactions was critical in answering the study's two primary research questions: (a) How does a multicultural individual influence their workplace? Moreover, (b) How do their workplace experiences affect their identity and sense of self? The key concepts and definitions are covered in the next section to provide a foundational understanding of the literature discussed.

Key Concepts

Culture

In the field of psychology, culture is dynamic and affected by the environments one is influenced by. This interaction results in behavior that allows one to make sense of culture by directing attention to specific aspects of the environment (Leung et al., 2008). In the research around cultural frame switching, culture is considered

cognitively accessible to individuals when the culture becomes contextually relevant; therefore, in a sense, culture is not fully internalized but also reflexive (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2003; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). As Leung et al. (2008) have noted, culture can generally be a catalyst and affect everything it encounters while being domain-specific and contextual. Culture is a complex concept, contextual, and continually changing every day. It is a part of who people are as individuals and an essential aspect of identity. There are many examples of culture that we experience every day. Some examples of culture derive from language, food, and body language. These are only a few things that come from culture that help individuals make sense of their environment, dictate how they express themselves and provide a way to understand others. Culture is an important variable that influences all aspects of a person and is an important concept to keep in mind throughout the review, as it is fundamental to multicultural identity and organizational behavior.

Social Identity

Identity, much like culture, is a complex overarching concept composed of various aspects of an individual that makes them who they are. The identities people hold affect how people see one another. Identity is something that we may be born with, something that we can learn, develop, and even adopt through lived experiences, much like culture. Burke and Reitzes (1981) discusses identity from how we take on societal roles. Burke (1991) defines identity as created and maintained through social interactions that individuals confirm or validate to develop a sense of self. Ultimately, the resulting behavior reflects our interactions with others in our environment. Examples of social constructs that could affect culture and identity are power, privilege, access, or (in)equity. People will also self-categorize or be categorized to provide themselves with a way to define others and understand their own social identities. Different researchers often discuss social identity as something to be mindful of because it affects how a person may experience cultural identities (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). The social identities we hold, such as race and ethnicity,

age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion, are also known as “The Big 8” in education and the social sciences (*NAIS - Sample Cultural Identifiers*, n.d; *Social Identities: Searle Center for Advancing Learning & Teaching*, n.d.). These identities shape how a person sees the world and affect their behavior from their understanding of themselves, their culture, and other cultures. A deeper discussion on sociology in a future section will further discuss multicultural identity, how it is constructed, and valuable in understanding how it plays out in organizations.

Key Definitions

Cultural Frame Switching

The phenomenon of switching between two or more cultures is called cultural frame switching (CFS). CFS is the ability to identify and hold two or more cultural orientations in an unconscious and involuntary way due to cognitively accessible constructs and contextual cues to the individual (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2003; Hong et al., 2000).

Bicultural Identity Integration

Bicultural identity integration (BII) is the degree to which ethnic and mainstream cultural identities are perceived as compatible or conflicting with one another (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

Multicultural individuals

Multicultural individuals are knowledgeable, identify with, and have internalized and committed to the values, behaviors, traditions, and language of two or more cultures. They are also believed to be more cognitively complex than mono- or bicultural people (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

Multicultural Identity Integration

Multicultural Identity Integration (MII) is the degree to which ethnic and cultural identities are perceived as compatible or in conflict. The construct looks at how this compatibility or conflict causes individuals to feel depending on the prompts they receive in their environments. This construct is made of three identity configurations: (a) categorization, where people identify

with one of their cultural groups over all the others, (b) compartmentalization, where people maintain multiple separate cultural identities within themselves; and (c) integration, where people see all their cultural identities as compatible (Yampolski et al., 2013).

Introduction

Over the years, the study of how individuals experience culture has evolved. The research looked at acculturation and assimilation, which then shifted to cultural frame-switching. As CFS was further studied, it was followed by bicultural identity integration. Both of these concepts, CFS and BII, have most recently led to research on multicultural identity integration. The literature shows a shift in the questions raised over the years from whether it is possible to cognitively hold more than one cultural frame and shift from one culture to another, consciously or unconsciously, to how well individuals can integrate two or more cultural identities. The review's focus makes a case for studying multicultural individuals by presenting the foundational studies on CFS and BII that led to multicultural identity integration. These two topics are critical since they inform the current literature about how multicultural identity is experienced. The approach allows the topics to frame the understanding of the existing literature around multicultural identity today, how it is studied, on whom it is studied, and how it came to be. The works discussed to make a case for why multicultural individuals are so valuable to study and why the workplace would be a context for studying them. First, a brief discussion of acculturation and assimilation is covered as it sets the foundation for CFS and BII. A discussion on BII follows the work on CFS, which leads to how CFS and BII have both informed the understanding of multicultural identity integration. Next, the review provides evidence for why a sociological focus is critical and why workplaces are an essential context of the study, as individuals and workplaces simultaneously affect each other through social interactions. Last is a discussion about the importance of qualitative methodology.

Acculturation and Assimilation

Before Ying-Yi Hong and their research team (1997, 2000, 2003, 2016) began studying cultural frame switching

and identity integration in the 90s into the 2000s, acculturation concepts provided the models to understand how people experienced more than one culture. Initially, acculturation was a unidimensional phenomenon where a person would have to pick one culture over another to assimilate, typically abandoning their heritage culture (e.g., in the context of immigration). More traditional acculturation research posits that once a person achieves acculturation, the dominant culture takes the place of the heritage culture, and the heritage culture is then entirely rejected (Berry, 1990; Gordon, 1964; La Framboise et al., 1993). While some people may experience acculturation this way, it describes a zero-sum approach where one culture must be lost to acquire another. This dynamic is detrimental and does not reflect how all people experience their relationships between multiple cultures.

Today, acculturation exists as a bi-dimensional model in which people negotiate between two different things: (1) the extent to which a person relates and identifies with their heritage culture, typically viewed as the minority culture, and (2) the degree to which they relate and identify with the dominant or host culture. These two cultural modes of acculturation in Table 1 result in four distinctive strategies that a person could enact to negotiate their heritage and host culture: (a) assimilation is the identification with either the dominant or host culture, (b) integration, also known as biculturalism, is the identification with both heritage and dominant cultures, (c) Separation is the identification with only the heritage culture, (d) marginalization is the lack of involvement with both heritage and dominant cultures (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Berry, 1990; 2003;2006 Sam & Berry, 2010).

Table 1

Berry's Model of Acculturation

Does the individual find it valuable to maintain a relationship with the larger society and host culture?	Yes	Assimilation	Integration
	No	Marginalization	Separation
		No	Yes
		Does the individual find it valuable to maintain their heritage, cultural identity, and characteristics?	

A limitation of the model of acculturation is that it focuses on acculturation outcomes versus understanding how the process takes place for individuals. In an interview with Berry in *Psychology Today*, Berry clarifies that the original framework for acculturation focuses on attitudes and preferences between how a person maintains their own culture and their experiences with other cultural groups. However, the most recent model takes the attitudes and preferences and refers to them as strategies because they are behaviors that come from individual preferences and are affected by the context (Emamzadeh, 2018). Still, the focus on understanding the process is not there. The study of cultural frame-switching begins to approach an understanding of the process of internalizing and negotiating different cultures in bicultural individuals (Hong, Y., Chiu, C., et al., 1997; Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000). Acculturation provides an understanding of the strategies used by individuals to make sense of their different cultural backgrounds. While the work of acculturation was intended for bicultural individuals, it also provides an explanation for how multicultural individuals straddle between their heritage culture, learning culture, and the culture in the society of which they are a part. They are not free of this experience while interacting in the workplace; therefore, it is valuable to take note of for the research.

Cultural Frame Switching

Whether individuals can cognitively hold more than one cultural mindset or frame and consciously or unconsciously shift from one culture to another is referred to as cultural frame switching (CFS) (Hong, Y., Chiu, C., et al., 1997; Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000; Hong, Benet-Martinez, et al., 2003). Verkuyten and Pouliasi (2006) stress the importance of social identities in CFS as “cultural primes may activate not only the corresponding cultural knowledge systems but also social identity processes and concerns” (p. 323-324). They conclude that self-perceptions and how people identify socially explain how cultural frames may be activated in bicultural people. A challenge for bicultural or multicultural people who

experience cultural frame-switching in social contexts is that they may be perceived as inconsistent or inauthentic, even if they are true to themselves, because they do not represent the culture of the society they are in (West et al., 2020). At the same time, frame switching has helped bicultural individuals achieve well-being by learning and being accepted into new cultures by holding two or more cultural identities without conflict (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Studies around cultural frame switching attempt to address what type of process exists when switching between cultural frames. This was done by utilizing experimental methods that prime participants with cultural icons to activate their cultural frames to understand what makes one culture salient over the other (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong, Y., Chiu, C., et al., 1997; Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000; Hong, Benet-Martínez, et al., 2003; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006).

The studies chosen to discuss CFS have also influenced the creation of the bicultural identity integration (BII) scale, later discussed, which also influenced the multicultural identity integration (MII) scale. All of which were studied in methodologically similar ways. Hong, Y., Chiu, C., et al. (1997) and Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al. (2000) developed a series of three studies that established CFS as a valuable research subject and subsequently improved and replicated earlier research to understand how individuals experience CFS. The following studies provide further context on how CFS is studied, on whom it is studied, and the conclusions reached on CFS. Hong, Y., Chiu, C., et al. (1997) conducted a series of experimental studies with a constructivist approach from social psychology that looks at culture as a general mentality or view versus an internalized structure in which people can adopt various cultural beliefs and constructs. Their research question focused on understanding how cultural knowledge becomes salient during tasks that require interpretation. They posit that a person with two or more cultural understandings may be primed to activate the cognitive network that pertains to either culture. Their studies utilize cultural icons specific to American and Chinese cultures to enable frame-switching in bicultural individuals (Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000). Their first study used Westernized

Chinese college students from Hong Kong who hold traditional Chinese values from being socialized in Hong Kong and westernized knowledge. Their second study focused on Chinese-born Californian college students who lived at least five years in Chinese and five in American society. Finally, in the third study of this series, the sample was made up of Hong Kong Chinese high school students to understand further how culture becomes salient when primed by culturally specific icons (Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000). These studies used random assignment to an American or Chinese priming condition or a control group. The study used priming methods to recreate how participants attribute their culture to cues. All three studies resulted in the same outcome. Those who were primed with Chinese images gave responses that were collective or “external” as compared to the American primed group, which responded with reasons that were more individualistic or “internal” (Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000). Through these studies, Hong, Y., Chiu, C., et al. (1997) found that it is possible to study and enable cultural frame-switching in individuals experimentally and that multiple cultures can direct how an individual thinks (Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000). A study such as this is critical to understanding multicultural individuals as they hold more cultural backgrounds, affecting their thinking and behavior. The research showed that environmental cues affect behavior, which is vital to understanding a multicultural individual's social workplace dynamics.

In a more recent study on cultural frame switching, West, A., Muise, A., et al. (2020) conducted three studies to understand the social consequences of being bicultural in relationships. All three studies had participants composed of white Americans born in the United States with parents born in the U.S., Canada, and Western or Southern Europe. The third study focused exclusively on heterosexual American women. Overall, the researchers predicted for these studies that CFS may undermine bicultural individuals' authenticity and negatively impact overall general impressions and impressions of prospective relationships in American culture. The studies find that frame-switching biculturals are perceived as behaving inauthentically by Americans and are seen as less likable,

trustworthy, warm, and incompetent compared to biculturals who do not frame-switch or behave neutrally. Ultimately, the results for all three studies affirmed that any perceived authenticity in a bicultural person's behavior countered some of the costs from frame switching; however, actively not frame switching, or separation, as noted by Berry (1990), produced the most advantage over authentically frame switching in the long run. This study is critical to understanding the challenges that multicultural individuals may experience when interacting with others in their workplace. As multicultural individuals hold more cultural backgrounds than bicultural individuals, they run an even higher chance of being seen as inauthentic, even when they behave naturally. The literature notes a social cost for holding a well-integrated identity due to how others perceive the individual. This consequence is vital to note as it could negatively affect multicultural individuals interacting in their workplace. Further studies related to CFS have implicated that bicultural identity integration (BII) is a catalyst or indicator of CFS (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). This concept is essential in understanding how people view their cultural backgrounds interact, discussed further in the following section.

Bicultural Identity Integration

Bicultural identity has been focused on in the field of psychology (Benet-Martínez, 2002; Hong, Y., Benet-Martínez, V., et al., 2003; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006) and typically studied and understood through groups such as immigrants, refugees, or ethnic minorities in adapting to a new culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Bicultural people navigate their heritage culture while adjusting to or learning a new cultural identity; this occurs independently of one another. The activation of each culture is context-dependent and complex (Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000). Today we know that bicultural identities can exist in even more complex ways through bicultural identity integration (Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Bicultural identity integration is the degree to which bicultural individuals perceive their cultural identities as compatible versus oppositional (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) looked at

this issue by conducting three studies replicating the previously mentioned CFS studies of Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al. (2000), where bicultural participants were exposed to either East Asian or Western cultural primes. The main goal of these three studies by Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) was to learn about BII's role in CFS by understanding how Chinese American biculturals possess separate cultural schemas that affect their behavior depending on the environment (Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000).

Ultimately, they found that how individuals attribute cues in their surroundings is moderated by the level of their BII. The inventory for BII has found that individuals who score high on the BII scale find less conflict between their heritage culture (the culture a person grows up in) and dominant culture (the culture a person is assimilating into). Since those with low BII scores find more conflict between both cultures coexisting, they tend to keep the two cultures mutually exclusive, which causes individuals to react to cultural cues in a contrasting way, meaning that the individual perceives the cultural cue as incongruent for themselves (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Downie et al., 2004; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). This research finds that low BIIs tend to have a conflict with or have a negative perspective toward one of their cultures. This conflict causes them to behave opposite to the cultural norms that the individual feels disconnected from. This disconnect may also cause high levels of acculturation stress for low BIIs. On the other hand, high BIIs have a positive perspective toward their cultures, view their cultures as assets, and hold lower acculturation stress levels (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng et al., 2006). Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) also point out that when low BIIs perceive a tension between cultures, it could make them more aware of capturing, processing, and behaving in specific ways to the cues in their environment to protect them from acting in the wrong way culturally.

For individuals to feel that their identities are compatible, they must assess whether their cultures can be integrated so the identities are not in conflict (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Downie, M., Koestner, R., et al., 2004). Even if a person

can find their cultural identities as strongly compatible, it does not mean they never experience their cultures in a way that alternates in behavior instead of fully integrated when the context changes. This means that a person could gain competence in two or more cultures without ever choosing one over another. Ultimately, no matter how well-integrated a bicultural individual's identities are, they can show culturally compatible and incompatible behaviors depending on the context.

This study expanded the understanding of CFS by introducing BII as a new variable that moderates how individuals respond to cultural cues in their environment. BII makes for a more dynamic understanding of culture and how individuals negotiate their multiple identities. Other researchers note that the strategy for managing heritage and host culture is to take on the bicultural identity. This means bicultural individuals must possess the following traits and skills: knowledge and practice of cultural beliefs and values, ability to function in these various cultural settings, language and communication skills in each culture, and positive attitude towards both cultures (Downie, M., Mageau, G. A., et al., 2006; Downie, M., Koestner, R., et al., 2004; LaFromboise et al., 1993). This point is also valid for multicultural individuals, as the concept suggests that identity integration is driven by the connections and disconnections a person may experience in a cultural context. It also emphasizes how complex and multilayered culture and identity are for bicultural individuals (Cheng et al., 2006). Bicultural identity integration (BII) builds on what was learned about CFS to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between two or more cultural identities and how individuals view their identity integration.

Summary

As mentioned before, what is challenging about CFS is that studying whether a person accesses their culture depending on cues can become very complicated as it may be impossible to know precisely why the individual responds in a certain way. Additionally, the research primarily focuses on bicultural individuals, which calls for a greater focus on multicultural identity research. Further research in the early 2000s shows a slowing down of new

work in CFS being utilized in other studies to show how CFS plays out in different contexts. For example, a study by Huerta et al. (2016) examines the influence of CFS on the interpretation of probability expressions in accounting standards by bicultural individuals. Another innovative study by Pope (2020) utilizes CFS to create dance movement therapy techniques to help people increase their BII and help them undergo CFS more efficiently by increasing the memories of positive bicultural experiences through exploring body posture. The evolution of CFS studies has expanded our understanding of individuals and their cultural identities. CFS research is valuable because it finds that people can cognitively incorporate various cultures into their thinking instead of merely understanding the outcomes of fitting into or dissociating from a culture, like in acculturation research. These same concepts can be applied to multicultural individuals and will be critical in understanding how multicultural people experience their identity in the workplace context.

Initial CFS studies by Hong, Y., Chiu, C., et al. (1997) and the more recent studies like those by West, A., Muise, A., et al. (2020) and West, A., Zhang, R. (2017, 2018) choose to look at CFS from different perspectives and from a constructivist point of view which aligns with the sociological focus of the research study. Studies by Benet-Martínez et al. (2002), Cheng et al. (2006), and West, A., Muise, A., et al. (2020) identify barriers individuals face due to negotiating between different cultures, such as disliking or having negative attitudes towards certain cultures, feeling disconnected, and being perceived as inauthentic. These findings can provide insight into how individuals may interact in relationships that allow them to be genuine with their cultural identity without social consequence. These concepts can also be applied to multicultural individuals and how they present their cultures to others. When thinking about the workplace, it will be critical to understanding how the multicultural participants sense their behavior to be perceived at work and how that affects them.

Once it was deemed possible for CFS to take place (i.e., people can hold more than one cultural frame cognitively), researchers began to look at bicultural identity

integration (BII), or the degree to which ethnic and cultural identities are perceived as compatible or in conflict (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong, Y., Benet-Martínez, V., et al., 2003). CFS and BII provided a foundation for research focusing on multicultural identity integration (MII) (Cheng & Lee, 2009). MII also speaks to the degree to which ethnic and cultural identities are perceived as compatible or in conflict. It also looks at how this compatibility or conflict causes individuals to feel depending on the prompts they receive in their environments. Although CFS and BII are the foundation of MII and how it is experienced, studies have been limited primarily to college and high school students and have only looked at bicultural individuals and two cultures interacting with one another (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong, Y., Benet-Martínez, V., et al., 2003; Hong, Y., Morris, M., et al., 2000). The following section further reviews how multicultural identity has been studied and why it is valuable for the present dissertation study.

Multicultural Individuals

In this review, multicultural individuals are understood as people who (a) strongly identify with two or more ethnic or racial cultures from any background, (b) are fluent in a language other than English, meaning one can speak, read, and write proficiently in two or more languages, (c) having lived abroad extensively, and (d) practicing more than one culture's values, behaviors, and traditions (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016). Some research has considered multicultural individuals, who hold three or more cultural backgrounds, to be more cognitively complex than mono- or bicultural people, who only hold one or two cultural backgrounds (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016). Pekerti and Thomas (2016) review several concepts relevant to multicultural identity, which views a multicultural identity as a spectrum and continuum instead of experiencing culture as a fixed dualism from which to switch back and forth. They propose that individuals may simultaneously experience their various cultural identities. They also believe this simultaneous experience of culture occurs through the process of cultural frame switching and which

is developed in a way that allows for multiple cultures to hold salience simultaneously by some individuals through advanced cognitive functions.

Multicultural people hold skills and traits such as creativity and offer more cognitive complexity for problem-solving. Organizations believe these skills make multicultural individuals successful mediators for cultural competency (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Hong, 2010; Leung et al., 2008; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015). Specific elements are considered necessary for a person to be culturally competent, such as knowledge of beliefs and values, knowing the language and other forms of communication, and positively viewing both cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). These expectations may place a burden and high sense of responsibility on multicultural individuals. It would be necessary to learn more about how these multicultural individuals feel they contribute to the workplace and how their expectations of being mediators may affect them.

Researchers used CFS and BII to understand how MII affects an individual and their well-being, influenced by how an individual sees their different racial identities and cultures as compatible. Researchers also examined how one's relationship with their multicultural identity affects them (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Yampolski et al., 2013). Therefore, as noted throughout this section would be valuable to understand the effects of holding a multicultural identity in a workplace setting. Researchers interested in understanding the cultural identities of multicultural people used the concepts from CFS and BII to learn more about how to measure the *integration* of multiple cultural identities. Research on MII is critical to the present dissertation research study as it provides an initial understanding and framework for how multicultural identity is challenged, supported, and navigated in addition to the previous work on acculturation, CFS, and BII.

Multicultural Identity Integration

Multicultural Identity Integration (MII) is the degree to which ethnic and cultural identities are perceived as compatible or in conflict. The construct looks at how this compatibility or conflict causes individuals to feel depending on the prompts they receive in their

environments. This construct is made of three identity configurations: (a) categorization, where people identify with one of their cultural groups over all the others, (b) compartmentalization, where people maintain multiple separate cultural identities within themselves; and (c) integration, where people see all their cultural identities as compatible (Yampolski et al., 2013, 2016).

Yampolski et al. (2013) researched the experiences of multicultural individuals using a mixed-methods design where they recruited 22 multicultural Canadians to learn how multicultural individuals perceived the integration of their cultural identities. Using interviews, the researchers focused on a scale composed of the three identity configurations: categorization, compartmentalization, and integration. The researchers ultimately found that each construct that makes up the scale (categorization, compartmentalization, integration) is tied to different well-being predictions. The participants' narratives from the interview were analyzed for coherence, which is connected to well-being and one of the MII identity integration configurations. The more integrated a multicultural identity was, the more coherence was seen in the narrative. Those who compartmentalized or had a less integrated multicultural identity showed less narrative coherence and, therefore, less positive well-being. When analyzing narratives, the researchers quantified their coded interviews by scoring the coherence of each construct of MII.

Yampolski et al. (2016) extended previous research on MII by showing how personal cultural identities and the level of their integration affects well-being. This research is similar to previous work on cultural identity integration in that the individual's cognitive processes are the focus. While informative, the contexts and personal stories of the participants were not considered. It is challenging to understand the actual effects of multicultural individuals' identities without gathering how the participants feel about the context in which they find themselves. The lack of understanding of personal stories and the context of the participants is critical in better understanding multicultural individuals and their interactions. MII begins to scratch the surface of multicultural individuals and how their cultural exchanges may affect their experiences and feelings.

Summary

Previous research on multicultural identity processes and how they are experienced has been primarily quantitative and centered in the field of psychology. This emphasis has resulted in a limited understanding of the social factors and contexts that affect culturally diverse people. For multicultural experiences to be genuinely understood, an investigation into how individuals interact with others and the contexts in which they interact is needed. Understanding how social context affects behavior is critical. This type of inquiry demands a more sociological lens through which to interpret the experiences of multicultural individuals. The following sections will provide evidence and note the importance of using a more sociological focus to understand the connection between workplaces and multicultural identity. Studies like these are a step towards providing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals' multicultural identities, which were generally missing from BII, CFS, and even MII research.

Moreover, as noted previously, research has not engaged with qualitative methods, which makes the argument for the need to understand multicultural individuals' lived experiences. Researchers have not typically collected direct quotes or stories from interviewees about their experiences, limiting our understanding of actual experiences of their social interactions and, even less, in the workplace. The following section will review why a sociological focus was critical for the doctoral research at hand.

Sociological Focus

Social Constructs and Context

Since multicultural identity integration is affected by the cues they receive from their environment (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Hong, Y., Benet-Martínez, V., et al., 2003; Yampolski et al., 2013), the present doctoral study focused on the perspectives of multicultural individuals to understand better the dynamic between a person's multicultural identities and how these identities shape and are shaped by work environments. It is impossible to know how multicultural individuals develop and how their identity is formed without considering the

context. Sociocultural research has extensively looked at how context impacts the identity formation and development of an individual and implies that an individual and their cultural context cannot be separated and are constantly interacting and influencing one another (Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 2003; Schachter, 2005; Shweder et al., 1998). Shweder's (1990) research posits that no environment is free of how people make meaning from their surroundings and contexts.

People socially construct their life through their understanding of their experiences, which they then put into action. The consequences of social construction are essential for understanding how to support multicultural individuals better, for this doctoral research, specifically in the workplace. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism noted that language and culture are how people experience their environments, communicate with one another, and understand the world around them. The development of people and their identities are a result of their social interactions. How people understand and learn is constructed through their interactions and exchanges with others, their environments, and context, which can be achieved in various ways (Akpan et al., 2020; Kapur, 2018). Hubbard et al. (2023) have pointed out that using a constructivist position to understand that a phenomenon recognizes that meaning is constantly being negotiated in real-life settings.

Social constructivism and context are essential for this study as it moves away from an experimental psychological approach and focuses more on the social interactions people are experiencing, which take place in the workplace context for this dissertation study. To understand social dynamics in any context, it is essential first to understand that experiences are constructed by the interactions of the people in the environment, or, in the case of the present study, how multicultural individuals interact with their work environment. The experiences of multicultural individuals may be incredibly unique as they come from various contexts. Multicultural people would not only add to previous multicultural identity research but also provide a greater understanding of how social dynamics are influenced by the interactions with their environment and

those around them. As Vygotsky (1978) noted, this is all negotiated through language. The participants in the present doctoral study all speak at least two or more languages and come from various cultures, giving them multiple cultural frames to build an understanding of their identity while at work. Therefore, it would follow that a workplace environment, where many individuals spend most of their time, would provide important insight into multicultural identity experiences and dynamics.

Social Exchanges and Interactions

Exchange theory describes the relationship between identity and work as two types of exchanges: economic exchange and social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). An economic exchange states that some value is exchanged for work, likely monetary, even if a shared goal does not exist. While money and economic gain are possibly at play, understanding how social exchange continuously affects a person at work and how someone's identity is valued at work and may ultimately affect their economic value is important to examine (Blau, 1964, 2017; Hoogervorst et al., 2004). This social exchange is critical to the present research study. Steers and Porter (1991) reinforced this idea by examining how work provided compensation, social interaction, and status concerning identity. The workplace provides an ideal setting where this social identity can be studied.

According to previous research, social environments affect behavior, and the social environment, in return, is affected by individual interactions (Butterworth et al., 2000; Su et al., 1999). When multicultural individuals have social exchanges, they increase the diversity of the environment, and the ways people respond within that environment. Culture is undoubtedly related to and affects identity as a process of the social interactions people experience (Bergh & Theron, 2009). Holding various cultures as a part of a multicultural identity may result in even more complex dynamics and interactions in the workplace, making multicultural individuals a valuable group to study.

Research by Smith et al. (2006), which focused on social psychology, noted that people from different cultural backgrounds respond differently to interactions and hold

different feelings, understandings, or perceptions of the meaning of the same behaviors. This work by Smith et al. (2006) is valuable because it points out that multicultural individuals may respond differently from others in their workplaces who are not like them, making the multicultural experience and perspective unique and varied. These unique behaviors influence how people socialize, affecting context, identity, and self. Social interactions affect the context, which in turn affects the development of the self. Learning and understanding how this social dynamic takes place at work are precious to organizations and those who work with multicultural individuals. It is also meaningful for the multicultural individuals themselves.

Workplace Sociology

The sociology of work is central to theory and research about workplace interactions. There have been many changes to the make-up of workplaces and the interactions and operations within workplaces over the years. In particular, it is essential to note the rapid change society experienced in the workplace due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These conditions call for researchers to rethink how we study how employees interact with each other and their workplace environment (Finkelstein, 1990; Henke, 1999; Kalleberg, 2009). It is also critical to understand the extent to which organizations support those they employ. Understanding these interactions would allow for more informed policy and improved employee workplace processes and experiences.

This dissertation study includes people who are knowledgeable of, identify with, have internalized, and are committed to the values, behaviors, traditions, and language of two or more cultures. Social identity is already an incredibly complex concept; therefore, this study does not intend to focus on the participants' specific multicultural backgrounds but on how having this multicultural identity affects their interactions at work. As people spend so much of their time at work, it makes sense that work would influence aspects of identity and vice versa. Wetherell (1996) said, "identity and self-esteem are attached to our position in the structures of work and paid employment" (p. 249). Those who have studied sociology tend to treat work as a central aspect of a person's life as it

impacts the individual, other aspects of their life, and how they define who they are (Kanungo, 1982; Kirpal, 2004; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Gini (1998) reiterated the idea that “people are what they do, and what people do affects every aspect of who they are” (p. 708). This idea reinforces the need for a sociological study of multicultural individuals in the workplace. Using a sociological lens focuses on how context affects the individual, how identity plays out, and how this experience makes them feel. In the present research study, the workplace is the context for learning more about the interaction between multicultural identity and the workplace.

Multicultural Individuals and Organizations

Organizational behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, processes, and structures within an organization are impacted within organizations. Research in organizational behavior works to understand why employees interact the way they do, how managers may seek better ways to be more effective in the workplace, and why some groups perform better than others (Ivancevich & Konopaske, 2014; Trimble & Jimenez Luque, 2022). Organizations and leaders face constant change in the workplace. Research has shown that organizational behavior does not look the same from place to place, and the concepts of organizational behavior do not fit all environments (Penley & Gould, 1988; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Smith et al. (2006) note a variety of traits and differences across cultures that affect the social interactions and dynamics in organizational behavior, such as how people experience and resolve conflicts and negotiation, verbal and non-verbal communication, how people relate to one another, working in teams, leadership, level of satisfaction in their job, commitment to the organization, and more. In this study, I ask how and why multicultural individuals influence and are being influenced by their interactions in their workplace. Suppose an organization can align its resources with the changing conditions of an organization’s environment, the characteristics of the individuals who work for them, group behavior, and how it affects the process and structures within an organization. In that case, they will be effective, efficient, and successful (Ivancevich

& Konopaske, 2014). Understanding how multicultural individuals affect the environments they interact in at work and how it affects them in return could be critical to the success of an organization. If the right resources and processes are implemented for these individuals, their skills can be better leveraged and utilized in a way that honors the individual and supports the mission and goals of the organization.

Even in organizations that look and operate similarly, people will display different attitudes and behaviors depending on their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Studies on Japanese, Egyptian, and Western workers have shown that attitudes and behaviors in the workplace differ depending on what part of the world workers are from (Abegglen, 1958; Berger, 1957; Bergh & Theron, 2009; Blau & Scott, 2003). The differences lie in the cultural behavior between the western world and the eastern world. People from the east are far more involved in the lives of their employees than those from western parts of the world. Further, these social interactions at work affect the behavior of multicultural individuals in their communities, depending on their life experiences and how they see themselves.

Some studies have provided evidence that organizations benefit from employees who identify with the organization itself; therefore, organizations try to create a workplace identity that impacts their employees. They give them specific roles in the workplace, which can affect workplace culture, hierarchy, and practices (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Buche, 2003; Hoogervorst et al., 2004; Kirpal, 2004). These researchers point out that the time spent in the workplace likely affects identity. It would follow that multicultural identity is impacted by the workplace through their interactions with others and their responsibilities in their roles. Workplaces are intentionally designed to achieve particular goals. Therefore, people hold specific duties in their jobs. The present research intended to know how multicultural individuals' interactions may lead to different social experiences compared to their colleagues. These experiences require their own inquiry and research to highlight the importance of better understanding the impact multicultural individuals have on the workplace and how

the workplace affects multicultural individuals.

Some researchers talk about the importance of leveraging the attributes of multicultural people to utilize them as mediators and facilitators of communication and cultural competency in organizations (Hong, 2010; Martín Alcázar et al., 2013; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015). They are expected to bring creativity and new perspectives to problem-solving efforts (Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015; Hong, 2010; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). This is problematic because there is pressure placed on multicultural individuals to use their competencies to perform highly instead of organizational leaders providing the appropriate DEI training and professional development for their organizations. Researchers posit that diverse individuals have skills to leverage for improved communication and efficacy in organizational settings. However, there is no agreed-upon true or tried theory robust enough to understand this concept of multicultural individuals' ability to leverage their various cultural identities in an organizational context (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016). Organizational diversity goals may be problematic because undue pressure is placed on multicultural individuals to perform in ways they may not identify. Moreover, in terms of equity and inclusion, these expectations are also problematic because they are not necessarily imposed on their less diverse colleagues with whom they share the workplace. These findings make a case for why the workplace is a critical environment to study multicultural individuals to help organizations and leaders align their practices and policy to support and honor all of their employees.

Organizations and their leaders might be better served by providing appropriate professional development in diversity, equity, and inclusion and enriching learning opportunities for all employees. If organizations want to leverage multicultural individuals and their skills successfully, it is critical for them to recognize their cultural identities and backgrounds. Ignoring these aspects of any person's identity may leave individuals feeling disconnected, undervalued, or as if they do not have a sense

of belonging. When multicultural individuals feel marginalized and not valued for their background, this may hold significant consequences for the well-being of the individual and the organization. The more organizations can genuinely understand and appreciate an individual's cultural background, the more prepared and informed they would be to develop and practice policies that embody DEI. The following section will describe the main methodological limitation from previous research and how this doctoral study addresses this limitation to improve findings to contribute and improve on existing research that has made a case for this doctoral study.

Qualitative Methods

The studies described in this review examined the experience of multicultural individuals primarily through quantitative methods and shared similar experimental approaches to looking at human experiences. The challenge with experimental studies, especially when studying something as socially influenced and complicated as multicultural people in the workplace, is that the results tend to be limited. Although my work looks across work contexts, this study is not intended to be generalizable. I conducted this study with a qualitative focus to better understand how multicultural individuals' dispositions and actions affected their workplace experiences; I conducted conversational guided interviews to learn about their personal experiences. This qualitative focus contributes to MII because it has always been studied through a scale instead of focusing on the participants' stories. Applying a qualitative focus in this research allowed for a more personal look into the experiences of multicultural individuals. It allowed me to understand how they experience their identity in the workplace instead of quantifying their experiences to fit an identity scale. This focus also displayed the social dynamics through the stories the participants tell, which was an essential aspect of this dissertation research study.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a foundational understanding of current research around multicultural identity and how it came to be studied. It noted the importance of taking a sociological approach to understanding the constructive

nature of how organizations play a part in multicultural identity. It also informs the methodology of this research study, which I describe in detail in chapter three. This chapter included a brief discussion of cultural frame switching, bicultural identity integration, multicultural identity integration, and the importance of having a sociological lens to explore identity and the workplace. The following chapter will provide a more in-depth description of the research study that was carried out.



CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

This chapter reviews the research methods I used to conduct this study. This research was based on a qualitative design to learn about the experience of multicultural individuals in the workplace. Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured conversational interviews, were used because they allowed for a more natural approach to storytelling. This approach allowed the participants to share experiences by allowing the interviewees to express their thoughts openly. This open sharing provided data in their interviews that allowed me to make meaning of their stories through analysis and interpretation (Beuving & DeVries, 2015; Glesne, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015).

Additionally, qualitative research was valuable to the current study because it allowed me to gain an understanding of how the multicultural participants' experiences worked by "getting inside the phenomenon to get detailed descriptive data and perceptions in the variations in what goes on and the implications for the people and processes involved" (Patton, 2015, p. 6). Qualitative methods assist in understanding context and how and why the interactions that result are essential to understanding a process, phenomenon, or experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research allowed me to pay attention to and understand the nuances of multicultural individuals, specifically in the workplace. I examined the social dynamics they experienced in their work context and the consequences of these dynamics on their well-being. This qualitative research may be used by employers and leaders who design

policies to support their multicultural employees better and look for more informed policies and practices to support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In the following section, I discuss how I created a participant pool through a survey, describe the makeup and background of the participants, how I carried out my interviews, and lastly, the process I employed for the coding and analysis of the interview transcripts. The purpose of this research is not to generalize but rather to provide a more nuanced and complex understanding of multicultural individuals in the workplace through their stories to motivate and inform current research, employers, and leaders in the workplace. I begin with a discussion of how participants' eligibility was determined.

Participant Eligibility

According to previous research, multicultural individuals are knowledgeable, identify with, have internalized, and are committed to the values, behaviors, traditions, and language of two or more cultures (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016). They are individuals who show attachment and loyalty to aspects of the cultures with which they identify or the culture in which they have been reared (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010). I used this definition and understanding of multicultural identity in this study to select eligible participants. A participant's eligibility was assessed through five initial questions on a survey. The survey was distributed to personal and professional connections in the international education, K–12, and higher education fields, whom I knew would be likely to fit the criteria for the study or who would be likely to know others who identify as multicultural. The eligibility was based on the following criteria:

- Participants had to strongly identify with two or more ethnic or racial cultures from any background.
- They had to be fluent in a language other than English, meaning they could speak, read, and write proficiently in two or more languages.
- Participants must have lived in more than one country for at least one year.
- They had to practice more than one culture's values,

behaviors, and traditions.

- They must have also worked in a professional environment for at least one year.
-

Survey

I administered the survey online through the Qualtrics platform provided by the University of San Diego. The survey was confidential but not anonymous, as the data intended to identify participants who indicated they were interested in the interview portion of the study. This information ties data points back to each interview participant. Based on the recommendation of the University of San Diego's Institutional Review Board, an adult waiver of consent was included in the survey; therefore, participants understood how they would be protected in the research process.

The survey first consisted of the five eligibility questions previously referenced. Participants were deemed ineligible if they did not fit any of the five questions. If the participants fit all five eligibility questions, they were further prompted with detailed demographic questions. These questions focused on the participants' cultural background and personal details, such as place of birth, where they were raised, languages spoken, international experiences, and detailed work industry information and context. These survey questions may be found in Appendix A. There were no specific criteria on the type of organization a participant could be a part of. However, there were detailed questions about the organization in which they worked. At the end of the survey, there was an option to indicate if they were interested in interviewing. Those who agreed to an interview had follow-up questions that collected their identifying information, such as first and last name, email, and phone number.

The survey results comprised a pool of 14 eligible participants through a convenience approach. This convenience approach is more common in cross-cultural research and allowed for sampling no matter where the participants resided in the United States (Schaffer & Riordan, 2003). Another reason for using the convenience approach is that I was strictly interested in the experience of multicultural people and not a particular type of workplace or environment. I did not ignore the workplace

environment, as Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism notes that what people know and understand is influenced by their environments; however, the workplace was not the focus of the study; multicultural experience was the unit of analysis. The survey did result in workplace variation, which added to the richness of the results.

In addition to a convenience approach, I used a snowball approach to gather more participants. I asked those who completed the survey to share it with others they thought would fit the criteria or be interested in the study to help me create a larger eligible pool (Glesne, 2016). Because I did not have access to a system or database that would allow me to create my sample based on my criteria, the convenience and snowball approaches helped me gather eligible participants willing to be interviewed. As mentioned, the survey resulted in 14 eligible participants, whom I then narrowed down to nine. The final nine participants became a part of the study as they all indicated wanting to participate in an interview at the end of the survey. The remaining five participants of the original 14 did not want to participate in an interview and therefore did not become a part of the study. The following section speaks to the interview process I underwent with these nine participants.

Participant Background and Demographics

The participants in previous research studies around multicultural identity integration were typically college students. Additionally, the main focus of work depended on bicultural people instead of multicultural individuals from different backgrounds. In this research, I selected individuals with more than two cultural backgrounds, and I did not restrict the multicultural background of participants or the type of industry in which they worked. This approach resulted in people from various cultures, ages, and professional backgrounds, which provided a diverse participant group to help me understand how multicultural individuals experience the workplace. The benefit was an addition and added to the richness of the data collected. The following section depicts in greater detail the cultural and professional backgrounds of the participants, including their place of birth, where they were raised, languages

spoken, and other contexts and aspects of their background.

Professional Background

The professional backgrounds of participants in this study were rather diverse, even among the five participants who worked in education. One of the participants, Pascal, worked as a program manager in education for an educational institution not directly related to any school but worked for a company that encourages students to achieve higher education. Two participants, Ben and Paula, worked as instructional coaches for K–12 teachers. They both worked at different grade levels, at different schools, and in other states. Another participant, Ali, balanced her work between being a school administrator and supporting programming for children in early childhood education at her school. Another participant, Beth, worked in higher education in the field of international education, assisting college students as an advisor. The remaining participants, Edgar, Ray, and Raj, worked in construction, information technology, and scientific research, respectively. Most participants already held a master's degree; however, three of the nine participants were working towards a master's degree or a Ph.D. The split for the type of workplace among all the participants was between the public and nonprofit sectors, except for Ray, who worked in the private sector.

Linguistic Background

Only one participant, Beth, grew up speaking English at home. Ava, Ben, Edgar, and Paula all spoke Spanish while growing up at home. Six participants noted they are the most proficient in only one of the languages they speak. All respondents are predominantly English speakers; however, Edgar primarily spoke Spanish, and Pascal predominantly spoke French. All participants noted being somewhat simultaneously proficient in at least two or three other languages. In addition to English being the predominately spoken language spoken by all participants, the participants also spoke a combination of the following languages: French, German, Hindi, Nepali, or Spanish.

National Background

Two participants, Paula and Ava, were born abroad but grew up in the United States, and one participant, Ali, who

was born in the United States, grew up abroad. Edgar, Rami, Ray, and Pascal mainly grew up and lived abroad and came to the United States at an older age than the rest of the participants. Ben was born and raised in the United States. All participants have lived in at least two to three different countries for at least an entire year; at least one of those countries was not the country in which they primarily grew up. All participants currently live in different parts of the United States. None of these participants come from the same ethnic, racial, or cultural background, so diverse perspectives emerged during the interviews. Table 2 notes all the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants of this study which were critical in understanding their backgrounds.

Table 2

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Interview Participant

Characteristics	n	%
Gender identity		
Female	4	44
Male	5	56
Marital status		
Single	5	56
Married	3	33
Divorced	1	11
Employment status		
Working full-time (salaried)	8	89
Working part-time	1	11
Student	1	11
Full time	2	22
Part-time	1	11
Other ^a		
Highest educational level		
Doctoral degree	1	11
Master's degree	7	78
Bachelor's degree	1	11
Professional background		
Architecture/construction	1	11
Education (K–higher ed.)	5	56
Information technology	1	11
Medical research	1	11
Social work	1	11
Workplace sector		
Nonprofit	4	44
Public	4	44
Private	1	11
Workplace size		
Large (Over 251 individuals)	4	44
Medium (51–250 individuals)	3	33
Small (1–50 individuals)	2	22
Yearly income (before taxes)		
Over 100,000	3	33
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2	22
\$35,000 to \$49,999	3	33
Less than \$20,000	1	11
Ethnic/racial background		

Asian, Asian American, Southeast Asian, or Desi	3	33
Hispanic/Latinx	4	22
White, Caucasian, European	1	11
African descent ^b	1	11
Linguistic background		
Chinese	1	11
Cantonese	1	11
Mandarin	9	100
English	2	22
French	1	11
German	1	11
Hindi	1	11
Japanese	1	11
Nepali	5	56
Spanish		
Native national background		
Costa Rica	1	11
France	1	11
Hong Kong	1	11
Jamaica	1	11
Mexico	2	22
Nepal	1	11
United States	2	22
Religious Background		
Hindu	1	11
Santeria	1	11
Unitarian	1	11
Does not identify with any religious faith	6	67

Note. N = 9 for each characteristic. Participants were 38.9 years old on average (SD = 11.2).

^aIdentified as a parent. ^bIdentified as Caribbean.

Guided Semi-structured Conversational Interview

The primary purpose of this research was for me to focus on understanding the personal experiences of multicultural individuals in the workplace rather than understanding their particular workplace. I interviewed each of them using a semi-structured interview, which assisted in keeping the interview on topic and provided data to answer the research questions (see Appendix B). Because the interview was semi-structured and conversational, it was less formal than a focused interview, which allowed for a comfortable process for participants to share their experiences. This interview method also allowed for additional questions to clarify, go deeper, and made it possible for me to probe for more understanding when needed (Deterding & Waters, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This less formal interview also allowed for flexibility and for questions to emerge from responses during the interview. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and was audio recorded over Zoom. The Zoom platform also provided the interview audio transcription, which I listened to various times to review and edit the

transcriptions for accuracy. I was not able to utilize member checking as a method to ask the participants any additional questions for further clarification.

Qualitative Coding

I approached the interview transcripts first through structural coding. In structural coding, the main topics are determined from the research literature and the research questions of the study (Saldaña, 2016). The research and questions were turned into initial codes, which allowed me to sort through the data and index the transcriptions with this initial focus that I later developed into themes. Table 3 shows examples of the structural codes I initially used when I reviewed the data for the first time.

Table 3

Structural Coding Examples

Research question	Codes
How do multicultural individuals influence the workplace?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEI initiatives - Positive/negative experiences - Increased/Decreased expectations/responsibilities - Skillset - Supporting others - Supported/unsupported - Well-being
How do their workplace experiences affect their identity and sense of self?	-

Note. I determined what the initial codes would be from the following bodies of research on CFS, BII, and MII as discussed in chapter three (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016; Yampolski et al., 2013; Yampolski et al., 2016).

I applied this structural coding across all nine interview transcripts as I reviewed each transcript individually at first. After I coded the transcripts individually, it was helpful to compare the same codes between the interview transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). Most of the codes I used came from research concepts related to literature around multicultural identity integration discussed in Chapter 2. The codes focused on concepts such as well-being, view of identity, and personal experiences. As these codes evolved, they narrowed down and became more specified as more data was collected and reviewed throughout the coding process and during data analysis.

Structural coding is made up of different levels of coding until the main themes are determined from the codes. I used more extended quotes and anecdotes during

the first level of coding. The second level of coding, also composed of meaningful and salient themes and patterns, helped to refine and narrow the codes down. Coding in two rounds allowed me to determine, in some cases, more codes and, in other cases, a refinement of codes to assist in creating the main themes and patterns (Elliott, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). The themes that emerged through coding were typically composed of various lower-level codes that shared a more significant common theme derived from the analysis between all the transcripts (Blair, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Deterding & Water, 2018; Elliott, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). Deterding and Waters (2018) believed this type of coding provides “reliability, validity, and transparency” in the data (p. 8). Theming of the data was also utilized as the codes created were made from extended quotes and analyzed to capture the accurate meaning of what the participant shared in their interviews (Saldaña, 2016, p. 67).

As they answered the research questions, participants expressed recurring terms or phrases throughout the interviews. These terms became codes (Blair, 2015). The coding approach I used combined an inductive and deductive approach, where the initial structural codes were deducted from the literature and research questions. Then I continued the process using an inductive approach where new codes emerged. The structural codes were improved upon or refined as the data was analyzed. This coding narrowed the focus of the themes that emerged throughout the nine transcripts. (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Given, 2008; Saldaña, 2016).

Structural coding had started with many codes, but the process helped me reduce the number of codes during analysis from 30 codes down to 15. Saldaña (2016) notes that although there is no magic or a standard number of themes a researcher is expected to achieve, codes should be manageable and kept to a minimum as the intention is to reduce the data rather than create more. I attempted to have no more than 30 codes for each case. Upon further analysis of the data, those 15 main codes were then reduced to five significant themes applied across all interview transcripts to share their stories. Using a constant comparative method of analysis (Charmaz, 2017), codes that were very similar or

related across the cases helped to identify the main emerging themes and patterns (Belotto, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). These significant themes helped me organize and provide headings for the results and findings section of my research, outlined in Chapter 4 (Elliott, 2018; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Interview Transcripts

I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the nine in-depth interviews presented in Chapter 4. Determining saturation was an ongoing process using a constant comparative analysis across all interviews as the participants shared information. It became noticeable to me when there was a repetition in the responses and when there began to be a distinct event or theme recurring across the participants to the point where no new analytical themes were emerging (Saunders et al., 2018). After completing an individual analysis of each participant's interview transcript, the cross-transcript analysis helped me make connections that could explain how individuals experienced their multicultural identities in the workplace (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I mainly looked for similarities in the participant's stories across all participants' responses. I also noted any differences, as they were valuable data points. After the analysis was complete, I could better speak to the similarities across the participants to determine and present the implications for the experiences these multicultural individuals were having within the workplace. I also determined how organizations could better accommodate or celebrate their multicultural employees in the workplace.

Positionality

Positionality is an essential aspect of research as the researcher's identity, such as ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and personal and professional background, all affect the research conducted. A researcher's positionality may sometimes match those they study but is not required to match participants. In any case, understanding positionality is valuable in knowing the researcher's lens and their possible biases and limitations in perspective (Merriam, 2015, pp. 63-64). I have chosen this topic for my dissertation concerning how people negotiate their multicultural identity in the workplace because I am a

multicultural individual and strive to be more mindful as a professional as I work with an international team. I also find value and critical importance in diversity, equity, and inclusion work. With this study, I hope to provide a resource that could be applied broadly in different fields to improve the understanding of multicultural individuals and their workplace experience. Through this work, I gained a robust understanding of multicultural individuals, the challenges they have experienced, and the resilience they have exhibited as a group of people.

As a multicultural individual, this placed me in a position of familiarity and comfort to interview them about their workplace experiences. I knew all but two of the participants personally, allowing for a relaxed and casual interview approach. Having a good rapport and relationship with the participants allowed them to open up with me to share their stories. Participants I knew may have wanted to participate and help to support me, which may draw in a particular type of person, which may or may not be objective. Additionally, I understand that this position of familiarity with some participants could have caused me to feel that I understood an experience more than I did. However, the structural coding method allowed me to begin with pre-existing research versus my ideas to discover the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Another thing to be mindful of was the power dynamic between a researcher and an interviewee, which may affect all interview dynamics. While my connection with the participants was positive and professional throughout each interview, I know this was only my perspective. Their perspective on the interview process and the influence that power dynamics may have played out with me as a peer, doctoral student, and interviewer is unknown. As Merriam and others point out, the researcher always influences the process (Glesne, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). Other than the fact that I have personal and professional knowledge of cultural competency, identity work, and other aspects of the research questions and topic, we did not talk about any other aspects of identity such as religion, education, socioeconomic status, etc. outside of their multicultural identity at work. Since I cannot assume what other

identities the participants hold and how those other identities played out in these interviews, it is not known how other aspects of their identity may have affected their multicultural identity in the workplace.

To address all the impacts that I, as a researcher, may have on this entire process, it was vital to keep detailed notes of my entire process to check for bias. I kept a notebook where I would write down my thoughts about the research I gathered to support this work. I took various notes throughout the entire process and especially before and after my interviews with the participants. My notes on interview days would consist of how I was feeling that day to ensure any experiences from earlier in the day did not affect the interview. I would also note down anything I was curious about as I went into the interview and any frustrations I had about the process to try to be as objective as possible. After the interviews, I would have many thoughts on what I had heard and what I felt was important or interesting and noted them down to begin processing them. This was especially helpful to refer to when I created my codes for data analysis, as I wanted to ensure my initial coding came from what I had learned from research rather than what I had learned from the participants. As I refined my coding, my notes helped solidify the themes as I noticed recurring topics emerge in all the interviews. All my notes helped me remember what took place at that moment. They allowed me to reflect critically and more objectively on what the participants had shared as they answered the research questions during their interviews.

Conclusion

How and why multicultural individuals experience different feelings in the workplace is a complex and challenging concept to study. As outlined in Chapter 3, I worked to apply methods and procedures to understand this phenomenon. Current research has been limited by its experimental approaches and methods to understand multicultural people; therefore, I felt it was critical to conduct a qualitative research study that would allow one to understand multicultural individuals more deeply from their perspectives and stories. These first-hand accounts of their experiences as multicultural individuals in the workplace offered a more in-depth understanding of the

challenges they often faced and the support required for a more positive experience at work.

The research methods outlined in this chapter led to the analysis presented in Chapter 4, which shows the stories of these nine multicultural individuals in their workplace. Their stories talked about how they saw their multicultural identity, defined it, and contributed to their workplace due to their multicultural background. They express how they impact their work environments and, in turn, how their workplace impacts them. The research worked towards understanding how individuals with various cultural backgrounds feel in the workplace. The conclusions and implications of this research are further discussed in Chapter 5. They provide some guidance to inform more organizations and individuals on what they could do to be better prepared to be more inclusive of diverse people in the workplace.



CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

In this chapter, I discuss the personal experiences and understandings of what being multicultural means from the participants' perspectives and describe how they feel they contribute to their workplace. I discuss how their workplace was personally and professionally challenging due to their background and the absence of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) resources and support in their workplace. The participants' accounts illuminate the different traits they identify as belonging to multicultural individuals and the adverse effects of their identity in the workplace. I also discuss how the participants spoke to the need for more DEI support at work and how addressing what they feel is lacking could result in an ideal workplace.

I designed this research to capture the experiences of nine individuals to understand how their multicultural identity affected their workplace and how their workplace experiences affected them. Understanding the personal experiences of these individuals provides essential insight into the opportunities and challenges present in the workplace and how these circumstances affect multicultural individuals. Rich qualitative data is generally lacking in cultural identity research; therefore, this work offers a

deeper understanding of how individuals experience multicultural identity and the implications of this identity on their work experience. Some examples of this are how it affects their social and emotional well-being, relationships with peers, and how organizational conditions influence how multicultural individuals navigate their identity at work. These accounts may also help improve the creation and practice of effective DEI policies for organizations as the participants shared what type of support they feel is needed.

Multicultural Identity Defined

The participants discussed what multicultural identity means to them, repeating throughout the interviews that individuals become multicultural from experiences such as living abroad, speaking multiple languages, and practicing the habits and traditions of other cultures. Multicultural individuals may also inherit their multicultural identity from their families. In other words, multicultural identity can be formed from lived experiences or can be inherited. Multicultural individuals do not always share the dominant group's language, culture, and values of the society in which they live. They often hold backgrounds that many described as simply "different." The following quotes illustrate the various ways these participants describe multicultural identity.

Different Perspectives and Lived Experiences

The participants described multicultural individuals as those with multiple and different perspectives from those which whom they interact. As Ali explained it, these perspectives come from their many lived experiences. She stated, "Instead of, you know, people with one lived experience, you have one person with five lived experiences." Ali further explained that a multicultural individual is much more culturally responsive and "able to be multi-perspective-able," that is, "to be able to kind of [understand] a topic, a problem, whatever it is, from multiple perspectives." Ali spoke about a multicultural individual as having the idea that many lived experiences are valuable, which is a point that appears across all nine of the participants. For example, Ava defines a multicultural individual as "someone who also holds different ideas and perspectives," compared to someone who is not

multicultural and has a perspective grounded in only one culture.

Like Ava, Rami believes that he is multicultural because he has “been exposed to two or more cultures... being able to identify different ways of thinking, different ways of behavior, different ways of approaching how to resolve problems.” For Ben, when defining a multicultural individual, he focused on the person’s ability to have varying perspectives or “lenses” acquired from living in a different culture. He explained it this way, “if you have a good amount of time and lived abroad in a different culture, without you knowing, you are automatically gifted with this third lens or fourth lens or wherever you’re at.” The experience of living in different cultures allows individuals to obtain even more perspectives and ideas.

Multicultural as Diverse

Multicultural identity is described as a “combination,” “spectrum,” and “variation” of cultures, languages, and food. Being multicultural is complex and involves many aspects of the participants’ lives that come together to form a multicultural identity. Ava stated, “Multicultural people combine the cultures they are part of” and cultures they have been involved with “either through upbringing or lived experiences, in the food they eat, or knowing different languages.” Being multicultural makes one different from others as it is a blend of where an individual comes from and the people and environments they have come across. Ali described that being multicultural is like having a “spectrum of identities... It’s kind of like a constant buffet of cultural options you have to pull from.” Ray described this identity as having,

A combination of numerous backgrounds that melt in a huge melting pot, basically creating a new person in front of you, based on background and experiences; not only yourself but like your parent’s backgrounds [and other lived experiences]. They’re feeding you what they know.

He goes on to further describe how multicultural individuals use the things around them to identify with others,

We have all these cultures that influence us, our dishes, our words we use ... I have various ways of

saying, my friend. I'll say my brethren, which is an English word. I'll say hombre, which is a Spanish word. There are various ways we address each other, you know, and it all is influenced by the different countries [we have lived in] ... You know, that's the multicultural me; I can identify with anybody, anywhere.

Ray touched on how being multicultural means pulling things from different cultures to inform the language he uses and the food he eats. It is what we learn from our families and experiences, and he believes that this multicultural identity comes from those aspects of the cultures with which he is involved. It enables him to relate with others.

Paula described how various things make her multicultural in a similar way. She explained it in this way, I am multicultural because I speak two languages. I am multicultural because I've had to learn from my immigrant parents, and also [I had to] be an immigrant and assimilate into a nation other than the one I am originally from.

Paula attributed her identity to language use, family background, and the environments she grew up in. All these things are aspects of her life that make her feel that she is multicultural.

Cultural Switching and Integration

The multicultural individuals in this study talked about multicultural individuals as those who "code-switch" to integrate into a culture. Ava talked about how an essential aspect of being multicultural is knowing how to behave differently depending on where you are or who is around. It is about the ability to switch between all the things we use to communicate and interact, such as language, clothing, and self-image. She explained it this way,

I not only remember codes, like language codes, I switch to those codes, but also I remember the forms of language, body image, clothing, everything, and how you present yourself ... and I first observe before I say something or do something.

Her observations inform her decisions and actions. Some participants talked about how they go back and forth, or code-switch, between their various identities and what this

looks like in their lives. Ben expressed his thoughts this way,

I try to incorporate [the three cultures] into my everyday life, like, in the morning, I wake up, take a shower. I'm listening to Spanish music like salsa and bachata, so that's playing in the background. Um, when I need to watch the news, I watch it in French, and then I watch it in English. I'm constantly incorporating this into a seamless identity.

Ali described code-switching as “a very unconscious reflective and reflexive kind of switching. It's like code-switching, you know, as you walk through the spaces you inhabit or find yourself in.” According to previous research, their descriptions of code-switching as a “seamless identity” and “unconscious reflective and reflexive kind of switching” are in line with people who hold a strongly integrated identity, where they do not sense a difference between one cultural background or the other because they work together harmoniously (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Yampolski et al., 2013, 2016).

Multicultural as ‘Different’

Interviews revealed that some participants noted that multicultural individuals belong to different cultures and can hold different perspectives, behaviors, and approaches. This sense of “difference” is impactful for them as it makes them stand out, and, as some of the participants commented, it makes them feel “othered.” Pascal explained this idea in terms of having “different angles.” He stated, “There's many different angles, but overall, it's really to be different. It's really to have different core values, a different way of thinking, different way of interacting with others, different way of perceiving things.” Being “different” also seemed to take on a certain sense of pride among the participants. Pascal explained, “[I am] always going to remind people that I am different. The way I think is different. The way I hear things is different.” Pascal also noted the great value of spending time in different countries, from the needed adjustments to this notion of being distinct from others. Again, the idea of being culturally ‘different’ resounds within his sense of identity. Rami accounted for the differences he feels in terms of where someone is from, as well as regarding their opinions

and backgrounds. He stated that multicultural identity means difference, specifically,

To have different backgrounds, from different countries maybe, to be in one single place and then share [different] opinions and experiences ... to have [different] culture, morals, and values. I happen to be part of each culture, kind of, throughout my lifetime.

The word 'different' continued to emerge throughout the participants' responses. 'Difference' was typically explained as different backgrounds, coming from different countries, holding different perspectives, and having different experiences, all of which can be shared with others or used to understand themselves and others. Rami, like some of the previous participants, noted that being a part of different cultures over time is a part of what makes them multicultural. Beth, when speaking about her experience on how multicultural people are different, explained,

In my experience, when one says multicultural, more often than not, [it] refers to someone who is not of the dominant group, whether it's ethnically, or maybe ... [they have an] immigration status or whatnot. To be multicultural is to be aware of other groups ... [it is] someone that has in mind [the] different kinds of demographics and populations [that exist], and [have a] different perspective on things.

Beth sees difference as simply being different from the dominant group. Like Beth, Edgar described how his multicultural identity shows up daily and makes him feel different. Others identify him as not being like them, mainly due to his language. He said, "I also speak some other languages, so [others] identify me as not from the United States, or at least not being born in the United States. Every day of my life is like that." Paula also explained that holding a "different" perspective or life experience is at the core of what it means to be multicultural. Paula strongly expressed how her environment and experiences make her feel "othered" or different from those around her. She defined herself as multicultural because,

I know I'm [a part of] more than one [culture] because I have felt like *other*. So, given the fact that I felt like

an ‘other’ in circumstances, cognitively makes me think that I am [a part of other cultures different from the dominant one].

Paula reiterates the main point driven throughout many of these participants’ statements. According to these individuals, sometimes being multicultural means being different and feeling “othered” from those around them.

Summary

According to these participants, to be multicultural, one holds different perspectives formed by different life experiences – experiences that come from one’s upbringing, language, culture, and nationality. These multicultural individuals mainly discussed multicultural identity in terms of being different. Some of them also described feeling “othered” because of this difference. In the following section, I discuss their experiences being multicultural individuals, specifically, how their multicultural identity emerges in their workplaces. I examine how participants explain they contribute to their workspaces and, conversely, how the workplace influences their experiences as multicultural individuals.

Multicultural Identity and the Work Environment

As the participants expressed what being multicultural in their workplaces means through direct statements and storytelling, the themes that emerged emphasized their ability to: offer empathy, bring self-awareness, build relationships, support colleagues, provide creativity, have stronger work habits, and bring cultural competency. The following sections will elaborate on how they see themselves at work, what traits and skills they believe they bring to the table, and, importantly, how they navigate their identity in their workplaces.

Offer Empathy

Since multicultural individuals can take on various perspectives and have different “lenses,” they feel it helps them to better understand others around them. They have a strong capacity for empathy with others, which benefits them in the workplace. Ali explained the benefits of her multicultural background in the workplace, allowing her to empathize more with others and understand them better. She stated,

You know, it’s very easy for me to connect with

[people from other cultures]. I don't mind, and I don't care if they have an accent. I can understand what they're saying, you know.... I can usually pause and say, that's interesting. Tell me more.

Ali noted how her understanding of others allows her to navigate successfully in her workplace. However, the workplace may not be supporting her in return, as she said, "that's something that I feel that being multicultural has put me in spaces where I did not feel like [empathy] was afforded to me, that's something that I would like to have done [when at work], you know."

Paula also felt that she was more empathetic than others who were not multicultural. She talked about how being multicultural is positive for herself and her work environment, "I'm a lot more empathetic. Um, it gives me more of a growth mindset to understand different ways of thinking, different styles, different everything. I think it makes me more malleable ... I could wax and wane to my environment." Beth talked about how as a multicultural person, she holds "compassion" and sees it in other multicultural people as a "group spirit and collectiveness." She goes on to say she believes this empathetic compassion exists "because [multicultural people] know what it means to be supported and to need support. They're willing to give [support to others around them]." Beth noted how those with a multicultural identity sometimes lack support, so it is, in a way, more natural for them to help and support others because they understand and can relate to what it feels like not to have support for themselves.

Bring Self-Awareness

According to these participants, multicultural individuals are, by necessity, hyper-self-aware in their workspaces. They continuously assess the appropriateness of their language, dress, and behavior, making them more self-aware than those around them. Similar to empathy, they see this as a strength because they can pick up on the environmental cues in the workplace to adjust their behaviors. Depending on where they are or whom they are talking to, they can read the room to better interact with those around them.

Ava reinforces the importance of being self-aware to understand best how to connect in her work environment.

“If we go into [interact with] a [different] culture [than our own] ... myself as an example, I have to ... remember the forms of language, body image, clothing, everything and how you present yourself, what’s good to say, what’s not good to say.” Beth also agreed that being multicultural causes an individual to be self-aware. She explained self-awareness in terms of humility. She stated, “[being multicultural means] being aware of how they want to be identified and remaining [humble]. I think that’s really important, to go about your day thinking about what you don’t know and aware that you don’t know everything.” Awareness of one’s limitations when interacting with others and not making assumptions was considered crucial. Paula spoke about self-awareness as a multicultural individual as being aware of her surroundings and paying attention to who her audience is,

I love being Latina and I love showing that, but there’s places that I don’t [show it]. There are places where I can’t, there’s places where I can or [cannot] blast a song that I really like because I’m *aware* of the people around me.

This self-awareness allows Paula and the others in this study to be mindful of themselves and those around them. Paula explained that being multicultural helps her understand how others might feel. She would consider that understanding and work to adjust her interactions accordingly.

Build Relationships

The participants spoke about how their multicultural background helps them to be better able to build and maintain relationships at work. Their workplaces benefit from the attention these individuals place on building relationships, as they can make others feel connected and valued in their workplaces. Most of these participants work in the educational field, where relationships are critical to being a better employee. These participants mainly talked about how their language gives them an advantage in building relationships as they can speak to people in their native languages and connect on a more personal level. Ben spoke to this as he highlighted the value of building relationships with people at all levels of his organization because he speaks different languages. He explained it this

way, “Being able to speak to everybody in the school from the janitor to the cleaning lady, to the cook, to the parents, who more often just speak only Spanish, right? It’s a huge advantage.” He feels he is a vital asset as an employee because he can “connect and communicate” with other employees at all levels of the organization.

Ali works with students and interacts with parents at work. She explained that because she can speak Chinese, she can establish better relationships with them. She explained, “when I go into those classrooms and interact with those children, I’m speaking Chinese to them. You know, when I greet their parents at the curb, I’m speaking Chinese to them.” While it may not be explicit or included in her job description, she makes it a point to utilize her cultural background and the competencies that come with that identity to ensure those she serves at work feel welcomed and acknowledged. Ali works to connect with cultures different from the ones she holds because, as a multicultural individual, Ali knows how important it is to connect with others. Ali explained,

I picked up a little bit of Hebrew, you know. When I see the kids who I know speak Hebrew, or I see the parents, I’ll use my Hebrew. It doesn’t go far, but at least a good morning, and how are you and things like that.

As a multicultural person, she uses her skills to extend to others to make them feel welcome and a part of the community. Edgar also talked about the value he brings to his workplace since he can speak more than one language. He uses this skill to build relationships with those that work for him. He expressed how important it was for him when he said,

I’m able to communicate with field people, with the people in the trenches, in Spanish. That is very good because I motivate them.... Build up a rapport. That is something important for me, to build a rapport with whoever is out in the field.

Edgar explained the value of having people from different backgrounds in the workplace and wondered why there are not more diverse people in his field who are bilingual.

Support Colleagues

The participants spoke about their ability as multicultural individuals to help their

co-workers in the workplace. Some do this through teaching cultural competency or by utilizing their language skills with their colleagues. These skills benefit the workplace because these participants tend to work in spaces that do not have many multicultural individuals. These multicultural individuals feel their backgrounds give them perspectives and understandings of other cultures and people. They feel that without their presence, workspaces would miss the perspective of those who tend to come from an underrepresented or minority group. This would be detrimental to the workplace and the participants' learning, development, and experience.

Ben talked about how he supports one of his colleagues by encouraging them to learn about the cultural background of his students,

The majority of the professionals working at this school are white, and 85% of their student population is bicultural, bilingual. So, there's a big gap that exists, and it's cultural, and it's linguistic ... so, it's [my role is] helping them understand, put themselves in the shoes of the students and ... [asking them],

have you done enough to build relationships and understand who the student is.

Ben discussed how his cultural competency ties into relationship building and spoke powerfully about how he mainly utilizes his multicultural identity with his colleagues as he advises them on building better relationships with his students. Ben felt that his multicultural perspective allows him to provide advice on connecting with students so that they and their students can have a better classroom experience.

Ava spoke about how she often provides translation to help support both her colleagues and their clients. She explained,

Definitely, the translation part [is work I am expected to do], no matter whether it was or wasn't on my job description; at this moment, it isn't. So that's one of the things that, you know, it's because we're in the heart of [this predominantly minority neighborhood] we get, mostly Spanish speakers, and the language takes precedence.

She further described how it affects her at work, "it definitely does slow me down.... So, yeah, it feels good, but sometimes it's just tiring." Ava is pulled in multiple directions and is expected to provide a service due to her language skills, although it is not part of her job description. She described the situation this way, "Translating definitely does affect me because it does put me in a position where I'm the only one that's doing this [work to provide cultural understanding and communication for my colleagues and clients]." It is challenging to take on this responsibility to fill the increasing demands at work. As Ava mentioned, speaking more than one language isn't considered in her job description; however, her multicultural identity offers essential skills that support her colleagues and clients at work, and her organization seems to require it to operate effectively.

Provide Creativity

Many of the participants talked about how they strengthen their workplace by “thinking outside of the box,” being “creative resources,” and “problem solvers.” As these participants can think from many perspectives, it allows them to take on different angles when solving problems, offering solutions, and being a resource for others in their workplace. These multicultural individuals become creative resources who can solve problems in new or different ways. Without these types of people in the workforce, as Rami said, employees would all be “thinking a hundred times in the same way” rather than approaching things with creativity and different perspectives.

Edgar talked about when he travels abroad to different sites for work, the same resources he used in the U.S. are not available to him, and it requires him to “think out of the box” and be creative, which his less diverse counterparts do not always do. He talked about how supportive it is in his workplace to a multicultural person who brings creativity. He described this creativity as “thinking out of the box ... like when somebody comes with a solution that is very unorthodox, very unusual.” He then elaborates, “it’s because of my background that I can provide the level of creativity. It is a means to resolve a problem ... you know, you just need to be very resourceful.” Edgar explained how in other countries, people learn things in different ways due to their environment. People from one country to the next have different resources, education, and access to things, allowing them to gain a different perspective from others. Rami also spoke about how multicultural people had different approaches to problem-solving when he explained how, in his workplace, holding a different perspective as a multicultural individual helps to “make our job pretty easy.” Because “if you have failed a hundred times ... then maybe [a multicultural person] can give you a better idea, because ... having cultural diversity brings a different way of thinking or doing the same things in a different way, instead of “thinking a hundred times in the same way.” This difference in thinking brings creativity, new approaches, and more efficiency to the workplace.

Stronger Work Habits

Some of the participants talked about how, when they are working, their workstyle and habits in the workplace

can be traced to aspects of their cultural backgrounds. Growing up in specific cultural backgrounds encourages them to have a strong work ethic, be organized, and be efficient, sometimes even more than their peers. Ray explained how his American friends do not understand how his multicultural background encourages him to be so hardworking in his work environment,

American versus Jamaicans, it's just kind of like that for us [Jamaicans]. It's like, what's next? Because we're so used to that hardcore work ethic. When I worked in the military, you know, I mean, I was never worn out before, but they wore me down because like they were like, oh, this guy has a really good work ethic.

He discussed how in his previous job in the Navy, he was overworked compared to others who did not work as hard. His work style and habits were exploited, forcing him to learn how to balance working hard and taking care of himself by finding healthy boundaries. Other participants also noted that they have a solid work ethic, and it has been significant because they cared about doing well in their jobs, even if it came with consequences, as it did for Ray. He struggled to establish a healthy work/life balance.

Ali also talked about how her multicultural background influences how she gets things done at work and how it may look in practice.

I tend to be very organized and really fast with, you know, putting together complex schedules, for example, you know, because I grew up in Germany, and Germans, you know, the spaces were very bureaucratic and ... boundaries are leaning towards the solid. So that deadlines, all these things, you know, are pretty holy to me ... I'm used to doing that.

Ali recognizes that the cultures she has operated in, due to her upbringing, have influenced her work style and approach to work. Like Ray and Ali, Beth also talked about how her cultural background influences how she communicates with others while she is at work,

My working style is a lot more Japanese ... who I'm talking to is important [because in] Japanese culture, and East Asian culture in general, there is a hierarchy [depending on] who you're talking to. When speaking

the English language, it's hard to express my respect [in the Japanese way]. My emails are super respectful because the Japanese language is very passive, and you have to place yourself in what they say is a humble position so that you put someone else on top [over yourself, out of respect].

In addition to the way she communicates, she also spoke about how her workstyle is fast and helps her to accomplish goals,

My work style definitely is Japanese, like chop-chop urban style. My goal is to really create harmony and make sure we achieve the goal. That does have to do with my background. I do think that a lot of things fall on my plate because I am able to deliver.

While her respectful and efficient way of working due to her Japanese background benefits the workplace, she feels that she may receive more work because she works faster than others and can achieve goals harmoniously.

Bring Cultural Competency

According to the participants in this study, people who are not multicultural do not hold the same level of cultural competency as those who are multicultural. Cultural competency for them means that multicultural individuals have many of the skills already discussed and, as such, provide many benefits to the workplace. Without these multicultural individuals who are poised to interpret the nuances of how people from diverse backgrounds interact and communicate in the workplace, organizational leaders may not understand what individuals are experiencing and may lose sight of its impact.

Some of these participants' colleagues were described as simply lacking cultural competency. They suggested that their colleagues tend to have less empathy, be less self-aware, and do not understand others in ways multicultural people can. The participants noted that their attributes are skills they try to teach their colleagues because they see it can be detrimental to the workplace and all employees without these skills.

Ben spoke about using his cultural competency to teach his colleagues how to be better teachers in the classroom. He noted that the school he works for is predominantly Latino; however, the teachers he works with

are all white; he then explained that “because a lot of my teachers are white, and they haven’t had many experiences working with people that may be different from them ... They might say something or do something that might trigger a student right?” He expressed that this difference in cultural experience or understanding may be challenging when he noted,

That’s why you need to put aside your different facades or different roles and really talk to students on a one-on-one level so you can understand where they’re coming from and then [also] seeing what issues that person has at home, right?

When talking further about this experience, Ben also explained that as an instructional coach, he is not necessarily paid to teach cultural competencies to teachers. However, Ben is aware of the importance of how not understanding identities outside of one’s own may negatively affect others. He knows that being conscious of this impact may allow for a better teacher and student environment. For example, he further shared about a particular coaching experience and the challenges it came with,

I have one teacher who was a former police officer. He needs to understand that maybe from where he’s from, a police officer is seen as someone as a positive figure and a role model in the community; however, some students might have a negative reaction to him because of things they’ve experienced. That’s what I need to tell [teachers], like, you need to be aware of these things, right? ... this comes down to cultural competency and empathy. That [skill] is highly needed in the teacher profession, but oftentimes, because of the lack of talent, or the lack of support, the structure [to support] teachers isn’t there.

Ben explained the importance of understanding why specific cultural backgrounds respond differently to certain social situations, like the students of color at his school having triggered responses to police officers. He also highlighted that the skills needed to understand how to be culturally responsive are generally lacking in education. The support is not there for educators.

Beth described how in her workplace, which is also an

education context, her colleagues do not have the cultural competency to communicate with students in a way that makes sense, for example, the Chinese students they advise. She noted, “In terms of communication, advisors kind of struggle, and I did find myself having to be in that position of explaining like this [challenge] could be cultural.” She further explained the nuances of communicating with Chinese students,

Email is not a thing back home [in China]. Plus, even making calls like, it’s so easy to get spam calls in China, like people would not even pick up your call. Even if you’re in America, people are not going to pick up.

Beth also expressed how critical it is to know how others receive information, considering their cultural background. Beth further noted, “It’s just really ironic because, more often than not, we use communication methods that don’t align ... then advisors complain of getting no response, or that communication is just off [with international students].” Beth’s comments show that having insight into multiple cultures allows for a better understanding of communicating in practical ways that improve access. She finds herself in a position where she needs to be a cultural facilitator for her colleagues to help them understand why their approaches are not working with students. Like the other participants, Beth helps to build competencies for other co-workers, even though it is not a responsibility that is part of her formal job requirements. Still, it makes her successful in her job and benefits those around her, offering support to her colleagues and students.

Being able to offer support to colleagues was seen as a benefit for Paula, who explained that because the teachers she coaches mostly come from just one cultural background, either White or African-American, they do not always understand the background of their students who come from mixed backgrounds,

If we’re talking about black students, are we encompassing people from other nations that happen to be Black, African, Caribbean ... because when [the teachers] see Black and Latino, that’s really murky [for them to understand]. Latino encompasses a lot of cultures and a lot of races, and so does black. Black

and African American can be entirely two different things.

Paula talked about how she tries to teach this cultural competency to others when she coaches them. It is a challenge for her because her efforts do not always stick with the teachers since they do not have that experience themselves of being multicultural, and they do not necessarily value diversity.

Summary

Through their stories, the participants explained the various traits they bring to the workplace. These skills and traits are described as having empathy, self-awareness, and a strong ability to build relationships through language. They also use their knowledge and background as a multicultural individual to support their colleagues to gain the ability to be more culturally responsive. Their work style and habits enable them to have a strong work ethic and be organized and efficient. The traits multicultural individuals typically spoke about revolved around understanding themselves, understanding others, and supporting their colleagues and workplaces in various ways. While everything they bring to the table benefits their workplace and makes them essential to their organizations, the participants' skills and traits do not come without a cost. In the following sections, the participants spoke more specifically about the challenges their multicultural identity causes them at work.

Challenging Workplace Experiences

The individuals in this study explained the many challenges they experience in the workplace regarding their multicultural identity. Their comments provide a deeper understanding of how they must navigate their identity when faced with less-than-ideal interactions at work. The main themes that emerged as challenges were feeling "othered," experiencing microaggressions, lacking diversity, limited professional development, and suffering from an impostor syndrome.

Feeling Othered

Participants described their experiences as "different" and feeling like they were the "other." This feeling was believed to be detrimental to the workplace as it caused them not to feel included or acknowledged in their

workplaces. This feeling of being “other” has not allowed the participants to connect with the people in their workplaces in a way that made them comfortable being themselves. In addition, participants explained the need to overcompensate to feel like they belong and to be taken seriously in their workplace. They did not feel like they were treated the same as those around them, which caused them feeling of otherness.

Ali described her feeling of being othered at work due to her ethnic and racial appearance and background when she said, “I realized that I am not [part of the dominant culture]...and I wasn’t being necessarily treated the same. I was detecting elements of my otherness time and time again, and I wondered why that was.” She explained how she was the only Asian person in her workplace and how obtaining a more formal administrator role made her feel different, “it didn’t bother me as much.” Ali described how having a position of power after becoming an Administrator allowed her to feel more comfortable being a minority in her work environment. However, even in a position of power, the feeling of “other” did not go away for Ali altogether.

Edgar felt that he needs to work much harder to prove that he belongs in his role. He makes it a point to be careful about how he talks or writes to be taken seriously as a professional.

I feel that I need to work like 110% or 120% more to prove my position ... The use of words. I put an emphasis on them, making sure that I use words that are at the professional level, emails that I write, the reports that I write. They need to be more explicit or clear.

The dual side of Edgar’s challenging experience is that because he works hard to be considered an excellent serious professional, people end up requesting him to work on special projects. He explained,

I am honored when people say, ‘We want Edgar to work on this project.’ It blows my brain away. It humbles me. But again, I know that is the payback of all the efforts that I’ve done over the years.

People do take notice of the hard work that he does.

However, others do not see how this hard work comes from

a feeling of having to prove himself to feel that he belongs or that he fits in as a professional. While this hard work can have a professional benefit, it comes at a personal cost of never feeling that he is enough or that he belongs.

Like Edgar, Pascal experiences feelings of inferiority due to how others respond to his cultural background. He explained it this way, “You always have that feeling that you’re inferior to others. So, there’s a good part of being different [from others], and then, at the same time, you feel that you’re kind of like the [insider].” He also expressed that he needs to work harder to be understood and appear competent,

When English is your second language, sometimes you really think that either the message didn’t go through because you made a little mistake of spelling or grammar in your email. You feel that people think less of you, which usually is not true. But in your mind ... it’s like a feeling of being incompetent.

Pascale went back and forth as he discussed the tension between whether or not the feelings he had were due to being multicultural or if it just may be in his head. He was clear that he had experiences related to his multicultural identity in the workplace that resulted in him feeling the need to overcompensate. These feelings were connected to him differently or “othered.”

Paula also talked about how she knows she is “other” when she defines what it means to be multicultural, “I know I’m more than one [culture] because I felt like other. So, given the fact that I felt like ‘other’ in circumstances, like cognitively, makes me think that I am more than one culture.” She also noted how even with other minority groups, they let her know she is still “other” with them as well when she said, “I am less ‘other’ with Black female teachers [compared to the Caucasian staff although,]. I’m still ‘other,’ and they still let me know like, ‘Hey, you’re a minority, but you’re not a *minority*.’” Paula noted that the other minority groups at work are not from multicultural backgrounds. She feels that while they may understand what it means to be a minority, they still have a limited perspective. They do not understand what she brings to the table at work or how her background is a part of what makes her feel “othered.”

Prevalence of Microaggressions

The participants in this study described the experience of microaggressions in their day-to-day work life and the challenges they bring. Experiencing microaggressions at work causes participants to keep their guard up, work harder or change their appearance to look “respectable” in the eyes of others. It causes them to spend time explaining to others why their actions are not inclusive or kind, and it minimizes the value of their backgrounds and all the skills they bring to work. Microaggressions cause the participants to have unpleasant experiences at work that they wish they did not have.

As an Asian woman, Ali felt others made assumptions about her because of her physical appearance. She provided the following example, “If I had an Asian child on my hand that I was walking into school, and I was picking up another child, right after, they would ask me, ‘Oh, is that your baby?’ and I’d be like, seriously?”

Another participant, Ray, talked about the microaggressions he experienced, particularly racial slurs. He explained, “I was called the N-word so many times in the military. I’ve never been called the N-word until the military.” Although that environment was different from other jobs he had in educational settings, he feels that in education, there is more of a façade of being aware and inclusive. Still, he experienced microaggressions from his colleagues. He stated it this way,

People [of color] like me had to be dodging [people] in the workplace [to not deal with inappropriate comments]. Or they would say [hurtful] stuff, and I kind of had to pull them aside like, ‘What? Did you really just say that?’

He spoke about how, at least in a military setting, racist comments were more upfront and less hidden, which was easier for him to process than the more subliminal comments and experiences he had in higher education settings.

Paula explicitly mentioned being challenged by microaggressions at work. She stated, “It’s more [about] the microaggressions that I receive [from staff]. I can’t say that being multicultural makes me feel great at work. I [personally] have a positive relationship to it, [but not at

work].” She then explained how at work, people say things to her like, “Oh, I must have misunderstood you. Your English is funny. It’s probably because it’s your second language....” Experiences like this cause her to feel like she must work harder to get her staff to engage in the work during the meetings she runs. She further described other microaggressions that she experienced at work,

Stuff like being compared to like Sofia Vergara, because that’s like the only like Latina on American television that they could compare me to, and not realizing that she plays really silly stereotypes, and something as small as calling me spicy, like, ‘*oh, you’re spicy*’ and, like, no, I’m not spicy I’m just me.

While Paula felt positive about her multicultural identity, she often experienced negative interactions in the workplace due to her cultural background. She identified her experiences as microaggressions based on the stereotypes people have of her and those are based on her cultural and linguistic background. Edgar also spoke about how he experienced microaggressions when he is at work,

I sense people have some sort of doubt [about my role at work] because of the color of my skin ... they’re like, he probably just used to be a carpenter, and now he’s a project manager or whatever. And that’s not the case, you know.

As a Latino architect, unless he dresses in a suit and tie when people see him, they think he is one of the field or construction workers and not a person who is in charge or educated.

For the longest time, I wore a tie—a professional dress shirt with a tie, nice slacks, nice shoes. Over time, I learned that if I just go like this, like a regular Joe, I am the trash bag guy, I am the landscaper, I am everybody, but I’m not an architect. I am not a smart guy. I am not a professional. More than once, they still, to this day, they tell me, ‘Are you here to fix the boiler?’ I just laugh.

Typically, those who hold Edgar’s cultural background work in lower positions, and others assume he cannot possibly be the person in charge. Edgar feels the *need* to look different to gain the respect of those around them in the workplace, which can be taxing. He shared,

I *need* to dress up. You notice that? I *need* to dress. I don't choose to. I *need* to. You see the emotional load in the using of that word? It commands respect with the people around me. When they go to meetings, they say, 'Oh, he's the guy in charge.'

Even after a lifetime in this profession, Edgar still experiences these microaggressions based on assumptions about his cultural background. The beliefs others have of these participants can be mentally and emotionally taxing.

Lacking Representation

The participants spoke about how not having people more representative of diverse backgrounds is detrimental to them as individuals and the communities they serve. The participants are not as motivated at work because they do not see people like them in leadership positions in their environments at work. Moreover, the participants also acknowledge how the people they work with do not represent whom they serve, which means they are less likely to understand the lives of those they serve and sometimes cannot communicate with them. These challenges cause the participants to work more or harder to fill those co-worker gaps.

Working in education, Ben explained how diverse representation is critical as it affects whom the school serves when creating policies and putting them into practice. Yet, his workplace is not diverse and thus not adequately responsive to those they serve.

I think [lack of representation] is the main issue in my workplace. You have to reconsider the policy and procedures in place, and who you're serving, and who you're hiring, right? Then who's designing the procedures? If it's not someone who's representative of the community, they're not even going to think about underlying issues that are occurring on an everyday basis [among those they are serving].

According to Ben and others, those who implement and create policies and procedures do not consider the perspective of the ethnic and racial backgrounds of those they serve. In that case, they will miss aspects of how those they serve understand information, behave, and experience day-to-day life. In Ben's workplace, the people who serve the students do not share the same racial and ethnic

identities as the student body. As a multicultural individual, Ben understands that this is a challenging situation, as those in power are not likely to be able to understand or fully take their perspective.

Beth spoke about how, due to a lack of representation in her workplace, she is expected to support all the Chinese students at work. There are no others who look like her or have the same cultural background. Beth is Chinese-Japanese and strongly identifies with her Japanese background and culture. She shared how she feels her Japanese identity is overlooked at work when she said, “What about my Japanese side? Like, nobody focuses on my Japanese side, and I identify with that a lot, but then any student with a Chinese background would be directly referred to me.” Beth shared how these students then became her sole responsibility,

Everyone’s like, oh, you’re a Chinese student. Go to Beth, but we all do the same thing, like we can all provide the same information ... I was in charge of checking up on and advising Chinese students, even though anybody could do that.

Although anyone could support the students in this space, Beth is the main point of contact due to her multicultural identity. Not only is there a lack of representation for the Chinese students she supports in her workplace, but there is an underlying microaggression or tokenism that impacts Beth’s experience at work.

Like Beth, Ava spoke to the need for more employees in her workplace who look more like her to feel supported. She also takes on extra work being the only Spanish speaker at work, the same way Beth is the only one who can speak Mandarin. Ava talked about this when she said, “Instead of just having one person be the main language speaker, we can definitely hire more people who speak Spanish or other languages.” She described how this experience of being the only Spanish speaker affects her at work. She said, “It forces me to have to be available for pretty much everybody. It kind of affects me. It definitely makes me feel tired.” Ava later described how she does not see people like her in her workplace, so she works hard to fill that need for others. This lack of multicultural representation comes at a cost to her.

Limited Professional Opportunities

Participants reflect on how they have missed out on opportunities to learn or grow in their workplaces due to all the skills they hold as multicultural individuals. Yet, advancement opportunities are offered to others or made more easily accessible to them because they are not engaged in these other activities that require their multicultural skills. If workplaces supported multicultural individuals like they support their colleagues or those they serve, they would have more of an opportunity to grow their capacity in their workplace.

Beth spoke on how her multicultural background has hindered opportunities to learn more about other aspects of her profession. She is expected to be the primary communicator or translator for Mandarin-speaking students. She feels the students should be able to work with any of her colleagues. When she was new in her role, she would help the Chinese students and not speak up about how it made her feel, and the time it took from other work. She explained it this way, “The first few years, I did what I could to just keep my job. It did hinder me on expanding my knowledge on other populations, and on other international student immigration stuff in general” While she may be in the best position to support Chinese students, Beth had to learn how to advocate for herself, so she did not end up being the only person supporting Chinese students causing her to miss out on professional development. She said, “It doesn’t happen too much anymore, and I think that’s also come with my evolution of being able to advocate for myself and trying to ask people to include me more in other types of things.” The onus of responsibility was placed on Beth to advocate for herself.

Ray described many stories about previous employment and how he experienced racism, which hindered his professional learning and growth. He talked about this when he said, “Like I told you before, this guy [I used to work for] would never, ever, provide the education, IRA, or advancement opportunities when I would show interest, so it drove me to quit.” He talked about how people who were white in his workplace would get these opportunities, but the same options would never be offered to him, even when he would ask. Ray had a hard time

developing as a professional in his role because of his challenges in this workplace due to his cultural background, which ultimately caused him to leave this workplace and find something new.

Pascale mentioned feeling he had missed out on growth as a professional because of his cultural background when he said, "I've never felt that I had more work because I was French, but I always felt that there was maybe some kind of reluctance to give me a higher position." He expressed the possible loss of opportunities in his workplace, such as not being promoted, when he said,

I'm going to apply for a position, and I sent the message out to the VP to HR, and I have that feeling somehow that I might not get the job because I'm French. You always have that feeling of not fitting in somehow.

Like Ray and Beth, Pascale feels that opportunities pass him by because of his cultural background, affecting his growth as a professional in his field. Paula also briefly described how lack of professional support and growth has affected her advancement opportunities, "It's very limiting. I feel like my wings are clipped. I don't feel like I could lean on anyone to use as support professionally." Paula talked about how ideal her workplace would have relevant and up-to-date professional opportunities that are more engaging for everyone. She described this when she talked about what she would like to see at work to learn and grow as a professional,

We have to take so much professional development that's boring and dated and just dry. I feel like I would be enthralled and excited if like one of those sessions were about what inclusion looks like in adults. What does it look like in a classroom? What does it mean to be culturally sensitive to children, but also [culturally sensitive] to staff members?

Paula wishes the content they got for professional development was more relatable and meaningful so that she and others would engage more at work.

Summary

Participants all experienced microaggressions and stereotyping and thus held negative feelings about themselves, regardless of the field in which they worked. They all described the lack of cultural understanding and comprehension from their colleagues, the feelings of being othered, a sense of not being good enough, feeling a lack of representation, and sometimes needing to overcompensate in different ways to be taken seriously as a professional in their field. These challenges are related to their colleagues' expectations of their behavior and the feelings they generate in the minds of multicultural individuals. Participants did not mention having any dissonance or negative relationship with their multicultural identity for themselves and instead described these challenges because of the interactions they have in the workplace. Through these stories, we also learn that the context or type of

workplace did not seem to affect the challenges all these multicultural individuals were experiencing. However, it was mainly in the general treatment they received from their fellow employees and employers and how it made them feel.

In the following section, the participants' quotes show the resources they have in their workplace related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which they feel could potentially support their multicultural identity and address the challenges detailed in this section. The respondents in this study elaborate on the resources available and, disappointingly, what is missing.

Availability of DEI Resources and Support in the Workplace

One of the primary ways employers support employees is by investing in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The premise is that DEI encourages spaces and the people in them to be more accepting and mindful of those who are not like them to make everyone feel welcome and safe. It is a practice that promotes diversity, that is, individuals from all kinds of backgrounds. Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs typically provide various resources to support different identities in the workplace. DEI resources and support are valuable for multicultural people because it is intended to inform others about how differences in background between people are a positive thing. These programs also often allow them to share a space and time with others like them to support one another. DEI inherently includes and supports multicultural people and helps to teach others about them. When it is present and embedded throughout the culture and practices of an organization or workplace, it should promote a healthy and fair workplace for employees. When these participants were asked about it, their comments indicated their needs were not so different from person to person.

The participants in this study expressed concerns that their current DEI resources were insufficient to support them adequately. Some noted that there were no resources or were unaware of any available resources. When asked about available DEI support at work, Ben explained, “I don’t think there is anything. I think it’s just kind of like informal groups ... they’re not really out there for people to

be like, oh, like, there's this resource [for employees]." He is not aware of any resources. The ones he knows about are not created by his workplace; they are informal groups that people in his workplace facilitate.

Ava also described how no resources have existed for employees with a multicultural identity in her workplace. There were affinity groups available to employees, but they were external resources that did not pertain to her immediate workplace. She said,

We do have the opportunity to utilize information that is given to us by other organizations, and then it is shared to everybody, but it's optional right now. But there are meet-ups where we can go hang out and meet people from different organizations with the same cultural background.

Since the resource groups are optional, employees must pursue them on their own time, so there is no guarantee that they will participate or have exposure to anything related to DEI. Like Ben and Ava, Rami only spoke about the availability of affinity groups as a resource for their multicultural identity. "They have different groups that I can go to if I'm feeling comfortable with only one set of people." There is no direct training or professional development around DEI implemented in Rami's workplace, but there are external groups he can join if he needs support in certain aspects of his identity at work,

They have provided very good programs like improving English if you feel that you are weak in communication, and then they have different groups like if you are a postdoctoral fellow, then you can enroll for postdoctoral group. If you are from an Asian community, then you can also opt for an Asian community group.

Edgar noted in his workplace, "For whatever [need], we have a resource group, I can just pick up the phone and call, and somebody is going to get back to me and help me out." Edgar talked about how his company does have resources for DEI. Still, there is never any mention of direct training or how these resources are regularly practiced in his immediate workplace. He noted that promoting DEI is an integral part of the image and politics of his workplace as a government company,

Yes, we are a government entity. We need to be having big billboards saying, “*Hey, we are big on inclusion. We are big on diversity.*” We need to be constantly promoting that and also [be the] examples of that.

However, Edgar then goes on to say how more work needs to be done to improve DEI,

“I think we need more work. Especially us guys, the ones that are 40 or over. We grew up in different beliefs from the people who are teens, 20s, or 30s. That [inclusive] language is already being used as they grow up.”

Edgar understands the need for DEI and more work around it, especially as the generations change, especially when the current and younger generations grow up learning DEI-related topics, which older employees may not have learned. Like Rami, Ben, and Ava, Edgar explained that they do not have any training or programming in his immediate workplace. There are many external resource groups for those who want them. However, the employee has to initiate and engage to benefit from or learn more about these affinity groups or resources. These resources do not exist in their immediate workplaces, the available groups are optional, and there is no regularly implemented programming for employees to stay informed.

Ben is generally unaware of any resources his workplace may have available for multicultural individuals. He noted this when he expressed, “I’m trying to think if there’s any actual support groups or like resources that, you know, people, bicultural, multicultural, can go to. I don’t think there is.” He could not think of any DEI information, programming, or training regarding workplace resources or professional development at work. When asked about resources in her immediate workplace, Beth could not think of any available resources to her, “I don’t think that leadership intentionally creates resources for multicultural staff.” In this workplace, the help she is directed to is external, and there is no immediate support for them in their workplace,

I don’t think that leadership creates any resources or personnel to support staff ... if we’re struggling, they always tell us to talk to HR. There are resources that is within our insurance or whatever. But not like within our unit, I would say.

Neither Beth nor Ben can think of anything in their workplace where they can readily access DEI resources or resources that support their multicultural identity. Beth noted the need for more support in DEI overall in her workplace when she stated, “It’s never enough. It’s definitely a good start where we’re getting information that is valuable, and it’s needed. We could do better.” She seems to be okay with what is being offered, but she also believes that her workplace could better address and provide resources in specific areas. She offers the following idea, “We could have those resources or those like professional development days where we train about a specific culture.... So, it’s good, but if we could, we should do better.”

Like most participants, Paula does not have any immediate resources, training, or professional development around her identity or DEI to help her feel fully supported in their role. She is not aware if there are any readily available for her, “Not in terms of diversity, not in terms of inclusion. I often feel like that’s one of the biggest areas of opportunities. Especially because the staff is predominantly white, and the students we serve are predominantly black.” She noted how critical it is in her workplace to have these resources because “we have kids from Jamaica, and parents and kids from different types of black subpopulations, and there’s never anything [to support us] about that.” Paula talked about there being resources for training at a higher level of her district but not in immediate day-to-day spaces at her school,

There isn’t someone that comes in and speaks and provides like a safe space to talk about or ask questions, or provide like a seminar, or even like discourse, amongst staff, like if there are resources, I’m not aware of them.

As Paula said, this is “*one of the biggest areas of opportunity*” for her workplace, so it is clear that more work is needed to achieve DEI in this workplace. She also noted, “They should talk about why diversity is important. That’s the biggest one. I feel like people in my campus, do not even value diversity. They don’t see its benefit.” She noted that there is indifference among the employees around DEI. Diversity is something she wishes their

colleagues would value. Paula expressed a significant need for more or better resources related to DEI in the workplace.

Unlike many other participants, Pascal is the only participant who noted that his company has many resources available to employees around DEI, sometimes to the point where it can be too much to know where to start, “Huge. I mean, sometimes it can be much. I mean, we have [a DEI program], which is once a month, and we had a professional development training for like three days about DEI.” Pascale has monthly training to keep him and his colleagues up on DEI topics for professional development. Even Pascal, who works in a company offering consistent training and resources for their employees, believes that his company could do a better job at being more inclusive. He stated, “I’ve always felt that the DEI in our company is mainly racially oriented ... And I was like, hmm, you know, when we think about diversity, equity, and inclusion, we have to think about all [backgrounds and identities].” While not explicitly stated, there is more work to be done at this organization to provide more inclusivity.

Summary

While some organizations seem to offer some DEI support, as was the case with Pascal, who did have a more robust DEI culture in his workplace, it was clear, according to these participants, that all the workplaces lacked adequate support. Many resources available to participants were external to the organization and not a regular practice in their immediate workplace. Most noted that if there were any resources available to them, they were not aware of them. The most common resource they mostly expressed as available to them were resource or affinity groups. Affinity groups appear to provide a shared space for people who hold the same types of identities and to help one to feel “protected, safe, or good.”, as Rami said. Despite their lack of resources and support, the participants continue to work and do their jobs. They continue to wish for resources to be more available in their immediate workplace. Even though they all work in different types of organizations and carry different multicultural identities, they all noted that their workplaces lacked DEI resources and support.

The Ideal Workplace

Given the many challenges faced by the participants, I asked them to offer their ideas about what a more ideal workplace would be like that would support them as multicultural individuals. They discussed a few ways they felt their multicultural identity could be better understood, acknowledged, and supported. They noted that for their workplaces to become more ideal, their spaces should focus more on cultural competency, increased diversity, healthy communication, and improved DEI training and professional development.

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence is defined as holding diverse values and principles and the ability to practice and hold different behavior and attitudes. Furthermore, it is the ability to value diversity and have self-awareness and adaptability depending on the cultural contexts in which people find themselves (Chiu & Hong, 2005; Cross et al., 1989; Hong, 2010; Thomas et al., 2010). It is a process that develops over time and allows people to hold different frames of knowledge and understanding. Due to the lack of cultural competence in the participants' workplaces, they feel they are treated differently from those in their workplace; they have to teach others how to understand different perspectives. More training in cultural competency is called for in these workplaces. They think they must over-explain to express themselves because they are misunderstood. They even feel like they cannot genuinely express themselves while at work. The lack of this competence in the workplace places undue stress on them, and many noted that if their workplaces had more cultural competence, it would be a better place for them to work.

Ali was clear about what she needed to support her experience at work. She explained, "There are certain individuals in our organization who I wish had more understanding of multiculturalism and, at least in theory, be able to be more responsive to the needs of their employees...." The environment she works in lacks cultural competency, even though she works in a diverse space with people from different cultural backgrounds than her own. She described her workplace as a "traditionally female BIPOC-dominated workspace." However, when discussing

her challenges, Ali explained that culturally responsive behavior is not evident. She said, “I realized that I am not [the dominant culture]. And I wasn’t being necessarily treated the same. I was detecting elements of my otherness time and time again, and I wondered why that was.”

Multicultural individuals like Ali sense when they are not acknowledged, understood, or recognized. According to Ali, building “cultural responsiveness” among all employees could address the adverse interactions in her workplace and provide a more ideal environment.

In recalling a series of culturally insensitive experiences at work, Beth said a more ideal workplace would be one where she was not tokenized or did not have to overexplain her experiences and feelings as a multicultural individual for others to understand. “I feel that the support that I would like to get is [to] not get those comments, like, ‘*Chinese students go to Beth,*’ or not to have to overexplain what I’m feeling, or what I’m going through.” She described the “open-door culture” that exists in her workplace. While the doors are physically open in that anyone can speak to an advisor at any time in their office, giving the appearance of openness, Beth feels the doors are not genuinely open to her because of the lack of cultural competency and sensitivity in the workplace. Beth wishes her peers would not do the things, the microaggressions that cause these negative feelings in the workplace. “I don’t need them to have their ‘open doors’ because they *should* have doors open. It’s more in terms of stopping what you’re doing that’s creating not-so-good feelings.” This kind of change would then create an ideal working situation for Beth.

Like Ali and Beth, Rami reiterated that a more ideal workplace would have more cultural competency. He firmly believes “the person’s background should not matter.” All people should have the same opportunity and chance to succeed and do well, and others should try to be more culturally competent and sensitive. He gives examples of things people comment on in his workplace that he feels are insensitive and irrelevant to the workplace. He stated,

I think they should be a little bit more sensitive towards people from different cultures. They should

also accept that this person can be vegan, or this person cannot or doesn't eat beef, or they eat stuff with their hands. I mean, they should be a little more sensitive to [difference].

Rami also described how sometimes being a multicultural person means that you do not always connect deeply with those around you in the workplace because of the lack of cultural awareness and competence in colleagues. He explained what this is like for him when he said,

When we go out for lunch, or we discuss our daily activities. I mean, that time, it is not a very comfortable thing because [my colleagues] don't understand our jokes, because it is in our [Indian] context, and then they also don't share some jokes [with us] because we might not end up laughing, or something like that. There are some barriers which restrict us to be a complete person.

Sometimes being multicultural leads to discomfort, misunderstanding, and an inability to be authentic in the workplace, which may also be connected to how one shows up as a professional. The consequence of this, as Rami explained, is that “we might not be giving 100%, but then yeah, maybe 70 to 80%, we will be able to give [of our personality at work].”

Diverse Representation in the Workplace

Some participants discussed how a more ideal workplace would have more people who look like them in their job and leadership roles. Diverse representation in a workplace allows individuals to feel supported because they see people who look like them. Additionally, employees feel they can achieve those positions when people who look like them are in leadership positions. Representation supports and empowers people in their workplaces. One of the previous sections, Challenging Workplace Experiences, discussed how the participants noted a lack of representation, which poses many challenges for them. It is not surprising that they would describe a more ideal workplace as more representative of their cultural backgrounds.

It is valuable for Ava and her peers to see themselves represented in their organization. Ava feels that more representation would encourage and motivate them as

employees of the organization. Ava calls for more information on what people like her have experienced in her workplace and their achievements. As a multicultural woman, she stated,

I would love to see some form of history [of representation] from within the organization. How many people who have a similar cultural background as myself have gone up that ladder? How many of them have reached not just entry-level but management or executive level? I think that would encourage me a lot, and not just myself, but definitely encourage a lot of us who are working there.

Additionally, she noted, “we need to remind ourselves that it is important to have leaders that look similar to the community you’re serving. It’s very influential and definitely beneficial for both the organization and the community.” Ava’s realization of the lack of representation that exists for her makes her feel “kind of sad.”

Beth also spoke about the value of having diverse groups of people at work “because we spend so much time at work. I think that I need to be in an environment where the staff also reflects diversity, some sort of diversity, ethnically.” It is essential for her to see diverse people in leadership roles. She said, “What is most important is that I think it’s a common observation [to me] that leadership typically doesn’t reflect the staff that are working for them.” Representation in the workplace would make the space ideal for her because, without this aspect in her workplace, she often feels that she ends up having extra work or feels misunderstood as there are no others who are like her around to support her.

Edgar also spoke about the importance of representation and how it helps to motivate and support his employees. He said, “your work as a Latin, you know, whatever you’re doing, is representing our culture.” For him, he expressed that representation is also important, and he would like to see more of it in his field and workplace when he said,

[Speaking Spanish] helps me out a lot because about 75% of the people in this field speak Spanish. You know that I find very few engineers out there, very few architects, very few people in the professional

field that are Latins. Where do we find more of these guys?

Edgar would ideally like a workplace where he is not the only Spanish-speaking Latino architect. If Edgar had more people like him in his workplace, it would support him in working with the people he manages in the field. Edgar would appreciate having other architects who also speak Spanish and represent Latinx culture at his job.

Healthy Communication

For their workplace to become more ideal, these participants felt that having healthy communication in the workplace was important. The ability to speak up and have an open and constructive discussion would support multicultural individuals and all employees in the workplace. They mentioned throughout the interviews how healthy communication would provide comfort, allow them to work better, and feel supported as a professional and an individual. Ali spoke about how a more ideal workplace would be one where she would have good communication with her colleagues; in addition to the cultural competency noted earlier, she said,

It's a very complicated workspace, and you need some, not just cultural responsiveness, but also a willingness [for everyone] to be self-reflective, you know, and communicate. And that's something that I wish some people in the organization would have more of.

In a workplace that would be more ideal, Ali would work with people who are culturally responsive, reflective, and could communicate well, so there is less of a disconnect in understanding those from different cultural backgrounds. As discussed in this chapter, Ali and others said their colleagues often made assumptions about them. If there was better communication among all colleagues, microaggressions might be reduced.

In describing the ideal workplace for a multicultural individual, for Ray, it is about communication. When asked, he mentioned that he had found his ideal place at his current position because “[My boss] highlights us and our achievements. It's like a fairytale. It's like I'm working at a fairytale job.” Ray feels celebrated and supported as an individual and professional. His boss, while they do not

share the same ethnic background, ensures he has a positive relationship with his employees largely because he communicates. He values talking through any issues. “For me, or anybody, he [my boss] will take the bullet for us, and then, he will be like, ‘Hey, let’s talk about this so that it doesn’t happen in the future.’” Ray appreciates that he works in an environment where they openly communicate and he is seen as a person, not just an employee. In his previous work experiences, he never felt his multicultural identity was supported. Communication is essential for Paula as well. She explained that having the comfort or ability to speak up about things would be ideal for her. She would feel supported. She said,

I feel like support would be me being comfortable and saying, ‘Hey, I feel like this stuff is really insensitive.

Can you find someone to come talk to the staff and educate, like in a safe space?’ That would be support.

When colleagues expressed inappropriate things, she has not able to have a healthy conversation to address them in the workplace. Her colleagues ignore her when she does try to speak up and make efforts to address the issue. She described her reluctance to speak up this way, “I don’t want to be that person [to speak up]. Like I feel like I do that in small moments every day. I feel like when I do speak up, it’s [dismissed].” Paula’s need and desire for healthy communication in the workplace, she believes, would also help to address some of the other challenges discussed, as previously referenced when the participants spoke on microaggressions and being othered.

Summary

These participants desire greater cultural competency, DEI support, representation, and healthy communication. They all described that these factors would contribute to creating an ideal workplace because it would improve how they are treated or seen at work. No one spoke about salary, physical items, or anything outside of how their multicultural identity is experienced and affected in the workplace. Again, regardless of these participants’ workplaces, they all desire similar things when they envision an improved and ideal workplace.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of the nine interviews, the

participants spoke to five major themes: how they define multicultural identity, how their multicultural identity impacts their work, how their workplace conditions affect and challenge their experiences, the types of DEI resources and support available to them, and what the workplace would ideally be like for them. Through the comments of these participants, we learn about the interactions multicultural individuals have had and are currently experiencing in the workplace. We also gain a deeper understanding of how multicultural individuals define and impact the workplace and how the workplace supports and challenges multicultural individuals. Regardless of the type of multicultural identity participants held and irrespective of the kind of workplace context in which they worked, they all described similar understandings of being multicultural, similar experiences, and similar needs for more support. There was slight variation across individuals in their work-life experiences.

In the following chapter, there will be a deeper discussion of these findings and their implications for our understanding of multicultural individuals in the workplace. Chapter five will also elaborate on why this research will help multicultural people, their peers, employers, leaders, and organizations. It also discusses how my own experiences as a multicultural individual have led me to focus on this research to learn more about the importance of the multicultural experience at work. I discuss how multicultural individuals can be better supported and motivated at work and what needs to be learned to understand their workplace experience better. Chapter five will also discuss the study's limitations and provide recommendations for future research to learn more about multicultural employees in the workplace. □

CHAPTER FIVE ANALYSIS & CONCLUSIONS

Previous research that has studied how individuals experience work has been mainly within the fields of business and psychology and utilized quantitative methods such as surveys and scales to understand how individuals are affected by their environment (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Hong, Y., Benet-Martínez, V., et al., 2003; Yampolski

et al., 2013, 2016). This study was designed instead to understand the social factors that account for the work experience of multicultural individuals. Using a sociological lens and qualitative methods, individuals shared their experiences as to why and how their multicultural identity has been affected by their work environment and how they have affected the workplace. This study clarifies that the dynamic between the workplace and an individual's identity is shaped by an individual's sense of their multicultural self, their attitudes, and dispositions, as well as those of their work colleagues, their efforts at work, and the workplace context. This body of research contributes to our understanding of the following: (a) how multicultural people define themselves, (b) what they feel they bring to the workplace and the challenges they face, (c) how their workplaces affect them, and (d) their suggestions as to how to create a more ideal workplace that is responsive to all employees.

National statistics on employment, as it relates to racial and ethnic backgrounds, have not adequately considered multicultural individuals in the workplace. When multicultural individuals come to the workplace, they come from various ethnic or racial backgrounds. It is not unusual for organizations or leaders to know little about them and the assets they bring, and the potential challenges that might emerge. This research shows us that individuals with a multicultural identity contribute to their workplace in many ways that others cannot. In turn, these individuals also experience challenges and discrimination in various ways. It is essential to note that the participants did not mention having any dissonance or negative personal relationship with their multicultural identity. Instead, they described the challenges they faced as a result of their experiences in the workplace as they interacted with their peers.

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism (1978), mentioned in chapter two, helps explain how social interactions affect what people understand and know. The stories told by the participants in this study highlight the importance of positive workplace interactions. These multicultural individuals described how interactions made them feel they were over-utilized, undervalued, and not

taken as seriously compared to their colleagues. As a result, they were stressed, and some felt “burned out.”

The results of this research are helpful for leaders and organizations who have multicultural individuals working for them to be better informed in knowing how to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This research also helps support multicultural individuals so their skills can be best leveraged to benefit the individual and the workplace while honoring their backgrounds. This research is both essential and critical because it provides a more personal understanding of the multicultural experience from the multicultural people themselves, which to date, is lacking in research. It is also valuable because knowing how to provide this group of individuals with more significant equity and inclusion will inherently benefit all other groups, multicultural or otherwise, in the process. When organizations and leaders treat their multicultural employees in a way that respects a person’s culture, it provides a positive workspace for people to interact. The stories told by these nine individuals offer a critical picture of how leaders and organizations could better support them, leverage their skills and knowledge, and interact with them in a way that would be inclusive of their multicultural identities.

The following sections will discuss further insights and implications of the findings detailed in chapter four. They will also provide recommendations to leaders and organizations about multicultural individuals in the workplace. Additionally, the limitations of the research and recommendations for future research conclude the chapter.

Discussion and Implications

Multicultural Identity Defined

In studying multicultural individuals and their work experiences, the first objective was to learn how they defined being multicultural. The participants in this study confirmed previous definitions of what it means to be multicultural. Previous research has suggested that the main aspects of being multicultural are: (a) strongly identifying with two or more ethnic or racial cultures from any background, (b) being fluent in a language other than English, meaning one can speak, read, and write proficiently in two or more languages, (c) have lived in

more than one country for at least one year, and (d) practicing more than one culture's values, behaviors, and traditions (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016). When the participants were asked about their definition, they concurred with this previous research, stating that what makes an individual multicultural are: life experiences, such as living abroad, speaking multiple languages, and practicing the habits and traditions of other cultures. This alignment of definitions is critical because it helps validate the previous research and the statements from these respondents.

The participants went further, however, to explain that multicultural individuals can inherit their multicultural identity from family or from where or how they grew up. In other words, multicultural identity can be formed from lived experiences or can be inherited. These comments offer a more sociological understanding of multicultural identity in that identity can be constructed from lived experiences through interactions with other people. It also recognizes the vital role that context plays in shaping identity. The type of multicultural background an individual may have can change depending on their environment, experiences, and interactions.

The most critical aspect of how participants defined multicultural identity was the sense they felt in interactions with their colleagues and employer of being "different," as an "other," or not part of the dominant culture or group. This point resounded throughout all the interviews. Multicultural individuals do not always share the dominant group's language, culture, and values of the society in which they live. They often hold backgrounds that many participants described as simply "different." All participants felt great pride in their multicultural identity, but their experiences were not always favorable because others treated them differently due to their multicultural backgrounds. This difference in treatment resulted in some negative work experiences. It caused fatigue, a feeling of not belonging, and a sense of having to be responsible for extra work outside their existing responsibilities.

Knowing how attitudes and dispositions socially construct one's sense of self in the workplace is critical, as

it can inform the support organizations should provide for their diverse employees. People's identities and well-being are formed and shaped by their interactions with others in their environment. Learning from the experiences of these multicultural individuals calls for greater attention to a cultural transformation that is healthy and supportive for all employees. This type of cultural change means that workspaces must create an environment where people are proud to work. This kind of change could result in employees being more motivated and productive. These multicultural individuals always struggled to feel good enough. They felt challenged in handling tasks outside their job description but were called upon to take them up because they had language skills and cultural competency that others did not. The following section elaborates on how these experiences impacted the workplace for participants.

Multicultural Identity and the Work Environment

Through their storytelling, the participants explained how their skills as multicultural individuals allowed them to contribute in specific ways. The main attributes that they felt contributed to their workplaces were being empathetic, having a strong sense of self-awareness, building strong relationships with a variety of others in the workplace, providing creativity, and bringing a strong work ethic. The participants typically spoke about how understanding themselves allowed them to understand others.

According to the multicultural individuals in this study, they also brought a degree of cultural competence that seemed to be missing in their workplaces. The participants felt that their skills and competence made others feel welcome, supported, and understood. Cultural competency can be defined as holding diverse values and principles and the ability to practice and hold different behavior and attitudes. Furthermore, it is the ability to value diversity, self-awareness, and adaptability depending on their cultural contexts. It is a process that develops over time and allows people to hold different frames of knowledge and understanding (Cross et al., 1989). Cultural competence allowed the participants to engage in the workplace in ways that support themselves, their colleagues, and those they serve in their jobs. It also brings

awareness and skills, allowing participants to work more effectively and efficiently. The participants note that they leverage their skills to support colleagues who often do not share their cultural competency. The participants were clear that their peers and colleagues did not have the same capacity for cultural competency. This lack of cultural competency often caused the multicultural participants to be left with additional work, face higher expectations, and facilitate awareness among others. This can be a problem for organizations as it may also cause what the multicultural individuals in this study described as feeling disconnected, misunderstood, or “othered.”

From a sociological perspective, the interactions they experienced challenged their identity. It was, in some cases, isolating. This finding is critical for employers and leaders to pay attention to as it is essential to be mindful of the unspoken expectations placed on multicultural individuals and the undue burden that comes with that type of responsibility. The following section looks more closely at this challenge and others that the multicultural individuals spoke about in their interviews. It shows why it is crucial to understand how their work experiences result from interactions and the support available or not available to them.

Challenging Workplace Experiences

The analysis of the participant’s interviews as they spoke about the challenges they have experienced due to their multicultural identity at work is informative, as participants expressed these challenges as something they are accustomed to encountering. What was apparent throughout the interviews was that their skills and abilities – those that made the participants feel they were contributing to their workplaces – came with a cost. As the participants spoke about their challenges, their stories provided a deeper understanding of how they needed to navigate their identity when facing less-than-ideal interactions at work. Their experiences and interactions with their peers caused them to adjust their cultural backgrounds, which could influence identity integration. Identity integration is believed to affect the well-being of an individual (Yampolski et al., 2016). If an individual begins dissociating from the multicultural identity and does

not experience or see their multicultural backgrounds as integrated any longer due to their experiences, this could result in diminished well-being for multicultural individuals.

Attempts to negotiate how they should present or utilize their identity in certain situations occurred to address and avoid the challenge of feeling “othered.” These multicultural individuals explained experiencing microaggressions, a lack of representation, and limited professional growth and opportunities. All participants experienced stereotyping and negative feelings about themselves regardless of their field or type of workplace. These stories taught us that the field or workplace type did not matter. All participants across all the workplace contexts faced expectations and engaged in interactions with their colleagues that they described showed a lack of cultural understanding and comprehension. As a result, they typically felt othered, felt a sense of not being good enough, felt a lack of representation in leadership, and sometimes felt that they needed to overcompensate in their work habits to be taken seriously as a professional in their field. Many of the participants described feeling overburdened and discriminated against. The following section discusses the resources the participants had available to them and those that were not available to them in their workplace, which ideally could have supported their multicultural identity and addressed the challenges.

Workplace DEI Resources and Support

The lack of availability of organizational resources and support for multicultural individuals affected the experiences of these participants. As evident throughout the participants’ responses, they faced many challenges, including a lack of resources or even an awareness of resources that could have supported them. Most of the participants noted that if there were resources available to them, they were not aware of them. Pascal, who was somewhat unusual in that he had a more robust DEI culture in his workplace, noted that more could be done to strengthen these practices. The only resources some of them mentioned they had available to them were resource or affinity groups. As Rami describes, “if you are a postdoctoral fellow, then you can enroll for a postdoctoral

[community] group. If you are from an Asian community, then you can also opt for an Asian community group.” Affinity groups provide a shared space for people with the same identities, which may help one to feel “protected, safe, or good.” While these groups provide a safe common space, it does not necessarily provide the proper learning and understanding required for those in that common space to know how to be equitable or inclusive in diverse spaces.

Moreover, affinity groups are inherently less diverse as they are typically composed of people who strongly identify with one particular social identity. They intend to support and uplift that identity over understanding the identities outside that space. While these spaces are a great resource to support those who are interested, it does not ensure that those who are not multicultural and could benefit from a better understanding of DEI will be exposed to the knowledge they need to build a work culture that practices diversity, equity, and inclusion effectively and successfully. Even with this lack of resources, the participants continue to work and do their jobs as is. Their needs differed from person to person, but they all expressed the need for and importance of more DEI resources, training, and awareness. Even though they all work in different types of organizations and carry different multicultural identities, they all note that their workplaces lacked DEI resources. DEI programming and resources are necessary because they help to cultivate understanding between people of different backgrounds. From their perspective, having strong training and resources in the workplace DEI would teach, encourage, and support growth for all employees in the areas the participants felt their colleagues lacked, such as cultural competency, representation, and healthy communication. They all described that these factors would create a more supportive, ideal workplace because it would improve how they are treated and seen at work.

I was able to learn more about the work experience of multicultural individuals because the participants spoke about the social construction of their experience: the interactions they engaged in, the structural arrangements that were lacking to support them, and the attitudes and actions of those they work with and for. As a result of this

analysis – lessons were learned that could inform employers and leaders of organizations attempting to create a more equitable workplace. The following section will explain how the socially constructed experiences of these nine multicultural individuals ultimately recommend that leaders and organizations provide improved resources for cultural competency, representation of diverse people, and healthy communication in the workplace.

Recommendations for Employers, Leaders, and Organizations

This study has implications for the work that leaders and organizations do as they attempt to address the diverse needs of their employees. Multicultural individuals in the workplace need improved policies and procedures to support them and improve the experiences of all workers. As pointed out by the participants, some main areas of improvement are training and professional development around DEI for improved cultural competency, more excellent representation of diverse people, and healthier communication in the workplace, which are discussed further in the following sections.

Improved Cultural Competency

Multicultural individuals called for improved cultural competence, which is defined as holding diverse values and principles and the ability to practice and hold different behavior and attitudes and the ability to value diversity, have self-awareness and adaptability depending on the cultural contexts in which people find themselves (Chiu & Hong, 2005; Cross et al., 1989; Hong, 2010; Thomas et al., 2010). It is a process that develops over time and allows people to hold different frames of knowledge and understanding. Due to the lack of cultural competence in the participants' workplaces, the individuals in this study felt they were treated differently. As a result, they had to teach others how to understand and respect different perspectives. The absence of adequate training resulted in negative work experiences for these participants. Participants felt they had to overexplain to express themselves and were often misunderstood or, at times, silenced. Many also felt fatigued and had a sense of having to be responsible for extra work outside their existing responsibilities.

Organizations and their leaders might be better served by providing appropriate professional development in diversity, equity, and inclusion and enriching learning opportunities for all employees. Organizations must recognize their employees' cultural identities and backgrounds to leverage their multicultural individuals' talents and skills effectively. They should do this by not ignoring any aspect of any person's identity. It may leave individuals feeling disconnected, undervalued, or as if they do not belong. When multicultural individuals feel marginalized and not valued for their background, this may hold significant consequences for the well-being of the individual and the organization. The more organizations can genuinely understand and appreciate an individual's cultural background, the more prepared and informed they would be to develop and implement policies that embody DEI.

As employers and leaders work to create a stronger sense of support, equity, and belonging for all individuals, these study participants recommend more DEI training. This advice is critical to pay attention to in the workplace as, without it, multicultural individuals will continue to feel marginalized and unable to contribute fully. Burdened by additional work and lacking compensation creates a poor workplace culture, employee burnout, and turnover. If employers and leaders are more mindful of the unspoken expectations placed on multicultural individuals and the undue stress that comes with this responsibility, they can do more to implement more appropriate training and intervention for their work environments. This mindfulness could result in improved and increased productivity, motivation, and employee dedication to the workplace.

Improved Representation of Diverse People

For the participants, an ideal workplace would be to have more colleagues who look like them so that they would see their backgrounds reflected in those who are in leadership roles. Representation in a workplace creates a sense of support and provides a visual sign that advancement is possible for employees who look like them. Representation supports and empowers people. Since the participants in this study did not see diversity represented, they became less motivated at work. This lack of

representation may be detrimental to multicultural individuals' self-esteem and productivity and, therefore, may negatively affect the work communities in which they are a part. These participants also pointed out that their backgrounds were not represented in the people they worked for. Often this resulted in dissonance, a lack of understanding about the lives of those they serve. They were less effective in communicating with them. Employers and organizational leaders can learn from this. Improving hiring practices that support diversity seems essential.

Moreover, employees need more significant support and resources when taking on more work than others due to being the only person who is like them in their work environment. If employers and leaders are more mindful and intentional about how they hire employees and the types of teams they build, diversity could better reflect the people they serve. Inclusion could make all employees feel more valued. Improved or increased representation would allow employees more equity in their workloads. It would also improve their sense of belonging to their workplace as there would be others they would feel are similar to them or to whom they can relate.

Healthier Communication

These participants called for better communication in the workplace. The ability to speak up and have an open and constructive discussion would better support these multicultural individuals. They mention how healthier communication would provide comfort and allow them to work more effectively in their workplaces. If employers provided the resources for healthy communication, their employees would experience improved self-awareness and empathy for others. The participants proved to be skilled in these aspects, making them powerful relationship-builders in addition to their ability to speak multiple languages, allowing them to communicate with more people from different backgrounds. However, they need a better communication structure within their workplace.

Participants in this study called for improved and healthier communication systems with their colleagues that values their opinion, listens to them, and makes them feel valued in their workplace. Employers and leaders must first

listen to their employees to understand their needs, which is a critical aspect of communication. Employers and leaders can then work to bring in outside professionals or hire new permanent employees to train their current employees to have healthy communication in their workplaces.

Implementing training and development in the workplace around communication will not only improve the sense of belonging of those in the workplace, but it will also provide an improved understanding of people who are different.

Learning how to communicate healthily in the workplace may shift the culture of that environment for the better to be more inclusive of all the people who are a part of it.

By addressing the needs of multicultural individuals, employees and leaders must also provide more diversity, equity, and inclusion for those around them. By providing DEI training, development, and resources for employees, these organizations should be able to improve cultural competency, increase the representation of diverse people, and strive towards healthier communication for all their employees. By addressing the needs of multicultural individuals, leaders will provide an improved environment and work culture for all employees allowing their organization to thrive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research finds that organizations, their leaders, and employees can all benefit from becoming more culturally competent, improving communication skills, and having a greater representation of diversity in the workplace. These factors can be achieved by providing regular DEI training and resources accessible to everyone in the workplace. Creating a workplace culture that teaches employees the importance and value of multicultural individuals and all diverse people is essential. Improved DEI would lift the burden from multicultural individuals from feeling like they do not belong, that they are not respected as professionals, and needing to overcompensate to fill the needs of others. This improvement could lead to an opportunity for a healthier and more productive group of individuals. If leaders can learn more about creating more inclusive and culturally competent environments, this would create positive experiences for all employees. It could encourage all to feel positive about their workplace

experiences and how they are viewed, leading to better organizational outcomes, such as greater efficiency and, ultimately, a healthier work environment.

The sociological perspective has been critical for this work because it provides the understanding that language and culture, how people experience their environments, how they communicate with one another, and how they understand the world around them (Vygotsky, 1968). These constructs inform how they make meaning of their workplace environment. The development of people and their identities result from their social interactions; therefore, how the participants interacted in the workplace affects their development and multicultural identity.

This dissertation shows how multicultural individuals shape the workplace and how the workplace shapes them. The participants in this study shared the consequences of their challenges in the workplace and how their experiences with their colleagues and the negative feelings made them feel “othered.” Microaggressions, lack of support and resources, being burdened with additional work, and feeling misunderstood are constructed through their interactions and exchanges with their colleagues. These interactions shaped their sense of self in the workplace. These individuals also shaped their workplace context, both in supporting the cultural needs of the workplace and as their attitudes and dispositions affected their willingness to work. What this sociological focus argues is that if organizations provide a workplace that is a healthy and supportive environment, multicultural individuals may have more positive experiences in their workplaces. The following section will discuss the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

Limitations

Studying multicultural identity and multicultural individuals in the workplace is essential as the world continues to become more diverse and workplaces struggle to mediate the tensions across diverse populations. While much was learned about how multicultural individuals in this study affected them in the workplace, additional studies are needed. Longitudinal studies are needed to better assess the workplace dynamics' effects on individuals' overall well-being and the impact these

experiences have on individuals outside the workplace. The more that is learned to understand how these multicultural individuals are impacted, the better they can be supported and the better chance we have as a nation to have citizens that can engage in constructive dialogue. The limitations and recommendations for future research of this study are described in the following sections. They include the lack of literature available on multicultural individuals in the workplace, the need for an improved framework, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the participant's responses, the sample size and selection of participants, and the limitations as a researcher.

Literature

The limitations that exist in this study begin with the literature. There is a significant knowledge gap in the literature on multicultural individuals' lived experiences in organizations. Previous researchers who have studied multicultural identity have not decided on an agreed-upon framework for studying multicultural individuals. Since there is no pre-existing framework to support the study of multicultural individuals, I had to construct a framework drawn from research in psychology and sociology to provide the foundations for how multicultural identity and their actions can be understood. This gap in literature means that this information can add to the field of multicultural research. However, it lacks a robust body of literature that could have helped guide the study. Additionally, since there is no agreed-upon or solidified theory of multicultural identity integration or multicultural experiences in the workplace, this study utilized a sociological lens to understand multicultural identity in a workplace context.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Another limitation of the study was the restrictions set by COVID-19. All my interviews were virtual due to the pandemic, which undoubtedly changed the dynamic compared to interviewing in person. How people interact online and in person is different and could have impacted the process. However, everyone interviewed chose a place they felt comfortable in, and the platform was the same across the nine participants. It is also important to note that the pandemic affected how people worked and interacted in

their organizations before it occurred. Many organizations have moved towards hybrid models or completely working from home. This change in work style means that the way participants interacted before the pandemic may have been experienced differently than during the beginning and later in the pandemic. Some of the participants' comments referred to when they were hybrid or working remotely, meaning that they may have had fewer interactions with colleagues, employers, and leaders during that time. I chose not to influence the interview process with COVID-19-related questions as it was not as critical to the focus of the study, which was their general experience with their multicultural identity at work and not changes to their workplace due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as COVID-19 has affected how we interact as a local and global society, it is critical to note this.

Participant Selection

Another limitation is the method of sampling for the study. Results are not intended to be transferable or generalized to a specific place or specific type of person, except for those of the participants. This is due to the study's sociological lens and qualitative focus to provide this rich account of multicultural identity as these participants reflected on their experiences in their work environment, specifically how their perceptions, interactions, and workplace context constructed their experiences. In this study, participants were chosen through convenience sampling and snowball sampling. How the participants were selected worked well for this study because there was not enough time to reach out to specific organizations or individuals to target; therefore, this resulted in a small sample of willing participants. The pool of people was individuals I knew personally who were willing to help me. It may help to be more removed from the participants in future research and to be more objective about the individuals participating and the data results.

Researcher Limitations

While I have conducted small pilot studies in the past and came in with an understanding of how to conduct research, as a doctoral researcher, I do not have a career in conducting research, making me more of a novice in conducting this type of work. This doctoral research was

also limited in time and in resources available as the work was conducted solely by myself and was accomplished in my free time. I am a full-time student holding a full-time job. Although I am multicultural, I may not have gotten the correct or complete picture of what the interviewees shared. As the social constructivist theory shows us throughout, people make sense of their experiences and how to respond to them based on experienced interactions; therefore, my understandings and interpretations of other experiences could be limited to my interactions and experiences. As Wolcott (2009) noted, even the interviewee could be wrong in their interpretations of their identity or what is being asked of them, which is a consequence of sociological perspective when constructing our understandings of the world around us.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following section will speak to recommendations for future research on multicultural individuals' experiences in the workplace. This research could be improved by expanding the framework, including additional participants such as employers and leaders of organizations, looking at more specific types of contexts, and, lastly, including more data sources for improved reliability and validity. With all four of these improvements, researchers may gain a more robust understanding of the multicultural experience and understand it from a dynamic sociological perspective.

Improved Framework

Re-assessing and expanding the sociological theory and framework used in this research could help to better expand this study to a more significant number of individuals from an even greater diverse population and a greater diversity of work contexts. Looking at these issues from a sociological lens has made clear that organizational structures and culture, as well as the individual actions of those involved, construct outcomes. Therefore, moving forward, I suggest that future studies be designed to utilize this framework and broaden the work to include stakeholders at various levels of an organization. In other words, it would have been helpful to be able to interview these respondents' employers as well as their co-workers. This sociological framework will also allow for a refined perspective on this work. This approach could help

strengthen the case for looking at multicultural individuals in a workplace or a different environment.

Looking at Employers and Leaders

Another aspect that may help to improve future research may be to also look at the employers and leaders of the organization the multicultural individuals are and ask them similar questions around the topic to gain a more holistic view of why multicultural individuals experience the workplace the way they do and how they can be supported. This may provide insight into the challenges of leaders and organizations around their ability or inability to provide the resources needed to support their employees and workplaces in the best way. It would also provide a clearer understanding of workplace relationships between leaders and employees.

Context

It would be valuable in future research on this topic to select specific organizations to study instead of leaving it open to any workplace, as I have done. A more focused setting or environment would help to get deeper into the structural aspects of the organization and the motivations for any change. This may also help and motivate other organizations with a similar make-up and structure to implement the recommendations that result from a study with a more focused workplace setting. However, this doctoral study found that the type of organization does not result in differences in experiences across the participants, which could be another interesting aspect from which to study multicultural identity.

Methods

Triangulation

Future studies would be wise to triangulate the data. Triangulation is a standard method to check for internal validity, utilizing three different sources to compare, contrast, or check against what is found in the three different sources (Glesne, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Wolcott, 2009). The data analyzed may provide triangulation through interviews, focus groups, surveys, document analysis, or other methods to address the topic. Providing more sources of data allows for richer and stronger results. Another way to strengthen the data collection and, in turn, data analysis would be to implement

a balanced mixed-methods approach. In addition to the qualitative methods, a quantitative method such as a survey that looks at a particular aspect of the multicultural individual, such as their level of identity integration or their well-being as it relates to their workplace interactions or some other scale that would strongly support and challenge the stories of these individuals could provide better a broader look at the issues queried here.

Member Checking

Another improvement for future research would be to include member checking as it allows for internal validity among the participants by requesting feedback about the initial findings to ensure there is no misinterpretation of what was learned from the participant during the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The participants from an interview can be requested to review their transcript to provide any comments, clarification, or additional anecdotes they did not share during the interview. This may prompt additional questions by the interviewer in transcripts to probe for further information to address the research questions. This method may aid in clearly understanding what the participants meant during their interview to provide as much objectivity as possible.

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APPENDIX A Survey

Hello! My name is Fiorella Morales, a doctoral student inviting you to complete this survey as a part of my Ph.D. in Leadership Studies at the University of San Diego! This research intends to look at the lived experiences of multicultural individuals and how they negotiate their multicultural identity in the workplace. My dissertation aims to understand better how people navigate their multicultural identity so that leaders can develop the best policies and practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Your participation would help me in accomplishing my data collection for the dissertation.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Participants must strongly identify with two or more

- ethnic and/or racial cultures from any background.
-
2. They must be fluent in a language other than English, meaning they must speak, read, and write proficiently in two or more languages.
-
3. Participants must have lived in more than one country in their lifetime for at least a total of one year.
-
4. Practices, values, behaviors, and/or traditions of more than one culture.
-
5. Must have worked in a professional environment for at least one year.
-

Any responses to this survey will be kept private and confidential. If you have any questions, please contact me at fmorales@san Diego.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!
The survey should take 15–20 minutes to complete.

Eligibility Questions

1. Do you strongly identify with two or more ethnic/racial cultural groups?
 - a. If yes, next question
 - b. If no, skip to End of Survey.
2. Do you speak any languages, other than English, fluently? (*meaning you can speak, read, and write proficiently*)
 - a. If yes, next question
 - b. If no, skip to End of Survey.
3. Have you lived in at least two different countries, for at least an entire year in each country?
 - a. If yes, next question
 - b. If no, skip to End of Survey.
4. Do you feel that you practice the values, behaviors, and/or traditions of more than one culture?
 - a. If yes, continue to the rest of the survey.
 - b. If no, skip to the End of Survey.
5. Have you worked in a professional role for at least one year?
 - a. If yes, next question.
 - b. If no, skip to End of Survey.

If participants fit these eligibility requirements, they will be deemed multicultural, as it pertains to the research informing the study. They will be prompted with the consent form in Appendix C to complete the rest of the survey.

The next series of questions will focus on your workplace background and your perspective and experience in them.

Industry Questions

1. What is your current employment status? *(Select all that currently apply)*

c. Working full-time (hourly)

d. Working full-time (salaried)

e. Working part-time

f. Not currently employed, looking for work

g. Not currently employed, not looking for work

h. Retired

i. Homemaker

j. Full-time student

k. Part-time student

l. Unable to work (e.g., disability, full-time caretaker, other extenuating circumstances)

m. Other (please specify):

6. What field/industry have you worked in the longest?

7. What kind of field/industry do you currently work in now?

8. What is your title in your current organization?

9. How long have you worked in your current organization? (Enter by year[s] then by month[s]).

10. In what sector is the organization that you currently work for?

a. Public (i.e., government)

b. Private (i.e., most businesses or individuals)

c. Nonprofit

d. Other

11. How many people are employed at your current organization?

a. Micro (1-10 employees)

- b. Small (11-50 employees)
 - c. Medium (51-250 employees)
 - d. Large (251+ employees)
12. What time of the day do you work the most?
13. What days of the week do you typically work?

Demographic Questions

This section will ask questions about your background and your identity. All aspects of who we are affect our culture and how we interact. These questions will help me as the researcher to contextualize your experience with your multicultural identity at work. Additionally, the results of this study intend to address organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion. Therefore, all aspects of who you are will be valuable to this work.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your assigned gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
3. Gender: How do you **most** identify?
 - a. Woman
 - b. Man
 - c. Nonbinary
 - d. Prefer not to say
 - e. Prefer to self-identify:
4. What is your current marital status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Married
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Other
5. What is your highest level of education?
 - a) High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) _____
 - b) Some college credit, no degree _____
 - c) Trade/technical/vocational training _____
 - d) Associate degree _____
 - e) Bachelor's degree _____
 - f) Master's degree _____
 - g) Professional degree _____
 - h) Doctorate degree _____
6. What is your yearly income before taxes?

- a. Less than \$20,000
- b. \$20,000 to \$34,999
- c. \$35,000 to \$49,999
- d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
- e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
- f. Over \$100,000

The remaining questions focus on your ethnic and cultural background, places you have lived and spent time in, and languages you practice.

7. Which ethnic/racial group do you **most** identify with? (*you may only select one*)
 - a. American Indian, Alaskan Native
 - b. Asian, Asian American, Southeast Asian, Desi
 - c. African & Black Diaspora, African American
 - d. Hispanic, Latinx
 - e. Middle Eastern
 - f. Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander
 - g. White, Caucasian, European
 - h. Other:
8. In your own words, how do you personally ethnically/racially identify yourself? (*Examples include but are not limited to German, Korean, Afro-Latino, Saudi, Caribbean, Asian-American, Navajo Nation, Tunisian, and Puerto Rican*)
9. What languages do you speak?
10. What language are you **most** proficient in? (*Proficient means you can speak, read, and write in the language.*)
11. What language is your native tongue (*the language you spoke at home growing up*)?
12. What city and country were you born in?
 - a. Is this where you mostly grew up?
 - i. If yes, next question
 - ii. If no, sub question
 1. Where did you mostly grow up?
13. How would you best describe the place you grew up?
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural

14. Which cultural heritage do you most strongly identify with? (*meaning you regularly practice the values and traditions and feel most comfortable with this culture.*)

15. In what countries have you lived in for at least one year or more?
16. Where have you lived in the longest? (*enter as city, country*)
17. Do you identify with any religious faith? (*e.g., Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, etc.*)
18. Where do you live currently? (*enter the region/state/province, city, country*)

Final Survey Page

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help me complete my research as I complete my dissertation and contribute to the fields of sociology, organizational culture, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Interviews are where I will gather the data I will primarily focus on. If you are interested in helping me complete my dissertation by participating in an interview that will discuss this topic on a deeper level one on one, please provide the following information:

1. First Name
2. Last Name
3. Email Address
4. Phone number

Appendix B Interview Guide

Interview Protocol & Questions

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. My name is Fiorella Morales, and I am a doctoral student at the University of San Diego in Leadership Studies. This interview will allow us to discuss your lived experiences as a multicultural individual, your relationship with your multicultural identity, and what that experience is like for you in the workplace. My dissertation aims to understand better how multicultural people experience the workplace so that leaders can develop the best policies and practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This interview should take between 60-90 minutes, and all data will be kept private with pseudonyms. Before we start, I would like to ask your permission to

record the conversation so that I do not miss any aspect of our conversation. (*Here, I will remind them of the consent form; see Appendix C*).

We will start with a few questions about how you experience your multicultural background. Then we will move into how you experience your multicultural background in a workplace where this has been the most salient for you, either a current role or a past role.

Interview Questions
Personal View of Multicultural Identity
1. In your own words, what does it mean to be multicultural?
2. How does your multicultural identity impact you personally?
Multicultural Identity at Work
3. Describe a typical workday for you through the lens of your experience as a multicultural person.
4. How do you feel you most contribute to your workplace as a multicultural person?
5. What is the most challenging aspect of being multicultural in your workplace?
6. Are you expected to do work outside of your official work description because of your multicultural identity?
7. Do you feel that your multicultural identity affects your professional growth at work?
8. What is set in place to support multicultural people in your workplace? i. If nothing is set in place, how does this impact you? ii. Do you feel the resources or support that is provided is enough? Why/why not?
9. What does an ideal workplace look like for you as it relates to your multicultural identity?

Appendix C Consent Form

University of San Diego Institutional Review Board

Participant Recruitment and Consent Page for the research study entitled: Multicultural Identity & the Workplace

Hello,

My name is Fiorella Morales. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Diego, San Diego, CA. I am conducting a research study to look at the lived experiences of multicultural individuals, how they negotiate their multiple cultures, and what that experience is like for them in the workplace. I would like

to invite you to participate.

The purpose of this study is to understand better how people navigate their cultures so that leaders can develop the best policies and practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and learn how multicultural identity is affected by workspaces. You have been invited to participate because you are a multicultural person. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey that takes about 10 minutes to complete and may take part in a follow-up interview that will last 90 minutes on Zoom and will be audio recorded with your consent. I will ask things like: *Do you feel your multicultural identity is supported in your workplace?*

You will also be asked a few questions about yourself, such as your age, level of education, ethnicity, languages you speak, and countries you have lived in.

This study involves no more risk than what you encounter in daily life. Your responses will be confidential, and all your information will be coded with a pseudonym. Your email or IP address will be deleted, and nobody will know your identity. I will keep the study data for a minimum of 5 years. You will receive no compensation for your participation in the study.

Taking part in this study is optional. Choosing not to participate will have no effect on any benefits to which you are entitled. You may also quit being in the study at any time or decide not to answer any specific questions. Should you choose to participate, please print out or save a copy of this page for your records.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at **fmorales@sandiego.edu**. You can also contact my dissertation chair, **Lea Hubbard**, at **lhubbard@sandiego.edu**

Thank you for your consideration.

Fiorella Morales, MA

If you would like to participate, please click on this link to begin the study:

[Being Multicultural in the Workplace](#)

Date: 11-30-2022

IRB #: IRB-2021-250
Title: MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY & THE WORKPLACE
Creation Date: 2-17-2021
End Date:
Status: **Approved**
Principal Investigator: Fiorella Morales
Review Board: USD IRB
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Fiorella Morales	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	fmorales@san Diego.edu
Member	Fred Galloway	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	galloway@SanDiego.edu