TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING TRADITIONAL INSTRUCTION AND THE THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Darcel Harper-Hogans

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of 10 elementary teachers in Georgia classrooms who have implemented traditional instruction as well as the theory of multiple intelligences created by Gardner. The basic research question lies in teacher perspectives of teaching traditional instruction and then switching over to teach the theory of multiple intelligences. A qualitative approach was used with a transcendental phenomenological design to obtain data for this research study. This phenomenological study used interviews, focus groups, and journals to understand the thoughts and ideas from purposefully sampled, 10 full-time certified teachers from Myrtle Crisp Elementary on implementing both methods. The following research questions guided the study: How do teachers of elementary students describe their teaching experiences using the theory of MI after using traditional teaching experiences? How do teachers of elementary students decide whether or not to use the theory of MI? What benefits do participants identify regarding the use of the theory of MI in the classroom? The data analysis utilized Moustakas' methodology in order to develop a thick description of the phenomena and the participants' perceptions of the best teaching method.

Keywords: implementation, Perspective Transformation theory, teacher perceptions, theory of Multiple Intelligences, traditional instruction, Transformational Learning theory

Dedication

This research is dedicated to every child growing up in the inner city. No matter how often your goal of going to and graduating from college is challenged, the will to overcome should always outweigh the words of naysayers.

Acknowledgements

Giving honor and praise to my almighty Lord and Savior. Lord, without your mercy, grace, favor, and kindness, I never would have made it through this journey. I dedicate each and every step of my achievements to my parents, Jeff and Debbie. I am eternally grateful. To my brother Jeff: I may be the oldest but you definitely are the wisest. To my friend/sister/cousin Mikki: I'm so glad we did it together! To my stepson IJ: College is nothing like high school; just remember to take it one day at a time. To my husband Ivan: Thank you for always checking on me and making sure I was okay when it looked like I was just staring at the computer.

My heart will be forever grateful to my committee, Dr. Brown, Dr. Gorman, and especially Dr. Zabloski. I truly cannot express how blessed I am to have had you as my chair. Looking back, I was nowhere near in a position to take on this endeavor; however, it seemed as if you knew that I was passionate about completing my journey and you supported me every step of the way.

Thank you Dr. Gorman for your guidance and insight. Thank you Dr. Brown for listening and understanding. Last but not least I want to give a special thanks to each of the participants, as well as my friends and family who supported me on this fabulous journey, without your input none of this would be possible.

All things are possible with me. Matthew 19:26

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List of Abbreviations

Early Intervention Program (EIP)

Georgia Department of Education (GADOE)

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

Multiple Intelligences (MI)

Physical Education (PE)

Professional Development (PD)

Project Based Learning (PBL)

Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM)

Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

Talented and Gifted (TAG)

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One provides a history of and rational for using traditional instructional practices, differentiated instruction and the theory of multiple intelligences. With the problem described as understanding teachers' perceptions on the differences between using the traditional instruction and the theory of multiple intelligences, the phenomena of experiences from the participants narratives are investigated through the three research questions: How do teachers of elementary students describe their teaching experiences using the theory of MI after using traditional teaching experiences? How do teachers of elementary students decide whether or not to use the theory of MI? What benefits do participants identify regarding the use of the theory of MI in the classroom? This chapter also explains why this study was chosen and how the data could assist Georgia policymakers in implementing the best instruction for elementary student's academic success.

Background

In schools across the country, teachers grapple with the complexities of differentiating instruction for students with distinct needs, interests, and varying degrees of strengths (Watts-Taffe, Laster, Broach, Marinak, McDonald-Connor, & Walker-Dalhouse, 2012). For years, the practice of teaching has undergone a significant change in reaching its present stage. Various educational theories such as Gardner and Mezirow will be studied and new ones are being proposed to allow the change to continue. Higher test scores seem to be driving the educational practices in schools. To accomplish this goal, educators strain to meet educational agendas, and they respond by teaching to the test, and students in turn react by cheating, taking learning steroids (legal and illegal psychostimulants), or just not caring in order to cope with the demands

placed on them in school (Armstrong, 2006). Some teachers still rely on the traditional method of education while others use differentiated instruction or the theory of multiple intelligences in order to meet academic needs of their students. Traditional methods of education, differentiated instruction, and the theory of multiple intelligences (hereafter referred to as the theory of MI) have been chosen to guide this study. All learners need varying degrees of intervention to aid their success. The theory of MI asserts that all individuals possess several types of intelligence: linguistic (words), logical-mathematical (numbers), musical (music), bodily-kinesthetic (movement), interpersonal (people), intrapersonal (self), spatial (visual), and naturalist (nature) (Gardner, 2011).

Despite the fact that academic and cultural diversity have increased in the United States and is expected to continue to increase, traditional school structures, pressures of content coverage for standardized tests, and limited budgets for staff development all are barriers to differentiation for students (Erickson, 2008). The adventure of learning, the wonder of nature and culture, the richness of the human experience, and the delight in acquiring new abilities all seem to have been abandoned or severely curtailed in the classroom in this drive to meet quotas, deadlines, benchmarks, and mandates (Armstrong, 2006).

Teachers have the capacity to cultivate all these intelligences by incorporating varying teaching methods that spark the learner's interest, thereby enhancing the educational process and making learning meaningful. However, many teachers still use small-group instruction as a way of teaching the broad range of learners in their classrooms (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Small-group instruction reduces the ratio of students to teachers, which could lead to sufficient improvement in student learning. The theory of MI is a form of differentiated instruction

(hereafter referred to as DI). Not only does the DI approach learning from an intelligence point of view, but also approaches learning by way of diversity. Diversity may be referred to as gender, ethnicity, language, race, socioeconomic status, and exceptionalities including physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual (Watts-Taffe et al., 2012). The idea of differentiated instruction is an old one. Over a 100 years ago in one-room schoolhouses across the United States with students ranging from ages six and 16, teachers had no choice but to differentiate their instruction (Tomlinson, 1999). In rural America, effective teachers in the one-room schoolhouse taught lessons by grouping children by ability (not by age), so that all children were learning—but not the same thing at the same time (Roberts & Inman, 2013). In differentiated instruction, students and teachers collaborate with one another to meet the targeted goals (Tomlinson, 2001). However, in some classrooms, teachers struggle to meet the needs of students due to the lack of training in differentiated instructional strategies (Reis, Gubbins, Briggs, Schreiber, Jacobs, & Renzulli 2004).

Differentiated instruction is a process of proactively modifying instruction based on students' needs (Chamberlin & Powers, 2010). Although much has changed in schools in recent years, differentiated instruction remains the same and the need for it has only increased (Tomlinson, 1999). Differentiated instruction had its inception in both gifted education and special education (Allan & Goddard, 2010). The term differentiated instruction began as Title I mandate. Title I, formerly known as Chapter 1, is part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and is the foundation of the federal government's commitment to closing the achievement gap between low-income and higher-income students (Borman, Stringfield, &, Slavin, 2001).

The original purpose of Title I was to allocate additional resources to states and localities for remedial education for children living in poverty (Borman, Stringfield, &, Slavin, 2001). The 1994 reauthorization of Title I shifted the program's emphasis from remedial education for disadvantaged children to helping all children reach expected rigorous state academic standards. Title I resources generally are used to improve student's academic achievement in reading and math, but they can be used to help students improve their achievement in all of the core academic subjects. The funds are based on the number of disadvantaged children in each school. Funding is not flexible however, schools have the flexibility to use the funds as they see fit. Title I also does not specify the type of education districts should provide to each student. In 1988, Title I was changed to require states to define the levels of academic achievement disadvantaged students should attain in schools receiving Title I funds (Borman, Stringfield, &, Slavin, 2001).

Researchers have explained the impact that using the theory of multiple intelligences has on student achievement (Adcock, 2014). Some studies even reference the perspectives of schools which only use the theory of MI over traditional instruction (Hoerr, 2000). To date, a phenomenological study designed to understand the transformational experiences of teachers regarding using an aspect of traditional methods of instruction, the Multiple Intelligences Theory and the difference between the two is not located in the literature.

Situation to Self

I am 49-year old educator who learned about the theory of MI in the 80's during my undergraduate studies. I was quite intrigued by Gardner's idea of eight intelligences. However, it was not until I began teaching that I truly began to fully understand and embrace this theory. This particular study is important to me because I believe that all children should be provided with an opportunity to learn in a manner that best suits them. I must admit, in the beginning of my career, I did not think I truly implemented the approach correctly. In addition to describing how this study agrees with my personal narrative, I brought my philosophical assumptions and constructivism of the use of both traditional instruction and the Multiple Intelligences Theory to the study. A constructivism viewpoint of multiple perspectives and socially constructed realities of the participants is also the guiding process of this study to determine the experience of transformative learning from using both types of instruction (Creswell, 2007). For example, I found myself continuously trying to find ways to make sure I was academically reaching all my students. More often than not, I utilized the traditional method because my colleagues taught in the same manner. These teachers believed the traditional method had been working so as the old adage goes, "If it is not broke, do not fix it". As the years passed, and I became more confident as a teacher, I began to incorporate different approaches with my class. The purpose of social constructivism is to interpret the meanings the participants have about the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2007). As the researcher there is an epistemological assumption that I will have interaction with the participants who are a part of this research in order to understand the multiple realities of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). Interacting with the participants will give a better understanding of their academic values. This axiological belief

system will guide the way I interact with the participants ensuring that they feel worthy and respect as they share their experiences of the phenomenon.

There are positive academic results when full implementation of differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms effectively takes place (Rock, Gregg, Ellis, & Gable, 2008). All children, including advanced learners, need to have the opportunity to excel in their classroom curriculum (Manning, Stanford, & Reeves, 2010). As a result of my experience as a teacher of advanced learners and with years of acquired professional development, I come with both biases and assumptions. I am a firm believer in the idea that MI provides an understanding of how students learn. However, I also am aware that I must separate my personal experiences when conducting this study. The goal of this study is to explore the lived experiences and individual perceptions of the participants whether or not their perceptions match my own is irrelevant. Without a formal study, I am only able to see transformations anecdotally; through this study and using an ontological assumption, I am able to hear all the participants articulate what it is like to experience transformation using both traditional instruction and the theory of MI and understanding that reality can be seen through various interpretations.

Problem Statement

Differentiated instruction, an application of social constructionist philosophies of teaching, offers a framework for addressing learner variance as a critical component of instructional planning (Huebner, 2010). It can also be described as a constructivist-style approach to alternative instruction that changes the pace, level, or kind of instruction provided in response to individual learner's needs, styles, or interests (Heacox, 2012). Teachers who effectively differentiate instruction have extensive knowledge about how students learn (Parsons,

Dodman, & Burrowbridge, 2013). When students struggle in the area of academics or the students' behavior is affected due to not understanding the academics, it is the teacher who has to make a decision on what to do. The problem according to the Georgia Department of Education's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) performance standard number four, all Georgia teachers of elementary students are required to challenge and support each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills that address individual learning differences (Georgia Department of Education, 2016) however, all teachers may not have adequate training on which types of differentiated instruction to use. The goal of differentiated instruction is for teachers to extend the potential of all learners by acknowledging students' needs through insightfully designing classroom educational experiences (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2012). By comparing the lived experiences of elementary teachers in Georgia who taught using both traditional teaching methods and Gardner's theory of MI, this research will endeavor to determine whether one is preferred over the other and why. Little research exists involving Georgia teachers of elementary students' perceptions about the preference of using one teaching method over the other and how those perceptions can potentially affect student achievement. Successful implementation of differentiation requires that teachers have an understanding of the content knowledge that they are teaching, along with a variety of pedagogical approaches (Johnson, 2010).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions of teachers of elementary students who have used traditional instruction and are now using the theory of MI in select Georgia classrooms. When teaching, the strengths of each

individual student helps to develop instruction, along with considerations for each child's unique cultural, familial, and personal characteristics (Aldridge, 2010). The goal of this study was to discover teachers' perceptions using the traditional method of teaching, which dates back to the 19th century (Aina, 2001) and the theory of MI, which has had effectiveness in the classroom for over 20 years (Armstrong, 2009). Since there is limited literature on teacher's perceptions, further research is needed to address the preference of Georgia teachers of elementary students. The design for this study was a transcendental phenomenological approach. Through the use of the participants' voices, the phenomena of experiences from their stories were investigated. This research attempted to identify Georgia teachers of elementary students preferences of instruction and why.

Significance of the Study

The sole focus of this study was to explore the perceptions of elementary teachers who have been in the classroom at least six years and have used traditional instruction however, are now using the theory of MI in Georgia classrooms. Exploring teacher perceptions is essential in the modern classroom because teacher perceptions can be barriers to the achievement of particular groups of students (Alquraini, 2012). The perceptions and attitudes developed by a teacher make up his or her belief system, and teachers use these beliefs to help make decisions on their method of teaching (Alquraini, 2012). A belief system is not easily changed unless evidence is provided that warrants changes (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010).

Teachers often struggle when teaching large numbers of diverse students within one classroom (Tomlinson, 2013). The major concepts considered within this transcendental, phenomenological study is teachers' perceptions, including their knowledge and experiences,

with the theory of MI. Providing insight into the perceptions of Georgia teachers of elementary students may spark a rationale for elementary school systems to better develop teacher support in the area of the theory of MI.

This research may open up discussions or further research that will use the perceptions of teachers to construct courses in the theory of MI within teacher preparation programs. In addition, the study could also illustrate how more emphasis needs to be placed on teacher training and preparation. It could help school districts direct future teacher in-service and staff development funds towards the creation of classrooms that differentiate instruction using a variety of teaching methods such as the theory of MI. The educational process needs to involve learning that is authentic and has real value for all of those involved (Adcock, 2014). In addition, this study hopes to narrow gaps in the literature about teacher perceptions regarding traditional instruction and the theory of MI and their effectiveness in classroom instruction. I also hope to gather enough information that would help teachers distinguish between the two ways of implementing instruction and determine which one has the most impact on student achievement. If indeed significant differences are exposed, further credibility is afforded the theory that only one specific instructional strategy may play an important role in how well students achieve academically (Alquraini, 2012).

Research Questions

The following questions will be explored to help understand teacher perceptions implementing procedures based on traditional instruction, differentiated instruction, and MI. Research Question 1: How do teachers of elementary students describe their teaching experiences using the theory of MI after using traditional teaching experiences? The purpose of

this question was to determine the perceptions of teachers using the theory of MI after implementing traditional instruction. Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide for one's future action (Mezirow & Associates, 2000)

Research Question 2: How do teachers of elementary students describe the process of deciding to use the theory of MI? The purpose of this question sought to analyze the reasons teachers use the theory of MI. Teachers may grapple with various notions of learning styles to help them understand the perplexing differences in students' thinking (Shearer, 2009).

Research Question 3: What benefits do elementary teachers identify regarding the use of the theory of MI in the classroom? The purpose of this question was to recognize that the use of the theory of MI not only impacts the teacher, but also has an impact on the classroom. The most vital support a teacher can give their students is using evidence of student learning to improve their teaching (Dufour & Mattos, 2013).

The research involved a qualitative approach which was used with a transcendental phenomenological design. Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research as inquiring about a problem, collecting data from people and places in natural settings, and then looking for themes to emerge from the data. Qualitative research stresses a phenomenological model in which multiple realities are rooted in the subjects' perceptions (McMillian, 2012). The transcendental phenomenological study model was used due to the nature of the research problem and the parameters of the research questions in that there is much about the phenomena and its factors which remain unknown and under-researched (Creswell, 2007). Transcendental phenomenology attempts to eliminate prejudgments and presuppositions about the phenomenon (Moustakas,

1994). Transcendental was chosen because of the researcher's experiences using both traditional instruction and the MI Theory and the need to bracket out those personal experiences. This design employed a purposeful sampling of teachers who have used both traditional instruction and the MI Theory. The experiences of participants were examined by focusing on the wholeness and essence of the experiences and shared phenomenon that cannot be measured through quantitative means (Moustakas 1994).

The research was conducted in an established, accredited educational setting and investigated mainstream educational practices. Data was collected using interviews, focus groups, and journals. All documents and research data were kept in a locked storage drawer on a computer with a secure password. The committee members were the only individuals who had access to the raw data during the study. Data analysis procedures included checking for descriptions of life experiences, finding significant statements, developing clusters of meaning, synthesizing a field journal, and creating textural and structural descriptions.

Definitions

1. *Charter School* - a public school of choice that operates under the terms of a charter, or contract, with an authorizer, such as the state and local boards of education (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).
2. *Differentiated Instruction* - process of proactively modifying instruction based on students' needs (Chamberlin & Powers, 2010).
3. *Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences* - framework for differentiating instruction (Norel & Necsoi, 2011). A variety of abilities and skills whereas individuals differ to the degree of skill and the nature of their combination (Gardner, 2006).
4. *Teacher Instructed Lesson*- teacher provides all the information, meaning educational comprehension which is solely based on the teacher's skills and abilities (Porcaro, 2011).
5. *Traditional Instruction*- lecture and questioning method of teaching (Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006)
6. *Transformational Learning Theory* - process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action (Mezirow, 1997).
7. *Perspective Transformation* - refers to revising meaning structure or culturally defined frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991)

Summary

Chapter One provided an outline of the research study in this dissertation, focusing on Georgia teachers of elementary student's perceptions of implementing traditional instruction and the multiple intelligences theory. Specifically, the research provided a rationale for utilizing the three research questions to arrive at an essence of the shared experiences in this qualitative, phenomenological study. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the phenomenon of factors that influence the decisions of Georgia teachers of elementary teachers of which instruction provides the most student academic achievement.

Chapter Two presents a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that are the underlying structures of this study and the literature used to establish connections between traditional and differentiated instruction, the Transformational Learning theory, and the theory of Multiple Intelligences.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review focuses on teacher perceptions when using traditional instructional and the Multiple Intelligences Theory. This chapter will explore the theoretical framework of Transformational Learning Theory developed by Mezirow, which has been prevalent throughout educational research (Mezirow, 1997) and Perspective Transformation (Mezirow, 1991).

Students and teachers go through a process of learning. Learning is an active process that requires the learner to change or elicit meaning from his or her experiences. Learning occurs when the learner engages in a variety of activities including the consequences of those activities, and through reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection. Mezirow (1991) named this process perspective transformation. Perspectives are sets of beliefs, values, and assumptions that have been acquired through life experiences (Mezirow, 1991). The way in which a teacher learns has considerable influence on how the teacher views instruction (Mezirow, 1991). Through critical reflection, teachers can identify, assess, and reformulate key factors on which their perspectives were originally constructed. The literature review will also examine the idea of teacher transformation and their perception of using traditional instruction over the MI Theory.

Theoretical Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) define the theoretical framework as "the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study" (p. 12). This study is grounded in two theoretical frameworks, which are discussed in this chapter.

Perspective Transformation Theory

Researchers supplying confirmation of a wide range of unique learning styles corroborate the demand for differentiated instruction (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Moreover, a growing body of research shows positive results for full implementation of differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms (Rock, Gregg, Ellis, & Gable, 2008). Effective teachers recognize that all students exhibit diverse learning styles and because of this, it is a teacher's responsibility to provide a variety of opportunities for academic achievement. However, adult learner's histories limit their learning and they use his or her past learning experiences to influence their current learning (Mezirow, 1991). No matter how effective a learner is at making sense of his or her experiences, in order to transform they have to start with what they have been given and operate within these horizons (Mezirow, 1991). These horizons are set in place by the variety of ways in which to see and understand what they have acquired through prior learning or meaning perspective (Mezirow, 1991).

Because this phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of Georgia teachers of elementary students who have implemented both the traditional methods of instruction as well as the theory of MI in Georgia elementary classrooms which Mezirow defines as their perspective transformation, this study used the work of Mezirow as its framework. Mezirow (1991) is best suited as a theorist due to the fact that he described perspective transformation as how adult learners revise the meaning structure or their culturally defined frames of reference which define meaning schemes. Meaning schemes are the process of becoming critically aware of how and why these interpretations have come to constrain the way one perceives, understands, and feels about the world (Mezirow, 1991). Changing the structures

of habitual expectation helps make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective (Mezirow, 1991). They are specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute the interpretations of one's experience Mezirow (1991).

Transformational Learning Theory

The Transformational Learning Theory, herein referred to as the TL Theory, was originally developed by Mezirow, who described it as being constructivist, an orientation that holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is central to making meaning and hence learning (Mezirow, 1997). Transformation includes the altering of structure, composition, character, or condition (Merriam-Webster, 2011). Transformation is also the manner in which learners transform problematic frames of reference and sets of assumptions and expectations to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow, 1997). The theory has two basic kinds of learning: instrumental and communicative. Instrumental learning focuses on learning through task-oriented problem solving and determination of cause-and-effect relationships, or learning based on discovery. Communicative learning involves understanding the meaning of how others communicate their feelings, needs, and desires. The research base for the concept of TL Theory evolved out of a comprehensive national study, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education in 1979, of consciousness that sought to explain an unprecedented expansion in the number of women returning to higher education in the United States (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

Transformational Learning is learning that produces a more substantial change in the learner than all other types of learning combined (Mezirow, 1997). The learning experiences determine the type of learner the person will become and tend to cause a substantial impact on

the learner's future experiences. Mezirow (1991) developed the concepts of *meaning perspectives*, one's overall world-view, and *meaning schemes*, smaller components that contain specific knowledge, values, and beliefs about one's experiences.

These perspectives represent to the process by which learners transform taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true and justified to guide action (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 7).

Educational researchers have proposed that teachers are one of the most important determinants of their teaching practices and most important, students' achievement (Guarino, Hamilton, Lockwood, & Rathbun, 2006). Levy (2008) asserted that teachers are so concerned with getting students to pass standardized tests, that efforts to educate students beyond the testing objective ceases altogether. Successful educators realize that learning styles vary and that all students must make personal and significant connections to the content in order to maximize their learning potential (Levy, 2008). Due to this type of learning environment, the relationship between the students and the teacher along with the teacher's responsibility in the classroom includes many challenges throughout the instructional day. Too often, teachers get sidetracked by having to focus on grades, grade-level equivalents, and percentiles (Hoerr, 2010). However, it is not just the teachers, but parents, schools, and entire school districts that are evaluated on the basis of test performance (Gray, 2013).

Teachers have been assigned the task of helping students understand how they learn as well as providing the forum in which to communicate the students' desire for learning. However,

when teachers focus on students' needs rather than their grades and percentiles, they create learning opportunities for students. This idea of a fundamental change in perspective or frame of reference is at the heart of transformative learning. TL was formulated while Mezirow (1997) was conducting a study that investigated the experiences of women re-entering college or the work force after a period of time. When individuals undergo a change, they transform their view of themselves, the world, and how they interact with others and the environment.

Transformational Learning is self-formation; which reflects the belief that the purpose of education is to bring out the inner qualities of a person (Dirkx, 2012). Self-formation involves a critique of the self within social constructs, examines self-defeating practices, and encourages the authentic self (Dirkx, 2012). The importance of teachers' perceptions cannot be underestimated because of its impact on student motivation, decision making, and attitude. The perception a person has of something outweighs its reality when coming to a decision, for in an individual's mind the perception *is* the reality (Potgieter, 2011).

Many teacher characteristics have been examined in relation to student achievement, especially the power to impart change in the classroom (Eury, Hemeric, & Shellman, 2010). Teachers are the ones who know the content and the students. For example, teachers' qualifications, including their experience and years of education, is necessary but not sufficient for improved classroom teaching or student academic performance (Cohen, Brody, & Sapon-Shevin, 2004). If student learning is our ultimate goal, then it should be measured directly and not extracted from limited observations of classroom instruction (Tucker & Stronge, 2005).

Related Literature

Traditional Instruction: History

The concept of multiage grouping dates back to the one-room schoolhouse of the 19th century (Aina, 2001). Education reformers such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, who worked in Massachusetts and Connecticut respectively, helped create statewide common-school systems (Glickman, 2001). Mann extended the school year by six months, doubled teachers' salaries, and introduced new teaching methods. Barnard helped produce a new educational system in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Mann proposed the need for common schools that would function as the great equalizers of human conditions (Glickman, 2001). Both Mann and Barnard argued education could preserve social stability, and prevent crime and poverty. Early American education was primarily private or religious, and it brought mass schooling and literacy to the nation well before the public school system we know today was legislated into existence.

Public schooling arose in response to an influx of immigrants who had different religions and cultures (www.edchoice.org). The primary focus was to establish social order and mainstream vast numbers of immigrant children into a common school setting. A mistrust of parents was common during the birth of public schools (Williams & Noguera, 2010). Over the past 150 years, mistrusting parents and forcing children into common schools has produced mixed results. Today, while some children receive a quality education, many, particularly those in urban areas, receive a poor quality education (Williams & Noguera, 2010). In many instances, public schools have further segregated the haves and have-nots, creating a gulf of learning opportunities that is simply too wide for many parents to cross (Williams & Noguera, 2012).

Traditional Instruction and the Teacher

A teacher imparting knowledge to a set of students, has been perhaps the most fundamental ingredient in formal education. Yet recent innovations born from technological advances, resource scarcity, and quality concerns are challenging the definition of "teachers" and the role they play in helping students learn. Up until the mid-1800s in the United States, teachers were almost entirely men. That has changed in the last 100 years; today, only 30% of teachers are males, and they teach primarily in secondary classrooms (Houston, 2009). Teachers were relatively untrained, and depending on textbooks to enhance flow and clarity of what to teach as well as when to teach (Cremin & Nietz, as cited in Bohning, 1986). Teachers sometimes lived with their students' families; this practice was called boarding round, and it often involved the teacher moving from one student's house to the next as often as every week (McCarthy, 2014). As civilizations developed and the knowledge/skills base of society became more complex, education became more important (Houston, 2009).

Traditional Instruction and the Classroom

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, one-room schoolhouses were the norm in rural areas. The school year was much shorter and students attended school for approximately 132 days (the standard year now is 180), depending on when they were needed to help their families harvest crops. School days typically started at 9 a.m. and wrapped up at 2 p.m. or 4 p.m., depending on the geographic area; there was one hour for recess and lunch, which was called nooning. One teacher taught grades one through eight together. The youngest students—called Abecedarians, because they would learn their ABCs—sat in the front, while the oldest students sat in the back (McCarthy, 2014).

The traditional form of instruction in the 1800s was schoolbooks and the number-one book was the McGuffey reader. The McGuffey readers were the way in which all students obtained their reading knowledge. The readers confirmed moral values and truths and shaped the literary tastes of American children (Bohning, 1986). They were collections of didactic tales, aphorisms and excerpts from great books and reflect his view that the education of young people required their introduction to a wide variety of topics and practical matters (Bohning, 1986). William McGuffey grew up in an extremely religious family of pioneers and later became a professor of philosophy at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. A Cincinnati firm approached him after renowned educator Catherine Beecher turned them down due to her hectic schedule. Truman and Smith wanted to publish readers and she suggested McGuffey. As a previous schoolteacher, he was quite dissatisfied with the established readers and was currently writing his own when the firm approached him. What made his stand out from the other books is that his introduced vocabulary, gradually allowing the student to gain precision in the area of word familiarity (Bohning, 1986). Lessons were very different than they are today. One teacher taught subjects including reading, writing, arithmetic, history, grammar, rhetoric, and geography. Students would memorize their lessons, and the teacher would bring the students to the front of the room as a class to recite what they had learned so that the teacher could correct them on the spot on skills such as pronunciation while the other students continued to work behind them (McCarthy, 2014).

Traditional Instruction and the Administrator

The teacher, who often doubled as the principal, knew the students and the parents well. The teacher-administrator usually lived close to where he or she taught, and was a highly

respected member of the community and subject to the school inspector. The inspector had the responsibility of keeping the schoolhouse outfitted with supplies, hiring teachers, and returning once a year to report to the town's assessors (Rippa, 1988). The inspector also evaluated schools, teachers, and students during the inspector's annual visit. Inspectors reported on the school's attendance record, the teacher's teaching skills, and the condition of the schoolhouse, including recommendations for improvements.

Types of Traditional Instruction Methods

Although there are a variety of ways to implement learning and instruction, in many classrooms the traditional method of instruction is still being used. When teachers use traditional methods of instruction or TI, students are passive learners while the teacher solely provides all the information, meaning any educational comprehension on the part of the student is solely based on the teacher's skills and abilities (Porcaro, 2011).

The most traditional type of instruction is teacher-directed or instructivism which has been around for many years, providing the foundation of traditional instructional practices. The process of instructivism incorporates a teacher-directed, carefully planned curriculum, with purposeful teaching at its core, and has two major purposes; first, to help the learner comprehend and interact with the world; and second, to direct learners and make the decisions about the content and sequence of what the student is learning. A teacher-directed lesson uses straightforward, explicit teaching by teachers who utilize a specific skill while expecting students to echo the information using rote memorization (Wiggins and McTighe, 2007). According to the online dictionary Merriam-Webster, rote memorization is a learning process that involves repeating information until the content or material is remembered verbatim. The process of rote

memorization involves learning facts without grasping a deep understanding of them. Without clear understanding, rote memorization makes it impossible to grasp meaning or to apply and transfer the knowledge to other areas (Kelekolio, 2013). Teacher-directed instruction is outdated because it does not provide opportunities for students to interact and expand their thinking (Ahmad, Seman, Awang, & Sulaiman, 2015). Teacher-directed instruction usually involves the teacher asking a question, students raising their hands to answer the question and then waiting for the teacher to select one of their raised hands. Once selected, the student gives a response, the teacher evaluates the student's response, and this cycle repeats. Education researchers call it the standard classroom transaction model of initiation-response-evaluation or I-R-E (William, 2014). The fundamental flaw of the traditional questioning model is that it makes participation voluntary. The confident students engage by raising their hands; by engaging in classroom discussion, they become smarter. On the other hand, other students decline the invitation to participate and thus miss out on the chance to get smarter (William, 2013). Other forms of traditional instruction include seatwork and teacher observations.

Differentiated Instruction: History

Differentiation is not a novel concept. Although the one-room schoolhouse is a form of traditional instruction, it is also an ideal example of how teachers attempted to meet the needs of all students centuries ago, dating back to the 1600s (Anderson, 2007). The one-room schoolhouse, similar to many classrooms today, had one teacher responsible for educating students who possessed a wide range of ability levels. In the schoolhouse there was one room, one teacher, and no digital technology. By 1919, there were more than 190,000 one-room schoolhouses operating in the United States, currently there are fewer than 400. The wide range

of abilities that were found in these schools still exist in our standard classrooms today (Gundlach, 2012). When the world of education shifted to grade schools, educators believed that children of the same age learned in the same manner (Gundlach, 2012). In 1912, achievement tests were introduced, and the scores exposed the gaps in student's abilities within the various grades.

In 1975, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ensuring that children with disabilities have equal access to public education. Educators used differentiated instruction strategies to reach this student population (Weselby, 2014). The passage of No Child Left Behind in 2000 further encouraged differentiated and skill-based instruction (Weselby, 2014). Many of today's classrooms are primarily defined by diversity; meaning that learning tasks must be adjusted to each student's appropriate learning zone. Vygotsky (1978) stated that individuals learn best when they are in a context that provides a moderate challenge; Vygotsky referred to this environment as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The concept of differentiated instruction is to challenge all learners to reach their individual potential (Sherman, 2009). The idea of differentiating instruction to accommodate the different ways that students learn involves a hefty dose of common sense, as well as sturdy support in the theory and research of education (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000).

Differentiated Instruction and the Teacher

Educators face many challenges when deciding which methods are best for organizing and delivering instruction to diverse populations of students. The strategies and methods used play a critical role in developing successful instruction in diverse classrooms. How teachers decide to teach is important for all learners, especially for students with disabilities, students

from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and students who are different in other educationally relevant ways (Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010). Effective teachers understand that students display a variety of learning styles and they must be provided multiple opportunities for academic achievement. Teachers must utilize all available resources to support learning activities (Cox, 2008). Differentiated instruction is to be implemented in a way that does not change *what* is taught but rather changes *how* it is taught. The strengths of each individual student is to be used to develop instruction, along with considerations for each child's unique cultural, familial, and personal characteristics (Aldridge, 2010).

There are no rules for differentiated instruction; it depends on the teacher's attitude, his/her strategies, the choice of activities, the way those activities are organized, and the teacher's ability to adapt them to the individual profile of the students (Oprescu, Craciun, & Banaduc, 2011). Teachers who employ differentiated instruction adjust their teaching for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, and assisting in the learning process (Dixon, 2014). Thoughtfully adaptive teachers adjust their instruction in real time to meet the specific needs of individual students or the demands of the situation in which they find themselves (Parsons, 2012). Being able to respond to both "why" and "how to" questions requires that the teacher have not only content knowledge and expertise but also the instructional skill and the time to intelligently guide students toward meaningful thinking about the content (Scherer, 2008). Teachers can utilize differentiation differently, but the fundamental aspects of intentionality are universal in appropriate application (Kingore, 2004). A teacher's response to

student's learning is predicated upon understanding the readiness level, interests, and learning profile of the students (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011).

Today's classrooms are more diverse than ever however, some teachers may feel unprepared to deal with the range of student needs (Schlechty, 2009). Teachers who do not recognize ways to differentiate or do not feel capable of instructing different groups at the same time struggle with differentiating instruction (Dixon, 2014). Designing and managing DI can be a challenging task because students work at many levels, and may be at varying ages and/or paces (Santamaria, 2009). However, most educators believe that multiage grouping allows students to develop a more developmentally appropriate program that is considered as a natural community of learners (Aina, 2001).

The best teaching practices are those that consider all learners in a classroom setting and pay close attention to differences inherent to academic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity (Santamaria, 2009). The art of teaching does not change because of a students' racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. To a large extent, good teaching—teaching that is engaging, relevant, multicultural, and appealing to a variety of modalities and learning styles—works well with all children (Cole, 2008). In the end, when teachers differentiate instruction, they vary not only the materials students use but also the way students interact with them. Varying instructional activities allows all students to learn the same concepts and skills with varying levels of support, challenge, or complexity (Tomlinson, 2000).

According to Tomlinson (1999), teachers begin where students are, not the front of a curriculum guide. They accept and build upon the premise that learners differ in important ways. "They work daily to find ways to reach out to individual learners at their varied points of

readiness, interests, and preferred approaches to learning" Tomlinson, 1999, p. 5. Thus, teachers also accept and act on the premise that they must be ready to engage students in instruction by utilizing different learning modalities, by appealing to different interests, and by using distinct rates of instruction, as well as varying degrees of complexity. Teachers who differentiate instruction ensure that a student academically competes against himself as he grows and develops, rather than academically competing against other students (Tomlinson, 1999).

Differentiated Instruction and the Classroom

In order to differentiate in the classroom the teacher needs to know what the students need in order to be well educated in the 21st century. In addition, teachers need to know what skills students need in order to flourish in a complex, multicultural, technology-saturated world (Tomlinson, 2000). Although it is the desire of most teachers to implement technology in their classroom (Berrett, Murphy, & Sullivan, 2012) as a means to differentiate instruction it is still not widely used in the classroom due to a possible lack of knowledge on the part of the teacher on how it relates to student academic growth (Reinhart, Thomas, & Torskie, 2011). Researchers suggest these guiding principles to support differentiated classroom practices:

- Focus on the essential ideas and skills of the content area, eliminating ancillary tasks and activities (Rock, Gregg, Ellis, and Gable, 2008).
- Respond to individual student differences such as learning style, prior knowledge, interests, and level of engagement (Tomlinson, 2000).
- Group students flexibly by shared interest, topic, or ability (Tomlinson, 2000).
- Integrate ongoing and meaningful assessments with instruction (Tomlinson, 2000).

- Continually assess, reflect, and adjust content, process, and product to meet student needs. Teaching using the DI approach begins by setting up a classroom environment that fosters a climate that is nurturing, safe, and encouraging for all students (Koechlin & Zwaan, 2008).

The classroom can be differentiated into four classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile: (a) content—what the student needs to learn or how the student will get access to the information; (b) process—activities in which the student engages in order to make sense of or master the content; (c) products—culminating projects that ask the student to rehearse, apply, and extend what he or she has learned in a unit; and (d) affect—how students' emotions and feelings impact their learning (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

To differentiate content in an elementary classroom, teachers can display reading materials to be used for varying reading levels. Materials can be put on tape, spelling or vocabulary lists can be created using the readiness levels of students, ideas can be presented through both auditory and visual means, reading buddies can be used (read with a partner), or space can be sectioned off for small-group meetings to help re-visit an idea or skill for struggling learners, or extend the thinking or skills of advanced learners. Common classroom practices such as cooperative learning and interactive activities can be altered to reach all learning styles. Assessments and data are used to determine student placements based on instructional readiness, skills, backgrounds, choices, or interests (Logan, 2011).

In the area of process, teachers can use the classroom to tier activities through which all learners work with the same important understandings and skills, but proceed with different levels of support, challenge, or complexity. The classroom environment can have space for

interest or learning centers that encourage students to explore subsets of the class topic of particular interest to them. Interest centers provide children an opportunity to be self-disciplined. They explore in their own way and intentionally direct their own learning (Magnuson, 2010). Another example would be to develop personal agendas (task lists written by the teacher which contain both in-common work for the whole class and work that addresses individual needs of learners) to be completed either during specified agenda time or as students complete other work ahead of schedule. The student who needs to move around could use manipulatives or other hands-on supports. Finally, the classroom could have an area sectioned off for students where the length of time a student may take to complete a task is carved out. The carved-out area can provide additional support for a struggling learner or encourage an advanced learner to pursue a topic in greater depth.

Differentiating in the area of products includes providing options on how to express required learning (e.g., create a puppet show, write a letter, or develop a mural with labels). The product allows the use of rubrics that match and extend students' varied skills levels. Products provide the space to work alone or in small groups; and this provides the space to create product assignments as long as the assignments contain required elements.

Students' emotions and feelings can impact their learning so to differentiate instruction in this area the classroom is a place where efforts are made to understand the affect that drives student behavior, and allow students to express their thoughts and feelings regarding learning or their abilities as learners (Tomlinson, 2000). The classroom is also a place to make personal, meaningful connections to what is being learned in order to maximize individual learning opportunities (Tomlinson, 2000). Each classroom is different with regard to space and makeup of

the building. It is not just a space; it represents the way the classroom works and feels (Tomlinson, 2000). In order to differentiate instruction, the classroom environment incorporates places in the room for students to work quietly and without distraction, as well as places that invite student collaboration. The classroom has materials that reflect a variety of cultures and home settings. It has clear guidelines for independent work that matches individual needs, as well developing routines that allow students to obtain help when teachers are busy with other students (Tomlinson, 1999). In the end, it is set up to provide the freedom for some learners to move around while also giving other learners a place to sit quietly.

Hattie (2012) stated that effective classrooms will have four defining characteristics: student centered, knowledge centered, assessment rich, and community centered. With a student-centered classroom, the student is on a journey from a being a novice learner to a proficient learner. A knowledge-centered classroom is important so that students can make connections and relationships among ideas. Creating an assessment-rich classroom helps the teacher gauge where students are throughout their academic journey (Hattie, 2012). The assessments help the students to know where to go next, so that they can move ahead from their starting point.

Lastly, a community center within the classroom is important because there is no one way to share and learn (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Within the classroom each person has a stake in the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of each member of the class. Teachers and students in the community also share in the importance of what each community member is aiming to learn (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

Differentiated Instruction and the Administrator

The face of leadership has changed over the years to revamp to accommodate for accuracy of leadership. Leaders for responsive, personalized, or differentiated classrooms focus much of their professional energy on two fronts: what it means to teach individual learners effectively, and how to extend the number of classrooms in which that sort of teaching becomes the norm (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). In order to help teachers differentiate instruction an administrator should provide opportunities for collaboration among teachers; especially if they want teachers to share effective practices and develop effective strategies which will serve all students. Productive leaders must show their leadership ability through collaboration efforts with the teachers. In the same way differentiated instruction affects student learning, administrative practices also affect student learning. Administrators are influenced by ideas in the broader environment (Rigby, 2013).

Transformational leadership is a popular trending leadership style in the 21st century. The uniqueness about this style is the delivery. Administrators who adopt this style of leadership motivate others to perform and be at their best (Northhouse, 2013). This style of leadership consistently sees the good and wants others to see the good in everything that comes their way no matter the situation. This style of leadership focuses on performance, and it fulfills the potential of an employee (Wang & Berger, 2010). Leadership in a differentiated instruction environment is determined not by the characters of the individuals but by the requirements of the situation, also referred to as situational leadership (Mendez-Morse, 2012). Leadership contains the cause or basis that assumes different situations require different types and styles of leadership. The most well-known model is the Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory

which stated that successful leaders change their style based on two continuums: the maturity of the followers and the details of the task (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2007).

An effective differentiated instruction model could be implemented as an in-house teach-and-learn model by designating one of the staff development days as "learn a new technique" day. For this concept, every teacher is able to choose from a menu of at least three to five different differentiation ideas such as project-based instruction, tiered lessons, flexible groupings, and interest groups. The teachers would be able to spend the day learning about the technique or structure, and planning how to use it in their classrooms. Each teacher could then teach the structure to at least two other colleagues prior to the next staff development day (Schwarz & Kluth, 2007). School leaders must be more than mere administrators; rather, appropriate DI leaders must have a vision, and know how to plan and evaluate with the end goal in mind (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez, 2008).

Types of Differentiated Instruction

According to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) the classroom can be differentiated into four classroom elements based on the readiness, interest, and learning profile of the student. The student should be provided with a variety of ways to obtain content or have access to a plethora of information. They should have a process of engaging in activities that will assist them in making sense of said content. Through their own process, students need opportunities to rehearse, apply, and extend what he or she has learned in a unit which in turn will affect how students' emotions and feelings impact their learning. All these elements should be designed to meet the individual characteristics of learners and to maximize their time in school (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, and Hardin, 2014).

In order to assist in the differentiated instruction approach, students can be flexibly grouped. Flexible grouping combination of students may include the student's interests, abilities, or mixed abilities. Learning styles and group formation must depend cooperatively on collected student data and content, process, and products (King-Shaver, 2008). Another way in which students are grouped is cooperative grouping. Cooperative learning allows students to not only learn material, but also to synthesize and discuss the material, reflecting on what they have learned (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Knowledge of students' learning preferences and placing the information in portfolios may inform teachers about materials and methodologies that may work best for students but not the ways in which students prefer to learn (Sangineto, Capuano, Gaeta, & Micarelli, 2008).

Learning Environment Modifications

Learning environment refers to both the physical and the affective climate in the classroom. It is the "weather" that affects everything that happens there (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Few students enter a classroom at the outset of a new school asking such questions as; What can be taught about grammar? What is a periodic table or will we learn about cursive writing and the planets? Rather, they come with an overriding question: How is it going to be in this place? The nature of the learning environment for that young person will, in large measure, answer that question (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

Assessment Variations

Differentiated Instruction not only includes the way in which a child learns, but includes formative and summative assessments as well as classroom climate. A formative assessment provides the teacher an opportunity to monitor student learning and provide ongoing feedback

(Jacoby, Heugh, Bax, & Brandford-White, 2014). The feedback is used to improve the way in which a teacher is helping students improve their learning. A summative assessment evaluates a student's learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against the standard or benchmark of the lesson being taught.

If teachers strongly believe in the content and curriculum they teach to improve students' lives as well as the worth and potential of their students, it follows that they would be eager to know how each student is progressing toward achieving important learning goals—and going beyond (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Differentiation switches the assessment and evaluation focus from competition among all students to a student competing with self. Students are recognized for current levels of achievement and then challenged to strive toward their personal best (Kingore, 2004). Students can show what they have learned in a variety of ways in terms of products produced as summative assessments.

Process Adaptations

Differentiated Instruction gives students choices about how to learn as well as how to demonstrate their learning. One of the ways in which teachers can provide opportunities for students to adapt the process by which they learn is Project-Based Learning, herein referred to as PBL. Today's students, more than ever, often find school to be boring and meaningless (Boss, 2013). In PBL students are active in their learning and projects are engaging, while providing real-world relevance for learning. The process of students' learning and the depth of their cognitive engagement distinguish projects from busywork (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010). The best way to teach gifted students is by differentiating their instruction (Hertberg-Davis, 2009) however, implementing appropriate teaching for gifted students in regular classrooms and the

practice of differentiation in regular classrooms has, in practice, been largely unsuccessful (Hertberg-Davis, 2009). Imparting content knowledge in a dynamic way to individuals with different personalities and varied learning styles can be a demanding task (Nielsen, 2008).

V.A.R.K. Learning Style

Another method of adapting the process of learning is to find out a student's preference for learning. Learning styles define the ways in which a person interprets, processes, understands, and integrates information. It is the aspect of an individual's preference, ease, or best way of learning (Nilson, 2010). Achieving success in education is dependent on the ability to adapt the process of teaching to the academic differences of students. Teachers who have a greater understanding of learning styles can increase their effectiveness in both instruction and assessment (Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Zhang, 2008). A teacher must create an environment where the needs of a variety of learners can be met (Corno & Snow, 1986). Fleming (1987) designed VARK as a 16-question questionnaire that can be taken either online or on paper so that a teacher can find a student's preference for taking in, and putting out, information when learning. The VARK learning style creates instruction that addresses four learning styles: visual, auditory, read –write, and kinesthetic. This type of learning style is structured specifically to improve learning and teaching, and was introduced to help support those who have difficulties with their learning. Visual learners process information using pictures, posters, and slides. They show what they know using pictures, and turning these pictures into words. Auditory learners intake and show their learning using discussions with others. Read/Write learners process their learning by reading the information and then showing their understanding by writing their

thoughts. Kinesthetic learners have to experience their learning through taking part in the actual learning (Fleming & Mills, 1992).

Learning involves remembering and often some type of skillful performance after studying (Ross, Maureen, & Schultz, 2001). Studying can be seen as a process that involves taking information and then processing that information. How a person learns can be impacted by numerous factors. These factors can be seen as dimensions to the study of learning styles. Learning styles are seen as having at least four general dimensions (Dunn, Beaudry, & Klavas, 1989). These include: 1) Cognitive–how individuals typically process information as they perceive, think, solve problems, remember, and relate to others. 2) Affective–how learning relates to a person's personality. This type of learning considers such characteristics as attention, emotion, motivation, incentive, curiosity, boredom, anxiety, and frustration. 3) Physiological– how learning relates to biological characteristics. For instance, what senses (auditory, visual, or kinesthetic) are used for learning? 4) Psychological– how learning relates to the inner strength and individuality of the individual. It is important to teach to a diversity of learning styles. Using various teaching methods helps maintain students' interests and meet their individual needs (Gunawardena & Boverie, 1993).

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

History

If the word differentiation means meeting each student where he/she is from an instructional standpoint, then Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences provides a framework for differentiating instruction (Norel & Necsoi, 2011). The word theory according to Meriam-Webster is an idea or set of ideas that is intended to explain facts or events; an idea that is

suggested or presented as possibly true but that is not known or proven to be true; or the general principles or ideas that relate to a particular subject. The diversity of the learner can usually be represented in a variety of ways such as; ethnicity, economic conditions, and gender however, diversity can also be represented academically as well. Other such diversities as spatial, verbal or mathematical can affect a student's learning. When considering the diversity of the learner it is import to recognize that each person has several ways in which he or she learns best. The learning theory that has shined a light onto the way in which each student's learn differently is the theory of multiple intelligences (Adcock, 2014).

When Gardner originally published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, in 1993 it began with a variety of thought- provoking questions. These questions addressed what some would consider as the intelligent aspect in human endeavors not associated with traditional learning such as playing chess, a musical instrument, or a sport. The questions also addressed why these endeavors were not accounted for or addressed on traditional IQ tests (Seider, 2009). Gardner is not the first person to suggest that there is more than one intelligence. Decades ago, J. P. Guilford created the Structure of Intellect, a model that identified more than 90 different intellectual capacities, and Robert Sternberg has developed the Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, which contains three forms of intelligence. Recently, Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence and Robert Coles' Moral Intelligence have received national attention. What connects each of these theories is that they share the belief that intelligence is a multifaceted, complex capacity (Hoerr, 2000). Gardner's theory has since provided opportunities to broaden definitions of intelligence and develop three premises of education (Darling-Hammond, 2010). First, education requires instruction to be individually centered, focusing on

each student's unique learning differences. Second, no theory is the basis of a quality educational program. Educators must establish sound educational goals and determine how to achieve desired outcomes. Practice, not theory, directs a successful school program. Third, students require a multitude of ways to show key concepts because of their varied learning styles (Gardner, 2011).

Early in the 20th century, Alfred Binet undertook the task of developing a test to identify children with learning disabilities for placement in special education classrooms (Arnold, Riches, & Stancliffe, 2011). Following extensive research, he discovered that the physical measurement of the size of a person's head did not equate to academic abilities, contrary to popular opinion at the time (Garrison, 2009). Binet's study is not the first in this line of research. As early as the 1800s, the father of kindergarten, Frederick Frobel (1782-1852), recognized that children learn best when engaged in hands-on activities and with multiple approaches (Adcock, 2014).

The theory of MI and the research on students' various learning style differences could possibly provide some understanding on how to effectively address the needs of diverse learners. Gardner stated that these varying learning styles challenge an educational system that assumes everyone has the capacity to learn the same materials in the same way, and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning (Gardner, 2006). He asserted that all people possess a variety of abilities and skills and "individuals differ to the degree of skill and the nature of their combination" (Gardner, 2006, p. 6). He noted that a person's learning style can be better described as intelligences. These intelligences include and are not limited to: linguistic (words), logical-mathematical (numbers), musical (music), bodily-kinesthetic (movement), interpersonal (people), intrapersonal (self), spatial (visual), and naturalist (nature) (Gardner, 2006). Gardner

suggested the intelligences be described as the combination of psychological and biological characteristics that enable individuals to solve problems or create products that are valued in one or more cultures (Gardner, 1999).

Gardner also considered the intelligences as one piece and that they rarely operate independently. Gardner stated that the intelligences, for the most part, operate at the same time; in essence, they complement each other as students increase and build their problem-solving skills. Gardner also noted that the intelligences are the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community (Gardner, 1999). Some educators have embraced Gardner's theory, and it has been useful to the field of education for rectifying the problems of education. While the theory of MI may be useful to educators and the like, it leaves intact the core assumption that only IQ-related abilities represent a person's true intelligence (Shearer, 2009). Gardner (1993) stated that theory of MI may lead to the following conclusions: All learners have the full range of intelligences; that is what makes them human beings, cognitively speaking. Gardner noted that no two individuals – not even identical twins – have exactly the same intellectual profile. Although the genetic material may be identical, individuals have different experiences. Having a strong intelligence does not indicate that one will essentially act intelligently (Gardner, 2006).

Theory of Multiple Intelligences and the Teacher

In order to focus on the theory of MI, teachers need to learn the specific aptitudes of each of their students. One way to do this is to offer a steady amount of varied activities, and then pay close attention to the types of intelligences students display as they solve problems and complete tasks (Bernard, 2009). Rather than relying upon a linguistic filter and requiring students to write

to show their grasp of skills and information, teachers using the theory of MI can allow students to use their strengths to demonstrate what they have learned (Hoerr, 2000). If a teacher is having difficulty reaching a student in the traditional ways of instruction, the theory of MI suggests a variety of ways in which the material might be presented to enable effective learning. Based on the theory of MI, Gardner developed entry points to understanding. Gardner identified the following seven entry points: narrational, logical, quantitative, foundational and existential, aesthetic, experimental, and collaborative (Wares, 2013). These seven entry points are related to the eight intelligences; they are like seven doors to a room. Gardner suggests that teachers use these multiple entry points to reach diverse students. Narrational entry point presents a story or narrative about the concept or idea in question. Logical entry point approaches the concept through a structured argument. Quantitative entry point deals with numerical quantities and relations. Foundational and existential entry point examines the philosophical and terminological facets of the concept. Aesthetic approach deals with the sensory or surface features that appeal to, or at least capture the attention of, students who favor an artistic stance toward the experiences of living (Wares, 2013). Experimental approach deals with approaches that are more hands-on, dealing directly with the materials that embody or convey the concept, while the collaborative approach pertains to group work (Wares, 2013). Gardner stated that any topic that is worth teaching can be presented to students in seven different ways.

The educational process needs to involve learning that is authentic and has real value for all of those involved. If educators take an approach of blending the theory of MI with DI, teaching will be more effective. The theory of MI allows teachers to focus not only on the product of learning but also the process of learning as well. The theory of MI allows teachers to

focus on the quality of the process of learning and expecting a quality product when the learning is achieved. This theory is vital in enhancing one's dignity and creativity; it has the ability to motivate students through a fun teaching and learning experience (Ahmad, et al., 2015). The process of using the theory of MI is valuable to teachers and students alike because it addresses the uniqueness of learners. Understanding how the brain works and how the theory of MI can be used effectively is vital to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes (Adcock, 2014).

Theory of Multiple Intelligences and the Classroom

Baker (2013) stated that despite the evidence of the benefits of teaching students to use meta-cognitive strategies, instruction [in meta-cognition] is still not commonly observed in most primary and secondary classrooms, and interviews with teachers have revealed limited knowledge about metacognition and how to foster it. Everyone possesses unique and diverse gifts and talents, and has different intelligences that contribute to the class as well as the entire school (Tai, 2014). The classroom is where students can show what they know by using a multiple of options such as multiple intelligence-based lesson designs, interdisciplinary curriculums, student projects, assessments, and apprenticeships.

In the lesson designs, students choose activities that seem most appropriate for communicating how well they have understood the content being taught, meaning the curriculum is modified to fit the students (Hoerr, 2000). Using an interdisciplinary curriculum involves the teacher transforming the classroom into a space where students are using more than one subject to comprehend a particular lesson, such as incorporating language arts into social studies and math. When students use projects as a means to show understanding, they are drawing on numerous intelligences. Classroom assignments are not the only area in which the multiple

intelligences shine. To show what they have learned from their projects and other classwork, students are to be given the opportunity to do more than fill in blanks and supply short answers to specific questions. Their assessments must provide students opportunities to demonstrate their higher-order thinking skills, generalize what they learn, provide examples, connect the content to their personal experiences, and apply their knowledge to new situations (Campbell, 1997).

Gardner (1993) suggested that schools personalize their programs for students by offering them apprenticeships during the elementary and secondary school years. The apprenticeships he recommends would not track students into careers at an early age. Instead, they would contribute to a well-rounded liberal arts education and consume approximately one-third of students' schooling experience. Although there is adequate classroom research and activity ideas for Gardner's MI Theory, few researchers have explored how the theory of MI can be used in conjunction with authentic assessment (Epelbaum, 2010). Assessment criteria and paradigms must take into account the various ways in which students can demonstrate knowledge and the various ways in which they can exhibit learning or display acquired skills.

In this context, it is helpful to provide assessments that allow students to use their stronger intelligences rather than short-answer, multiple-choice items that depend heavily on linguistic and logical-mathematical skills, and possibly favor students with strengths in these areas (Christodoulou, 2009). A major objective of the theory of MI might be to generate new educational experiences in schools, experiences that would lead to a personalization of the training in order to avoid uniform, inefficient teaching (Oprescu, Craciun, & Banaduc, 2011).

Theory of Multiple Intelligences and the Administrator

According to Armstrong (2009), administrators must have some basis for encouraging their teachers to try the theory of MI in their classrooms, and on a grander scale, maybe implement a multiple intelligences-based curriculum. The basis of encouraging teachers is usually in the form of school improvement. The notion of school improvement is generally recognized not as a single activity but rather as a series of overlapping processes that take place within a collective endeavor that significantly enhances the quality of teaching and learning and improves educational outcomes (Harris, 2002). The school culture led by the administration influences the perceptions held by teachers when implementing certain educational practices (Ferretti and Eisenman, 2010). In conjunction with classroom practice, school improvement is understood to be a means of developing a professional learning community in which teachers and students learn and progress together (Harris, 2002). Teddlie (2005) noted however, that the complexity of the relationship between leadership and school effectiveness requires the skillful blending of several methodological approaches. Zepeda (2007) argued that principals must create a vision for supervisory practice before they can effectively take on the role of instructional leaders.

Types of Multiple Intelligences

According to Gardner (1999), intelligence refers to the human ability to solve problems or to make something that is valued in one or more cultures. One of the most significant characteristics of MI Theory is that intelligence can be pluralized. This means that individuals do not possess merely one intelligence; instead, they have a variety of differences and all intelligences at varying levels (Menevis & Ozad, 2014). Gardner (2006) stated that these

differences challenge the beliefs of an educational system that assumes everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal assessment is sufficient enough to test student learning. He further stated that human cognitive competence is better described in terms of a set of abilities, talents, or mental skills (Gardner, 2006). Gardner (2006) noted that as long as we can find a culture that values an ability to solve a problem or create a product in a particular way, he would strongly consider whether that ability is considered intelligence (Checkley, 1997). Gardner (2006) asserted that students learn best when working within their strongest areas of intelligence. According to Gardner (2006), teachers should actively differentiate instructional methodologies to best match students' intelligence areas in order to provide the most effective learning experience for students. Gardner provided a means of describing human capabilities or intelligences into the following eight categories (Armstrong, 2009):

Bodily-Kinesthetic

Bodily-Kinesthetic is the capacity to use the whole body or parts of the body such as the hands, fingers or arms to solve a problem, make something, or create a product. Having a bodily-kinesthetic intelligence involves using one's entire body or parts of the body (much like the hand) to solve problems or construct products. Bodily-Kinesthetic is the kind of intelligence that is shown in the ability of an individual to use his or her body in a skillful way in order to achieve an expressive aimed goal. The most evident examples are people in athletics or the performing arts, particularly dance or acting. According to Block, Parris, and Whiteley (2008) and Goldin-Meadow (2010), adding a kinesthetic connection can help students create a mental image of abstract concepts and strengthen the way they think about or understand those concepts.

Interpersonal

Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand and interact with other people. Teachers, clinicians, salespersons, and politicians need this type of intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence enables one to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people. Interpersonal intelligence allows individuals to work effectively with others. With their heightened ability to understand and respond to others (Adcock, 2014), persons with this intelligence have skills in areas such as communicating verbally and nonverbally, seeing situations from different perspectives, creating positive relationships with others, and resolving conflict in groups. These individuals are skilled at assessing the emotions, motivations, desires, and intentions of those around them. Having this intelligence helps one learn by relating to others through cooperation and sharing. Interpersonal learners can make excellent group leaders and team players (Armstrong, 2009).

Intrapersonal

Intrapersonal intelligence refers to having an understanding of one's self-knowledge including the awareness of inner moods, intentions, motivations, temperaments, and desires. Having an Intrapersonal intelligence enables an individual to have the capacity for self-discipline, self-understanding, and self-esteem (Armstrong, 2009). Intrapersonal intelligence entails the capacity to understand the self, and to appreciate one's feelings, fears, and motivations. Intrapersonal intelligence involves having an effective working model of the self, and being able to use such information to regulate one's life. Individuals with Intrapersonal intelligence are adept at being aware of their emotional states, feelings, and motivations. These individuals sometimes shy away from others, finding it easier to work alone. Enjoying self-

reflection and analysis, including daydreaming, exploring relationships with others, and assessing their personal strengths are also traits of Intrapersonal intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence involves not only an appreciation of the self, but also of the human condition (Adcock, 2014).

Mathematical

A person with a mathematical intelligence has the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically (Armstrong, 2009). A mathematical person has the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, and think logically. Mathematical intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking. According to Al Ghraibeh (2012), mathematical intelligence is centered in the left half of the brain, the face, and the back of both sides of the brain. In both sides of the brain, the human being is capable of solving problems and achieving results which is the main residence or the basics for science and mathematics. A mathematical person has the enhanced capacity for numerical or logical patterns (Adcock, 2014).

Musical

Musical intelligence is to think in music, to be able to hear patterns, recognize them, remember them, and perhaps manipulate them. Musical intelligence involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns (Armstrong, 2009). A musical intelligence encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms and runs in an almost structural parallel to linguistic intelligence. Musical intelligence entails skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns, and is one of the earliest talents to emerge in the developing child. The intelligence of music usually emerges

at the age of three. Individuals who have a high level of musical intelligence can compose music and play it by the age of five. While the main functions for this intelligence are in the vocal level, tones, and rhythms, it was once thought that music and language began in the same region of the brain. However, after further investigation, it was determined that language development resides in the left hemisphere whereas music resides on the right (Heldling, 2010).

Naturalistic

A naturalistic intelligence is the human ability to discriminate among living things as well as sensitivity to other features of the natural world such as clouds and rock configurations (Armstrong, 2009). Naturalistic learners learn by working with nature; they enjoy learning about living things and natural events including the sciences and environmental issues. A naturalistic intelligence enables a person to recognize, categorize, and draw upon certain features of the environment such as having the capacity to understand nature or biology (Adcock, 2014). The Naturalistic intelligence combines a description of the core and a characterization of the role that many cultures value. Those with Naturalistic intelligence have the ability to identify and distinguish among different types of plants, animals, and weather formations found in the natural world (Adcock, 2014).

Verbal-Linguistic

Linguistic intelligence is the capacity to use language, to express what is on one's mind, and to understand others. Verbal learners have the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish goals. Linguistic intelligence is represented by the ability to write and interact through words. Strength in the area of verbal-linguistics allows one to understand the order and meaning of words and to apply metalinguistic skills to reflect on the use of

language (Tai, 2014). Poets specialize in linguistic intelligence, but any kind of writer, orator, speaker, lawyer, or a person for whom language is an important stock in trade highlights linguistic intelligence. Gardner found that a person cannot continue any effective interaction in the world without recognizing phonetic utterances, structure, semantics, signs, or symbols (Gardner, 2011).

Visual-Spatial

Visual-Spatial intelligence refers to the ability to represent the spatial world internally in one's mind. Those with visual-spatial intelligence have the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas. Visual learners are sensitive to colors, lines, shapes, forms, spaces, and the relationships that exist between these elements (Armstrong, 2009). Spatial intelligence includes the capacity to visualize, to graphically represent visual or spatial ideas, and to orient the self appropriately in a spatial matrix. Visual-spatial intelligence is represented by the ability to use the imagination, and recognize the visual world accurately. A visual-spatial intelligence helps an individual's visual experience in spite of the absence of the visual material that is related to it (Al Ghraibeh, 2012).

Summary

Although there is valuable information on the use of how teachers use instruction, there is not one aspect of the process that can ensure effectiveness in all classroom situations. On the other hand, where research has identified practices that work, many educators would agree that they must apply those practices and evaluate their effectiveness on how students understand the concepts taught in their classrooms. Both traditional instruction and the theory of MI have been individually studied over many years (Tomlinson, 2000; Gardner, 2006), a lack of descriptions

on how Georgia teachers of elementary students experience transformation using both methods have been demonstrated.

Effectively incorporating various types of instruction have strong concrete support as a means of successful teaching techniques. Research has indicated that veteran teachers may still be grappling with ways to implement what is considered the most effective type of instruction in the classroom setting (Beam, 2009). This grappling is based on the teaching philosophy that teachers are willing, wanting, and able to adapt instruction to student differences (Beam, 2009). However, if teachers continue to focus on the academic success of all students, then educators must be able to freely create an engaging atmosphere beneficial to all students.

The two theoretical frameworks chosen to scaffold this research is the Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997) and Perspective Transformation Theory (Mezirow, 1991). Through enhanced understanding of the lived experiences of elementary teachers in Georgia who use traditional instruction and the theory of MI, this study endeavors to provide teacher perception of which method is preferred and the logic behind their preference. The case for the need for this study centers on the necessity for Georgia teachers of elementary students to differentiate instruction (Georgia Department of Education, 2014) and finding the best possible way to improve student academic achievement.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter presents an overview of the research design and methods that were used to further explore this topic. For the purpose of the study, ten teachers from Myrtle Crisp Elementary (pseudonym) with over 6 years of teaching elementary students served as participants who have used both traditional instruction as well as the theory of MI. The literature indicated a gap in research with an understanding of the perceptions of Georgia teachers of elementary students and their preference of which instruction has the most student achievement. Interviews, a focus group, and journals were used in the data collection process. In this chapter, the design, research questions, setting, participants, data collection methods, and procedures for analysis are identified.

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of teachers of elementary students who have implemented traditional instruction in Georgia elementary classrooms as well as the theory of multiple intelligences developed by Gardner. The qualitative method is appropriate for this study because qualitative research adapts to the findings that develop in the qualitative process (Pitney & Parker, 2001). In a qualitative method, the researcher is able to examine the policies of the environment (Anderson, 2010) through experiences of the respondents. The concept of differentiated instruction has been in elementary classroom since the beginning of teaching. It has been addressed by several different names all while still trying to achieve the same result—academic success for all children. In the Homewood Brushton School district (pseudonym), one school has seen a need for a change from the traditional way of teaching and incorporates the theory of

multiple intelligences. Myrtle Crisp Elementary (pseudonym) is a school located in the Homewood Brushton School district that introduced the concept in the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year as a pilot study and has continued to receive positive feedback from both parents, and students.

Design

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to recognize the thoughts and ideas of teachers of elementary students who once used the traditional method of teaching and who are now implementing the theory of MI. Qualitative research was chosen because its nature is to gain a more complex understanding of the phenomena by investigating and exploring the experiences lived by the participants by incorporating the actual perceptions of the participants (Creswell, 2007). This qualitative study explores the attitudes, feelings, and motivations of 10 Georgia teachers of elementary students who once used the traditional method of teaching but are now using the theory of MI. The nature of a qualitative research study spends time focusing on the understanding of the problem. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorenson (2006) defined the qualitative researcher as one who seeks "to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables" (p. 31).

To obtain teacher perception, I organized participant interviews, a focus group, and participant journals into themes to help answer the research questions. This information was documented strictly from the teacher's point of view. These procedures, along with the number of participants, lent themselves to a transcendental phenomenological design. The transcendental approach is used when a phenomenon is identified, data is collected from several people who have experienced the phenomenon, and the data is then organized into themes (Moustakas,

1994). The phenomenological approach provides an opportunity for gaining in-depth understanding of teacher perceptions, requiring the researcher to reserve judgment, bias, and presuppositions, and to adopt openness to any themes that may emerge (Finlay, 2008). The theoretical framework guiding this study is Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory (1997) as well as his Perspective Transformation theory (1991). Mezirow's theory creates the foundation for analyzing the data because through this theory, participants analyze their teaching experiences based on how their teaching transformed from using traditional methods of teaching and the use of the Multiple Intelligences theory. I utilized transcendental phenomenology, which required me to bracket my personal viewpoints about traditional instruction and the theory of MI suspending previous experiences toward the phenomenon.

Research Questions

As mentioned in Chapter One, the following questions will be explored to help understand teacher perceptions of implementing traditional instruction as well as the Multiple Intelligences Theory.

RQ1: How do teachers of elementary students describe their teaching experiences using the theory of MI after using traditional teaching experiences?

RQ2: How do teachers of elementary students decide whether or not to use the theory of MI?

RQ3: What benefits do teachers of elementary students identify regarding the use of the theory of MI in the classroom?

Setting

The study used certified teachers who used both traditional instruction and the theory of MI. Participants will be selected from Myrtle Crisp Elementary school (pseudonym) which is a

Pre-Kindergarten –5th grade school located in the Homewood Brushton School district (pseudonym). Homewood Brushton is a public school district located 20 miles south of Atlanta and serves 40,790 students in grades pre-school to grade 12. The district has 28 elementary schools, nine middle schools, and 10 high schools. Of the 28 elementary schools, 17 are labeled Title I. Each elementary school consists of a principal and assistant principal. Middle schools has one principal and an assistant principal for each of the three grade levels sixth-eighth, while each high school is comprised of one principal, as well as an assistant principal, and a counselor for each grade level ninth-twelfth.

Myrtle Crisp Elementary was chosen because it is the first elementary school in the district and the only school that no longer only uses traditional instruction as its educational foundation, but provides a variety of learning and teaching opportunities to students, faculty and staff that are fully grounded in the theory of multiple intelligences. The school encompasses a principal, assistant principal, and a counselor. Although the school focuses on the theory of MI it has retained some elements of traditional instruction such as having an Early Intervention Program, a Talented and Gifted Program and art, music, and PE classes. Of the over 600 students, 52% are males and 48% are female. 70% are labeled African American while the other 30% are comprised of White, Hispanic or other. There are 44 teachers and the student to teacher ratio is 15:1. Only 5 of the 44 teachers are male and 90% are African American while the other 10% are White.

Participants

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to obtain teachers' perspectives of a phenomenon they have all experienced. All participants in the study were selected from

Myrtle Crisp Elementary in the Homewood Brushton School district (pseudonym). Due to the constant change of what instruction looks like in the classroom, the participant pool for this study represents a wide range of years of teaching and subject areas representative of the teaching pool. The minimum years of full-time, licensed teaching experience in the elementary setting could be one and the maximum years of experience could be up to 35. However, following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the research plan, 10 Georgia teachers of elementary students who have at least 6 years of teaching experience and have previously taught using traditional instruction but are now using the theory of MI were selected via email. In qualitative research, data saturation can be achieved by the inclusion of the first six individuals in a study (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), although between six and twelve individuals is considered ideal. However, a sample size of at least 10 participants for phenomenology studies is suggested by Creswell (2007). For this reason, 10 was the target sample size for this study. Pseudonyms were created for all teachers participating in this study (Moustakas, 1994). One of the procedures used for the selection of the participants for the study is purposeful sampling. Johnson and Christensen (2012) defined purposeful sampling as "a nonrandom sampling technique in which a researcher solicits persons with specific characteristics to participate in a research study" (p. 231). It is used to identify individuals who meet each of the qualifications set forth for the study (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of this type of sample selection in a qualitative study is to choose participants that create a deep understanding of the phenomena (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2003). Criterion sampling was also used as all the individuals studied have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In addition to meeting the qualifications set forth for the study, the 10 participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study.

Procedures

In order to obtain data and complete the study, all researchers who will be working with human participants must apply for and receive approval from the superintendent of the school district and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before they may begin collecting any data for their research. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) consists of members of the educational institution whose responsibility it is to review all of the institution's research proposals so as to ensure the ethical behavior of researchers and the safety of any human participants involved in that institution's research studies. I completed the Application to Conduct Research (District Level) and submitted the document to the office of Learning and Leadership Services for approval. While applicants must submit requests to conduct research to the Homewood Brushton District Office, the final authority to approve or deny school data collection, surveys, etc. rests with the individual principal of the school asked to participate. Approval was obtained from IRB, the office of Learning and Leadership, and the principal of Myrtle Crisp Elementary. An email invitation was sent out to participants until thematic saturation of participants was achieved. The email invitation to participate (Appendix A) was only used to determine interest. Once participants were determined, each participant received an email to obtain informed consent (Appendix A) that explained the study's purpose. With principal permission, an initial meeting was conducted at Myrtle Crisp Elementary between the hours of 3pm and 5pm with each of the participants.

During the initial meeting, the informed statement of consent was verbally reviewed and participants were encouraged to ask questions. They were reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary, confidential, and that the interview would be audio recorded.

Participants were also informed that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative ramifications. After participants were selected a statement of consent (Appendix E) was obtained and each participant signed up for a time to be interviewed. During a five week interval, open-ended, in-depth interviews were conducted and transcribed. The interviews were member-checked by going back and forth to participants with a hard copy of the transcribed interview which allowed their input on my interpretation (Moustakas, 1994). Significant statements, sentences, or quotes delineating units of meaning were highlighted, then those units of meaning were clustered together to form themes (Moustakas, 1994).

A focus group was conducted to collect shared understandings regarding traditional instruction and the theory of Multiple Intelligences. Although all participants initially agreed to be a part of the focus group session, only six of the 10 participants actually participated. As participants discussed and considered each other's views during the focus group, a richer description of the phenomenon was obtained (Patton, 2002). It was feasible to use interviews, focus groups, and journals extensively since this allowed for better understanding of the experience and viewpoint of the participants. The process of data collection was natural and engaging. While each participant voiced their lived experiences, they were provided equal participation throughout all interviews and focus group session (Creswell, 2007).

Table 1

Participant Information

(N=10)

Participant	**Gender**	**Ethnicity**	**Traditional Teaching Experience (years)**	**Prior Theory of MI Teaching Experience (years)**
Alexis	Female	African American	10	1
Ernestine	Female	African American	12	3 or more
Henrietta	Female	African American	22	1
Jenny	Female	African American	6	1
Michelle	Female	African American	20	Less than 1
Misty	Female	African American	20	1
Scharae	Female	African American	10	Less than 1
Tammy	Female	African American	15	3 or more
Tiffany	Female	African American	7	Less than 1
Wendy	Female	African American	16	1

The Researcher's Role

My role in this study is as an educator who uses the theory of MI in my teaching. I am also a teacher certified to teach Talented and Gifted (TAG) students and who is aware of what students in elementary school need to achieve academic success. However, as an educator, it is also my duty to understand the views and perceptions of the students being served. From the first time I was first introduced to this theory, I have been an avid believer in its ability to give students an opportunity to achieve a positive learning experience, all while engaging them in the learning process. Engaging the learner can be a little tricky because it requires creative instructional strategies in which to draw each student into the learning process (Liftig, 2008). My role is someone who has previously taught in the Homewood Brushton School District for over 6 years. However, I do not know any of the participants since the participants were identified through indirect contact via email. In order to avoid my own personal bias and assumptions, I used empirical research to guide interview and focus group questions. According to Smith et al. (2009), researchers should bracket personal experiences in order to set ideas or any bias aside to fully engage in participant experiences. As a strong supporter of the theory of MI, I was required to take on a new and different viewpoint and accept the information as new data in order to produce an impartial product that accurately portrayed the essence of each participants' lived experiences. I chose this school because I was interested in uncovering common themes from the experiences of Georgia teachers of elementary students who were once using traditional instruction and who are now using the theory of MI.

Data Collection

In phenomenological research methods, data collection needs to focus on how the participant experiences the phenomenon. Good qualitative research requires multiple sources of data collection (Creswell, 2007). Data triangulation was used during data collection to acquire rich, thick, in-depth information. (Creswell, 2007). Data triangulation is a validation strategy where multiple sources of data are used to increase the credibility and evidence of the study (Creswell, 2007). Rigorous and varied data collection techniques were employed including: (a) individual interviews, (b) focus groups, and (c) participant journals. Whenever evidence is found in a variety of sources of data, the information is then deemed as being triangulated which brings legitimacy to the findings (Creswell, 2007).

Interviews

Data collection began with semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B for interview questions). . Semi-structured interviews are normally organized with a pre-determined set of questions in mind and then other questions emerging from dialogue between the interviewer and participant (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews were conducted with participants using open-ended questions that were broad and general in nature so that participants were able to describe how they were transformed and the processes they went through (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews are used for obtaining the participants' experiences through the eyes of the participants; they are more personal than a questionnaire or survey. Participant interviews were scheduled and took place individually and face-to-face in order to focus on their lived experiences. However, the process of having individual interviews also allowed for open-ended discussion and comfortable dialogue which provided me an opportunity to interact with the

participants and freely ask questions, obtaining more information pertaining to their individual experiences with the phenomenon.

As each interview began, I informed the participants of my intent to only express their views as I gain insight regarding their perspectives on traditional instruction and the theory of MI. I explained the benefit of their responses to my study and notified them that I only intended to take up between 20 and 30 minutes of their time. I also informed them that if necessary, I would be willing to continue the interview on another day if the interview exceeded the originally agreed upon amount of time. According to Moustakas (1994) the interviewer is responsible for creating a climate in which the research participant will feel comfortable and will respond honestly and comprehensively. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) note that the in-depth semi-structured interview is the most commonly used tool among researchers conducting phenomenological studies. Moustakas (1994) supported the idea that phenomenological interviews involve an informal process of interactions which are formulated around open-ended questions. I used semi-structured interview questions. These questions were the same semi-structured questions asked of all the participants. The semi-structured questions focused on the teachers' perceptions of implementing the theory of MI after using traditional methods of instruction. Open-ended questions gave each participant the opportunity to elaborate their feelings more freely regarding the phenomenon of the study. Each participant's narrative illustrated their perceptions regarding traditional instruction and the theory of MI. Their narratives also served as a small glimpse of each of the participant's lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Based on research question number two; benefits regarding the use of the theory of MI in the classroom, I developed a list of 10 interview questions before implementing the study (Appendix B). The interviews were written to take only 25-30 minutes of the participants' time. Appointments were set on the calendar and were conducted within a 20-day time frame. Teachers were interviewed at a meeting place of choice, all choosing their classrooms, using the semi-structured interview questions. Interviews occurred after school hours using their classroom where participants were most comfortable and least distracted. To ensure confidentiality each participant was given a pseudonym. With permission from the participants, each interview was recorded using two different audio recording devices so that if one failed the information would not be lost. I used an audio-recording application on my Apple iPad® to record each interview, as well as a mini digital recorder as a back-up recording device. I then stored them on my Apple MacBook Pro computer. All recording data was also backed onto an external hard drive which I transcribed exactly as the speaker stated (Creswell, 2007). After each interview, I thanked the participants for their time and explained to them that they would receive a transcript of their interview. They were then asked to respond by email to confirm if the information from their interview was accurate. I asked the following 10 questions of each of the participants.

Interview Questions

1. How many years have you been using the theory of MI?
2. In what way has using the theory of MI changed the way in which you teach?
3. How do you utilize the theory of multiple intelligences for specific student groups within your class?

4. What concerns did you have about implementing the theory of multiple intelligences in your classroom?
5. How has implementing the theory of multiple intelligences impacted your instruction?
6. Compare and contrast your classroom before and after implementing the theory of Multiple Intelligences.
7. Please describe your comfort level in implementing the theory of multiple intelligences.
8. In what ways do you incorporate the theory of multiple intelligences (content, process, product, other)?
9. In what ways are traditional instruction and the theory of multiple intelligences alike? How are they different?
10. What personal experiences have shaped the way you want to teach using the theory of multiple intelligences in your classroom?

According to Moustakas (1994) participants should only be asked two broad questions to get to the textural and structural description of their experience; thus question one was developed with this in mind. Question two was designed to reveal whether the participants went through the transformative learning phase of implementing the theory of MI (Mezirow, 2008). Questions three and four are stated in such a way that allow the participants to make meaning of their own experiences (Bridwell, 2012); furthermore, these questions provided the participants the opportunity to reveal several of Mezirow's phases of transformation: (a) experienced a disorienting dilemma, (b) underwent self-examination, and (c) conducted a deep assessment of personal role assumptions and alienation created by new roles (Mezirow, 2008). Questions five and six are constructed so that the structural descriptions can be exposed (Moustakas, 1994).

Furthermore, these questions allow the participants to divulge other components of the transformative learning phases on how they: (a) shared and analyzed personal discontent and similar experiences with others, (b) acquired knowledge and skills for action, and (c) tried new roles and assessed feedback (Mezirow, 2008). Questions seven and eight are identical in design and are aimed at getting the participants to recall the processes of implementing the theory of MI. Questions nine and ten afforded the participants an opportunity to investigate teacher understanding as well as perceptions and experiences concerning their preparation in implementing the theory of MI (Shapley, Sheehan, Maloney, & Caranikas-Walker, 2010).

Focus Group

In addition to the in-depth interviews, a focus group was conducted in order to discuss the shared experiences of using traditional methods and to gain additional information that would lead to a better and perhaps deeper understanding of their experiences. According to Patton (2002), focus groups are advantageous when researchers are attempting to increase confidence in the patterns that emerge from individual interviews. Elliot (2010) noted that focus groups can potentially be more effective for understanding the phenomenon. While participants are sharing their lived experiences they have the opportunity to hear what others have to say about the same topic.

The focus group interview was conducted after each participant had the opportunity to member check their individual transcribed interview. The focus group questions (Appendix C) were designed to enable the participants to share and analyze personal discontent and similar experiences with others (Mezirow, 2008). The focus group included six teachers who were asked to volunteer for the group. The open-ended questions used in the focus group varied from

the questions used in the individual interviews. The protocols (Appendix E) provide an outline of the process. In qualitative research, focus groups help to stimulate interaction among the participants that may not be revealed when interviewed individually; such as feelings and perceptions (Gall et al, 2003). The session lasted approximately one hour and began with an introduction and opportunity for each participant to mingle with one another and to become comfortable with the process. Many of the participants knew each other but since they taught different grades they normally were not in the same part of the building at the same time unless it was during a staff meeting and even then they are mixed homogeneously with their grade levels. The focus group session was audio recorded for transcription purposes. My role was to facilitate and monitor the discussion and maintain a reasonable and ethical environment (Smith et al., 2009). Although focus group members were encouraged to express personal thoughts on the subject of traditional instruction and the theory of MI, it was up to me to moderate the conversations and maintain focus of the group. The transcription involved multiple reviews of the recording and readings of the transcribed interview to ensure accurate transcription. Focus group participants were given the opportunity to review the transcription of the focus group session as part of the member checking process.

Focus Group Questions

1. Please take a moment to introduce yourself to the group. Be sure to tell us:
    a) Your name
    b) Highest academic degree obtained: B.S./B.A., M.Ed., Specialist, or Doctorate
    c) What you teach, your role, at this school

d) How long have you taught at any location, public or private school in years including the 2016-2017 school year?

e) How long have you taught at only Myrtle Crisp Elementary School in years including the 2016-2017 school year?

2. How often do you attend professional development classes, inside and outside this school building? Do any of these events provide instructional strategies discussing the theory of multiple intelligences? If so, where?

3. Does professional learning classes or instructional observations have a greater influence on your use of the theory of multiple intelligences?

4. Tell me about some of the common strategies used when implementing the theory of multiple intelligences?

5. Recall the first time you implemented the theory of multiple intelligences and you saw positive student outcomes.

6. What else you would like to discuss or add to the conversation about your perceptions of implementing the theory of multiple intelligences?

Question one was used as an ice breaker question that sought to create a comfortable and positive environment as it set the tone of the discussion (Krueger, 1988). The purpose of questions two and three was to extract any ideas in reference to professional development that participants feel have to be thoroughly investigated. The goal of question four was to investigate the ways in which participants implement the theory of MI. The purpose of question five was to elicit any positive experiences connected to the theory of MI. Question six concluded the session

by offering the participants an opportunity to share any ideas that were not previously shared (Krueger, 1988).

Participant Journals

Participants were asked to journal their experiences over the course of four weeks, documenting their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and insights concerning their transition from using traditional instruction to the MI Theory. Journaling as a data collection strategy is primarily intended to assist the participants in responding to research question number one; describing their teaching experiences using the MI Theory after using traditional teaching experiences. Journaling as part of research is used as a means of documenting and reflecting on the practice of research (Banks-Wallace, 2008). A journal is both a diary and a log in that it blends personal reflections, accounts of events, and descriptions of experiences (Chabon & Lee-Wilkerson, 2006). Each week the researcher emailed prompts to the participants with the goal of having them reflect upon their transition. Participants responded with answers to these prompts via email. According to Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) interviews and journals may be the best means of accessing rich, detailed, first-person accounts of the participants' experiences. Journaling assists in bringing forth the stories, thoughts, and feelings about the target phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Journal writing also helps to encourage learners to reflect on experiences and discover things they may not easily recognize. Journals help keep a record of learning experiences and show patterns of work and activities (Van Manen, 1990). After the focus group and journal information was transcribed, data from all three methods were analyzed using phenomenological reduction methods.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of interview transcriptions is based upon an inductive approach, which means that I must arrive at general concepts or themes from an analysis of the specific textual data. Qualitative data analysis typically, but not always, identifies patterns and themes by means of thematic codes (Bowen, 2005). The qualitative study incorporates the participant's stories to keep the experiences and their perspectives true to the qualitative process (Bowen, 2005).

For this study, Moustakas' (1994) approach to transcendental phenomenology was followed, which requires the focus to be on the description of the experiences of the participants rather than on my interpretations (Creswell, 2007). In order to maintain the purity of the participants experiences through storytelling, a narrative analysis was used to demonstrate and protect their stories (Bowen, 2005). The participants within this study completed the interviews, focus groups, and journals at varying times as they consented to participation in the study on varying days. Before the interview process began, permission was obtained from each participant to audio record the interview. Narrative research requires a researcher to review audio-recorded data for detailed information (Reissman, 2008).

I scheduled interviews which were completely based on convenience and availability of the participants on the day they consented to participate. During the interviewing process, the researcher looked for similarities, differences, and outliers. The interviews were separated into sections by interpretation and then the transcription was reread methodically for particular themes and examples. Some examples included; repeated words, phrases, and similar

experiences with each of the participants. Once the outliers were noted, the researcher was able to determine how they worked together to constitute a grander theme.

Notes were made in the margins which classified the region of the interview, inserting the topics of conversation under several groups. This process helped to create a coding structure for the information data. A coding structure also made it easier for the researcher to see where themes were in the document (Welsh, 2002). After coding and reviewing the audiotapes of each question and the different participant responses, the information was examined in isolation albeit in chronological order as they occurred in the original interview to accurately present the participant's perspectives. Throughout the process of analyzing the data, the researcher simultaneously wrote memos on transcripts reflecting about the process. Memoing, or the process of writing notes on interview transcriptions or observations helped initiate my thought processes.

The focus group session was scheduled after all interviews were completed. Following the completion of the interviews and focus group session, participants received access to their journal prompts and were asked to complete them within a four-week window. The data provided from the participant's interviews, focus groups, and journals identified themes within the context of the study. Using these three sources of data helped achieve triangulation, or the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection to provide validity to the study (Creswell, 2007).

Epoche

Epoche, a Greek word which means to stay away from or abstain, is a necessary precaution which as a human instrument must take to avoid tainting the data (Creswell, 2007) and examining it from a pure state (Moustakas, 1994). To avoid bias when analyzing the data, the researcher wrote down their opinions and biases in a computerized journal for the purposes of epoche. Epoche, or bracketing, is a systematic effort to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated (Moustakas, 1994). The act of bracketing is also used while analyzing data as it calls for individuals to eliminate personal experiences and remove all biases (Creswell, 2007). It was important for the researcher to be open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing the research participants describe their experiences of the phenomenon being investigated Moustakas, 1994).

Member Checks

During the study, member checks took place to ensure credibility. Member checks maintained that all transcripts of the interviews, focus groups, and the participant's journals were sent to the participants for verification to make sure the transcripts were accurate. In addition, analysis and final conclusions were shared with each of the participants.

Bracketing

Moustakas (1994) emphasized the importance of researchers to be open and receptive when hearing research participants describe their experiences. Bracketing, the first step of phenomenological reductionism, is the process of suspending judgment from a phenomenon in order to consider it outside of general contexts (Creswell, 2007). Since the researcher is a teacher who once used traditional instruction then incorporated the use of the theory of MI, the

researcher has experience with the phenomenon being studied. It was important that I set aside my personal experiences related to the phenomenon to prevent personal bias from clouding the data collected for this study.

Phenomenological Reduction

In phenomenological reduction (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994) the researcher attempted to develop a description of the experience that reflected the data as a whole. Following the completion of bracketing, the data collected for this study was analyzed using horizonalization. Horizonalization is the process of highlighting meaningful statements from collected data in order to provide an understanding of how the phenomenon was experienced by study participants and assigning equal value to each significant statement (Moustakas, 1994). To accomplish this each participant's data was approached separately and their transcripts were reviewed three times so as to allow for the raw data to expand. The process of horizonalization revealed meaningful statements, or horizons, that were color-coded and analyzed to identify trends and commonalities in responses, creating clusters of meaning and themes within the data.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is needed in qualitative research so as to ensure that the study has a degree of validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). It establishes the quality, rigor, and confidence of research (Schwandt, 2007). This is especially important given the fact that the qualitative researcher, as the human instrument, is considered to be far more likely to become a victim of the subjectivity inherent in qualitative research methods than those who do quantitative research (Creswell, 2007). Trust can be obtained with triangulation by means of different data collection

modes (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). The trustworthiness of a study addresses four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1996).

Credibility

Credibility is defined as the confidence in the accuracy or truth of the findings provided by the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). In this study credibility will be addressed through the use of triangulation, member checking and peer debriefing. Triangulation ensures that multiple data collection methodologies have been utilized and member checking refers to the practice of allowing the participants to review the collected data for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). Member checking allows participants to critically analyze the findings and affirm the accuracy and completeness of the study (Creswell, 2007). Peer debriefing occurs when an impartial peer examines methodology, interpretation, and data analysis of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). With this in mind, I had two peers, who are not involved in the research project, examine the transcripts, methodology, and final reports of the study. Data collection came from three data sources: (a) interviews; (b) focus group; and (c) journals.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability means that the results are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). It refers to the consistency of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). I attained dependability through detailed and thorough methods of collecting and analyzing data.

Confirmability is the degree to which the results are shaped by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). It is the criteria that ensure that I did not fabricate the interpretations and findings (Schwandt, 2007). When researchers are aware of their own biases, it decreases the likelihood that their preconceived ideas will influence or impact their study results (Creswell,

2007). Researcher bias can have a negative impact on research results, which verifies the importance of collaborating with other professionals to ensure that researcher bias does not occur (Creswell, 2007).

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which research outcomes transfer to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). Transferability is being able to provide the reader enough information about the phenomenon of the study to use it for comparison of other cases in an effort to establish any degree of similarity in which findings might be transferred (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). In this study, I provided thick, rich descriptions of the shared experiences of the participants. Descriptions aid in determining if the research is transferable between myself and the participants (Creswell, 2007) and also to other settings and environments (Lincoln & Guba, 1996).

Ethical Considerations

This study examined the perceptions of experienced teachers using traditional instruction and the MI theory. In order to protect the participants and the value of the study, various ethical considerations were addressed including: (a) requesting permission for published materials, (b) gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before conducting research, and (c) properly adhering to American Psychological Association 6th edition (2010) guidelines for citations and syntax. The appropriate steps were taken to obtain specific clearance for all phases of the study such as: securing records of IRB approval, site consent forms, and participant consent forms. Defined procedures were followed to ensure that all identifying information for the school district and the school remain anonymous. I have made every effort to protect the

privacy of the participants and to remain ethical within this study. I only interviewed adult volunteer participants and their names were changed to provide anonymity. Participants were informed of the voluntary, non-compensated nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. All data albeit electronic or hard copy is in a secure location and only I have access to this information. The stored data will be destroyed at the end of three years. I typed the transcription documents from the interviews and focus group sessions and saved them on my personal password-protected laptop.

Summary

This study was designed to contribute to the existing body of work regarding teacher perceptions regarding the use of traditional instruction as well as the theory of MI. As such this qualitative phenomenological study sought to explore the lived experiences of teachers of elementary students in Georgia. This chapter has outlined the design, research questions, participants, data collection and analysis procedures that were used to investigate the phenomena. I used transcendental phenomenological because it was the most advantageous approach for learning about the lived experiences of Georgia teachers of elementary students.

Participants were recruited using a purposive sampling method because I wanted the selection of participants to purposefully give an account of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Ten individuals consented to participate in the study. Three research questions were utilized to guide this study and data was collected through interviews, a focus group, and journals. First I interviewed each participant so as to gain more information about the phenomenon experienced. Afterwards, six participants discussed their views of traditional instruction and the theory of MI during a focus group. Finally, all participants documented their

individual experiences via four journal prompts. The data was analyzed upon completion of each of the data collection methods. To discover the themes, an analysis of significant statements from the participants were conducted and the recurring words, phrases, and sentences were documented. The information gained from the participants aided me in my ability to describe the essence of what they experienced. To establish trustworthiness, I used triangulation, member checks, and bracketing. Every attempt was made to remain ethical by protecting the documents and confidentiality of the participants by assigning each a pseudonym and maintaining a password-protected laptop.

The final goal was to discover insights for which type of instruction the participants prefer to use and why. The following chapter, Chapter Four, will describe the data from the research study, data analysis and the results.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Four is to provide an analysis of the data of the study. This chapter demonstrates the phenomenological methodology as presented by Moustakas (1994). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover teacher perceptions of implementing the theory of MI after using traditional methods of instruction. Triangulation was used and the three forms of data collection were interviews, focus groups, and journals.

This study sought to understand the lived experiences of 10 teachers of elementary students in Georgia classrooms with a variety of teaching experience and who have implemented traditional instruction as well as the theory of multiple intelligences created by Gardner. Transcendental phenomenology focuses on identifying the meanings of individual experiences (Patton, 2002). The remainder of this chapter uses the participants' perspectives to describe and understand the overall experience. The transcendental phenomenological design was utilized to set aside opinions and judgments while interpreting the participants' lived experiences (Van Manen 1990). The key findings obtained from interviews, focus groups, and journals resulted in themes that came from the data analyses which brought explicit answers to the three research questions. The presentation of the findings allows the voices of the participants to come through as rich, detailed descriptions, which is the foundation of a phenomenological research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and includes the descriptions of the participants as they transformed from using traditional instruction to using the theory of MI.

Participants

The identities of the participants and the school were protected by a pseudonym. All participants were employed in the same school, which is referred to as Myrtle Crisp Elementary. In total, 10 participants were involved in this study. All of the participants were African American females and teachers of elementary students in Georgia who have implemented traditional instruction as well as the theory of multiple intelligences created by Gardner. Of the 10 participants, 63% were previously introduced to the theory of MI through a college course. The participants taught at Myrtle Crisp Elementary, had at least 6 years of teaching experience, and previously taught using traditional instruction but are now using the theory of MI. Although the participants have common backgrounds and varied characteristics such as their age, the grades and content they teach, as well as the number of years they have invested in the field of education, they all have implemented traditional instruction as well as the theory of multiple intelligences. For this study, classroom observations were not a valid tool for collecting data since the phenomenon to be studied was teacher perceptions rather than instructional implementation. Each participant was interviewed individually in her individual classrooms and six teachers participated in the focus group interviews held in the Myrtle Crisp Elementary media center. A month after the individual interviews, four journal prompts were emailed to the participants, and all participants responded to each of the prompts. Lastly, a focus group discussion (n=6) was conducted. Background information about each participant is summarized below using pseudonyms.

Alexis

Alexis teaches students who are TAG however, she only teaches 5th grade students. This year marks her 9th year of teaching. Alexis has a master's degree in elementary education, and during her entire 9 years of teaching, has always incorporated some aspect of the theory of MI into her lessons. However, this is the first time she has been at a school that focuses on personalizing learning and incorporating Project Based Learning or PBL, which specifically addresses the theory of MI within her day-to-day instruction with emphasis on preparing students for the real world. Her instruction incorporates lessons that are based on 21st century skills such as; creativity, communication, critical thinking and creativity. Her students rotate through stations that are based on one or more of the intelligences. In the beginning of the school year each of her students complete a MI questionnaire which Alexis uses to personalize learning for each student.

Ernestine

Ernestine has a master's degree in science and has been teaching for over eight years with two years overseas. She has experience implementing the theory of MI doing most of her research on an independent level. As the STEM teacher, she is always trying to finding ways to incorporate the theory into her lessons. Even her room is set up to represent each of the intelligences. She guided me to the interpersonal section of the lab because that is where the students go when they are planning their activities. Although she is not a stranger to the theory, she seemed a little embarrassed to admit that even though her room looks the part she has not been steadfast in her attempt to utilize the theory in her day to day activities. As the STEM teacher, she sees the entire school on a bi-weekly basis and sometimes not at all due to other

activities going on in the building, so it can be a little difficult to maintain the concept of the theory. She stated that she wished that school was not segregated by subjects and that learning was a more fluid process. She runs the STEM lab and creates lab rotations based on each of the intelligences. She has given each student a MI checklist and using lab rotations based on the intelligences is supposed to help Ernestine understand how each student processes his or her learning. Understanding how they process their learning allows her to create lessons that meet the needs of the students, which she states, "is the whole purpose of being a teacher."

Henrietta

Although Henrietta has the most teaching experience of the group, she is currently finishing up her master's degree in curriculum. Throughout her teaching career, she has had the opportunity to teach all grades 1st- 5th. She even retired for a few years however, she became bored at home sitting around doing nothing, and in the last year returned back to the classroom. She was a bit surprised at the school's decision to focus on the theory of MI but says she has seen these "newfangled" theories come and go. She believes that in time the school's climate will change again and the teachers will be back on the educational rollercoaster ride. However, she admits that she still uses the previous concept of "themes" in her class which in her opinion is the same thing as the theory of MI. She decided to obtain her master's in curriculum because she wants students to be excited about learning as well as being excited about being able to communicate, collaborate and share their different points of view. She believes the best way to influence students is to interact with them on levels that are appealing to them. One of the challenges in her transformation was that she had to redesign her lesson plans to make sure she incorporated MI. She said, "The theory caused the lesson plans to change." The change in the

lesson plans required her to show each student's needs, interests and talents and show the creative ways she was using to meet each of the student's needs. As mentioned earlier, she has the most experience, however, role playing, art, movement, singing, and learning centers were redesigned to give student choices and let them create things and make improvements without a large amount of teacher input.

Jenny

Jenny was the first person to be interviewed, and she is the youngest of the group and has the least amount of teaching experience. She has a master's degree and is currently working on her doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. Although she is the youngest, her confidence was strong in her convictions about her transformation. Jenny is a new at Myrtle Crisp Elementary however, this is not her first time being introduced to the theory of MI. In her previous school, all teachers were trained in recognizing as she called them, "the eight levels of intelligence." She was excited about the implementation process because she said, "students are able to drive instruction using their own individual intelligences." Jenny works with students in the Early Intervention Program (EIP) which affords her a small class size of just 11. She says she has no choice but to use the theory of MI and relishes the fact that the school is focusing on MI because she can clearly see her students' strengths and weaknesses and she is able to adapt her lessons accordingly.

Michelle

Michelle has a specialist degree in reading and language arts and was a middle school teacher for 15 years before she came to Myrtle Crisp Elementary. Middle school teachers are only focused on one thing she said, "And that's the subject they teach." Transforming from

traditional instruction to the theory of MI was a little daunting for Michelle. Not only did she have to transform from the middle school process to the elementary but also had to learn about the theory of MI. She says that although her initial reaction was that the implementation may be challenging, she soon embraced the idea. She indicated that as she was putting in the time to develop instructional plans that addressed the diverse student needs she was rejuvenated as an educator. She realizes that the theory of MI is a better way to meet the individual needs of the students. She is thinking about going back to middle school and says that through this transformation she will continue to integrate the theory of MI within her lessons, even if it is with middle school students.

Misty

Misty has a master's degree and has been teaching for exactly 20 years, with four of those years at Myrtle Crisp Elementary. She was excited to learn that the school was focusing primarily on the theory of MI. Misty is a TAG certified teacher and works on the same team as Wendy. She shares many of the same ideas as Wendy when it comes to the theory of MI. Her students are ability grouped and she teaches all subjects every day. As the interview progressed, Misty began smiling and talking about her previous students. She was smiling because she gave them every opportunity to be the best they could be. She did not let them focus on assessments, rather she encouraged them to focus on their gifts. She told them that if they focused on their gifts they were able to face any hurdle that came their way. She began laughing because she says, "students always seem to see assessments as a hurdle instead of a stepping stone."

Although she has been teaching gifted students for the last few years, Misty's TAG certification has given her the opportunity to use the theory of MI in her classroom because she

is able to easily recognize the "gifts" she says all students possess. She stated, "Although I believe implementing the theory of MI is what's best, for me it is obtaining the time required to effectively recognize the gifts of each student."

Scharae

Scharae does not like the theory of MI and was not afraid to speak her mind. She loves teaching and believes that students just have the ability to learn, there is no theory behind it. As a former pre-k teacher, she has a master's degree in early childhood and has been teaching at the elementary level for seven years. She does recognize however, that students have varying learning styles and the use of Multiple Intelligences could possibly allow teachers to tailor their strategies based on the needs of the students.

The theory of MI is a new concept to Scharae so the transformation has been difficult. Transformational learning occurs throughout an adult's life and it is especially prevalent when the stability of a person's truths are challenged or rapid change in circumstances occur such as implementing the theory of MI (Mezirow, 1997). In addition to the new theory, she is challenged to customize lessons that include technology. She wants to reach all of her students based on their own personalized learning ability, but she thinks she may hinder them due to her own academic constraints. Students have varying learning style and the use of Multiple Intelligences will allow the teacher to tailor her strategies.

Tammy

Tammy is a former 1st grade teacher who began teaching gifted students when she implemented gifted inclusion in her general education classroom the previous school year. She recently became the lead TAG teacher and unlike Misty she sees each grade level one day a

week. She decided to change her position because she wanted to incorporate her love of the theory of MI with all students not just her class of 1st grade students. Tammy holds a master's degree in elementary education and has only been teaching at Myrtle Crisp for the last 3 years, however, she has over 15 years of teaching experience. Tammy was focusing on the TAG entrance exam for a student in 3rd grade during the interview process. Her room has papers piled up on her desk which is located near the back window however, that did not distract her from expressing her views on implementing the theory of MI. She hopes that one day the TAG exam will be divided into the various intelligences or that more teachers incorporate the intelligences into their lessons creating lessons that incorporate each of the intelligences. She wants students to be confident in their learning, focus on what they know, and strengthen what they do not know.

Tiffany

Tiffany has been teaching kindergarten her entire teaching career so the thought of transforming from one way of teaching to another has changed her whole idea of what teaching is all about. She has been used to the traditional way of teaching and is not sure if she understands the concept of the theory of MI. She is not afraid of change. For example, instead of desks she has tables and each table is color-coded. She indicated that at this age students should not be expected to just sit at desks and in her opinion they learn best when they are at a table sharing the same space. However, she does fear that she would not execute the process because she may revert back to her old ways. She recently received her doctorate in teaching and learning and plans on leaving at the classroom at the end of the school year. Although she is leaving the classroom, she does not have a clear plan as to what her future holds. However, she

hopes that she will be in a position to further investigate the theory of MI with her future colleagues and receive support in her continued transformation. She is hoping her new colleagues will be able to relate to the stress she encountered. She wants to be able to combine ideas as they offer a variety of strategies that will help her incorporate the theory into her educational career.

Wendy

As the grade chair for her department, Wendy was looking forward to a change. Not only a change for herself but also a change in the way the teachers on her team were creating a positive academic environment. She was excited when she learned she was expected to implement the theory of MI in her classroom. She was introduced to it in college however, she has never been told to use it as a means of teaching. As she closed the door to her room, she mentioned that some of the older teachers have been complaining that the new initiative is too much for them to handle and they would rather go back to the way things were. In Wendy's opinion, teachers just want to teach the way they learned how to teach and what is most comfortable. Wendy has a master's degree and has no intent of adding more education to her resume. She has been in the teaching profession for 16 years, with six of them teaching at Myrtle Crisp. It is her hope to be able to make learning fun and meaningful for all students. Using the theory of MI has provided her the opportunity to be able to address each student's learning style in hopes that they will be able to grasp specific concepts and apply them to real-word situations.

Results

Data triangulation included, in-depth interviews, focus group and journal prompts. Triangulation is often used as a strategy to show validity of data. Multiple sources of data can assist with increasing the reliability and evidence of the study (Creswell, 2007). Analysis of the data began after the interview transcriptions, focus group session and journal prompt responses was completed. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), data collection should conclude after answers become redundant and there is no further insight into the phenomenon. After examining the phenomenon of using both traditional instruction and the theory of MI experienced by the participants (horizonalization), the resulted in three common themes (a) Teacher efficacy, (b) Implementation and utilization, and (c) Student learning style.

Theme Development

According to the transcendental design of this study, the researcher's perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs have been set aside (Appendix F), and the following section provides a narrative of each theme which is solely reflective of the participants' experiences and perceptions. Saldana (2009) stated themes are short abstract statements that ultimately pull together recurring ideas. They are developed whenever numerous codes are identified simultaneously, forming a common idea (Creswell, 2007). Each of the participants encountered many of the same experiences throughout the individual and focus group interviews. After meeting thematic saturation from the data collected, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher uploaded all individual and focus group interviews, as well as journal transcripts into a word document to create an initial generation of codes. Once the transcriptions were recorded, the data was generated using Microsoft Word *find* and highlighted using a variety of

colors as answers to open-ended questions arose according to each of the participant's responses. In order to access rich, detailed, first-person accounts of the participants' experiences it was best to use individual interviews (Flowers & Larkin, 2009) while journaling assisted in bringing forth the stories, thoughts, and feelings about the target phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

Journal prompts also helped to encourage the participants to reflect on their experiences while possibly discovering things about their experience they may not have easily recognized. After the initial coding, the codes were printed and manually investigated to determine their importance to the experience of using traditional instruction and then the theory of MI. Each of the pertinent and significant statements was categorized and labeled according to the research questions. Next, all statements that did not match the participant's experience of using both traditional instruction and the theory of MI were then eliminated and the remaining codes were examined to connect relevance to the participants experiences. Table 2 shows the enumeration of the codes, which were then organized and detailed by themes. Three significant themes emerged: teacher efficacy, implementation and utilization, and student learning style. The participants' statements were then grouped into units and assigned codes, leaving only the statements relevant to the topic as having equal value (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant received a copy of their individual transcript to review for accuracy and to examine the themes. After receiving the transcripts, participants were given a three day turn-around to submit the transcripts back to the researcher to make any changes if needed.

Table 2

Open-Codes and Themes

Coded Categories	Codes	Themes
Teaching method	9	Teacher Efficacy
Concerns	6	
Effectiveness	8	
Strategies	17	
Planning	16	Implementation and Utilization
Comfort Level	11	
District Level constraints	9	
Professional development	8	
Support	8	
Academic Performance	20	Student learning style
Instruction	15	
Engagement	11	

Theme 1: Teacher Efficacy

Teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform tasks related to teaching the theory of MI was a theme that emerged throughout the data. It was evident that the participants were passionate about teaching. They indicated that when using the theory of MI, they had more opportunities to guide students throughout the learning process and meet the needs of the different learners within their classes as well as explore skills and concepts they previously thought were not available when they were using traditional instruction.

The ability to navigate through the transformation of using traditional instruction and then the theory of MI successfully has a lot to do with the capacity of the teacher to recognize whether his or her transformation has a positive or negative effect on the students. According to Klassen and Chiu (2010), teacher's confidence in their ability to implement effective instructional and classroom strategies lead to positive student engagement. All of the participants had to have at least six years of teaching experience to be a part of the study. They were confident in their execution of traditional instruction however, initially when the new concept of using the theory of MI was introduced, some shared that they were not so sure that were going to be able to effectively implement the theory of MI into their regular routine.

Teaching Method. All the participants have been teaching for over six years and began using traditional instruction as their number one means of instruction however, due to its primary nature to differentiate instruction, Alexis, Henrietta, Jenny, Michelle, and Tammy all commented on the theory of MI as a method of instruction they will continue to embrace throughout their teaching career. During the focus group, Jenny stated, "As I dissolve my use of traditional instruction and fully embrace the theory of MI, I am free to design my lessons with my student's strengths in mind and not just the standards." Tammy also spoke of being free as a way to describe her teaching methods. She acknowledged that she no longer considers herself a teacher but a student. She proclaimed,

> Each day that I come to class I am become more and more amazed at what my students can do. Letting them use the learning processes in ways that are more comfortable for them allows me to become a person who acquires knowledge which makes me a student.

While implementing the theory of MI many indicated that they found themselves emerging, and prospering as teachers when speaking of their efficacy. Bass (2012) noted that prior knowledge must be reshaped, or transformed, to absorb new information and develop new perspectives of a situation. As Tammy mentioned in her journal prompt "It is helping me achieve the academic goals through differentiation of my lessons." While Michelle stated in her prompt, "This teaching method is helping me achieve the academic goals I have in regards to reaching all my students. Multiple Intelligence is a way to reach each student on a level that appeals to him/her." Both Tiffany and Wendy admitted that using the theory of MI has allowed them to be more of a facilitator during instruction. Wendy indicated, "Using the theory of MI allows me to focus on how my students like to work. By doing so, I am able to clearly see how I should plan for instruction." Although Tiffany has a doctorate in curriculum and instruction, she says that her teaching methods have drastically changed however, not from what she has learned in her studies but what she is doing in her classroom. Tiffany stated:

> I am more of a collaborative teacher, collaborative in a sense that I am asking the students more questions where they are required to use critical thinking skills, not just giving me back what they think I want to hear. I recognize this more often now than any other time in my teaching career.

Scharae stated, "The teacher is expected to teach the whole child and whatever method is used should be best for that particular child."

Concerns. Although each teacher has at least six years teaching experience, many of them were concerned with their ability to effectively reach all their children while using the theory of MI after using traditional instruction throughout the teaching process. Their concerns

manifested throughout their interviews, the focus groups and their journals. Schrae is a kindergarten teacher and as she mentioned in her interview, "Most of my concern is my student's ability to demonstrate their knowledge in written form." She continued, "It seems as though students whose strength is not writing will not have to be focused on the formality of writing as they were in traditional instruction."

Ernestine mentioned that she was concerned with the student's ability to self-govern however, she realizes it is her responsibility to guide them while at the same time letting them go out on their own. She also mentioned that she is concerned with how well her students will react to change since they are used to the traditional methods of teaching, some students may not be willing to showcase their strengths. In addition she stated, "Building productive students is a process of developing procedures and breaking down learned, ingrained habits which can be an uncomfortable situation not only for teachers but for students as well." In her interview, Michelle noted, "Elementary school requires teachers to devote so much time planning lessons, but does not afford them enough time within the day to actually plan the lessons. In middle school we had more students however, our teacher planning times were longer." During the focus group, Misty solemnly spoke about time however, she was not referring about time to create lessons but specifically teachers having enough time to process the theory of MI, grade activities all while making sure students pass the statewide assessment.

Implementing the theory of MI has not changed the grading policies and the way in which students are assessed. Participants stated that they are concerned students are not doing as well as they would like for them to when they complete benchmark and standardized tests. The transition from traditional instruction to the theory of MI caused Alexis to rethink the design of

her classroom as well as her organizational procedures, particularly the way in which she obtains student grades. Alexis expressed:

> With some of the parents, it is all about grades. They do not seem to be interested in hearing about their student's individual strengths and how utilizing those strengths are far more powerful than whether or not they received a 100 on the test.

William (2013) noted that most student achievement is too multidimensional for a single score for each student to be particularly useful. He added, a single score, no matter how carefully derived, is not able to truly indicate whether a student has grasped or not grasped the concept being taught. During the focus group Jenny stated, "Students are much more comfortable taking assessments when it matches their intelligence however, they become nervous when they are asked to complete an assessment that is not equal to their strongest intelligence." Tammy chimed, "Students are not afforded the opportunity to move at their own pace until they master the content." During the focus group, many of the participants stated that teachers were still being forced to rush students through the lessons because we have to move them along the spectrum of standards even if they are not ready by the end of each nine week grading period. Misty also noted that it will be sooner than later that the *higher-ups* (as she called administration) will deem it necessary for the teachers to let go of using the theory of MI if it does not show concrete evidence of raising the reading and math scores.

Effectiveness. The effectiveness of the theory of MI struck a chord with many of the participants. The theory was new and they did not have evidence of its effectiveness. They agreed that although they were well aware of the effectiveness of traditional instruction in the area of benchmark assessments and standardized tests, they were looking forward to seeing if the

theory of MI will produce better academic results. According to Gardner (2011), the concept of multiple intelligences supports the idea that students are able to interpret the world from a multitude of perspectives. However, in order for teachers to evaluate what students comprehend, teachers must be able to not only administer but also create assessments that connect to the variety of intelligences their students bring to the classroom.

Within her journal prompt, Tammy pointed out that although she is considered a veteran teacher, "The challenge for me was assessing my student's learning in ways which will give an accurate overview of their strengths and weaknesses." Michelle stated in her prompt that she became stressed at the notion of implementing the theory of MI because as she stated, "I had to put in a vast amount of time to develop instructional plans that address the diverse academic needs of my students." On the other hand, Henrietta expressed that redesigning her lesson plans to make sure they incorporated the theory of MI was a constant challenge. According to Mills (2011), teacher knowledge, including teachers' content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge, is closely associated with teachers' efficacy levels. Ernestine prefers using the theory of MI because she says, "Good instruction provides students the opportunity to have hands on or real world experiences for the big academic concepts they are expected to learn." Jenny added, "The theory of MI provides students a variety of opportunities to work in their own way. This is an effective approach because students are more inclined to take ownership of their learning."

Strategies. Several of the participants indicated they had to adjust the teaching strategies they were using prior to implementing the theory of MI. Although adjusting and changing is what teachers are known to do, they indicated that they learned best when they were

working in the trenches. Some indicated they found themselves having to step out of their comfort zones, teaching differently, and reinventing grading practices. The participants agreed that they must change in their strategies if they want students to have successful classroom experiences. In her interview, Henrietta mentioned, "Using the theory of Multiple Intelligences, has affected my teaching strategies because I use it when I design my learning groups." She recognized that each student is bringing their own learning style to class which will affect the make-up and structure of the classroom environment. She continued, "I am now more observant of my students. I ask more in-depth questions. I want my students to make mistakes, learn from those mistakes, and ask questions that will strengthen their learning." Jenny stated, "The theory of MI has impacted my teaching because students have more opportunities to make those real world connections required for 21st century learning." In her journal prompt, Schrae noted: With the combination of specific valid research based educational strategies I will be challenged to customize lessons that include technology that can be extended cross curriculum and beyond one day. The introduction of these educational strategies will definitely allow me to change the way in which I teach in a more effective way.

With 21st century learning concepts being at the forefront of most instructional practices, teachers now expected to implement technology-rich, constructivist activities to help students become college and career minded individuals (Debele & Plevyak, 2012). They are expected to know what strategies they possess, what strategies they need, and how they can use them with the theory of MI.

The participants with the most teaching experience noted that teachers have gathered an arsenal of strategies either from classroom experience, teacher sharing, or college training. Both

traditional and the theory of MI can incorporate the same strategies it just depends on what teachers want to use and the types of students in each class. Many teachers still continue to use whole group, small groups, and individualized or one-to-one learning. They did note however, it takes time to know which strategies to use since every strategy is not for every student. Ernestine expressed her thoughts by stating, "I incorporate a variety of strategies in my lessons such as student partners, small groups and student lead. It is these strategies that provide the students with a multiple of ways to demonstrate understanding of the lesson."

On the other hand, a few of the teachers with the least teaching experience agreed that gathering strategies is part of the teaching experience. They stated they wish they knew a way to keep up with all of the instructional strategies since they do not remember being taught specifically how in college. According to Livneh and Livneh (1999), teachers need opportunities to reflect, engage in professional dialogue, work with pupils, and engage in peer observation, coaching and feedback. Tiffany shared, "I just always try to cater to how my students learn." Alexis and Jenny noted that most of their students learn best by doing so they focus on providing a variety of hands on experiences where they get to move and interact with others. Once again Tiffany stated, "I try to design activities for students that need similar instruction for the same standard. I found that this gives them a buddy system and someone to connect with."

Theme 2: Implementation and Utilization

With years of experience, college education, and some with post graduate work, traditional instruction has been second nature to most of the participants. However, when the teachers were confronted with implementing the theory of MI some of the participants said it was like their first year of teaching all over again. To effectively implement the theory of MI

they believed they needed more training. Of the 10 participants, only Ernestine and Tammy have had 3 or more years' experience using the theory of MI, while the rest of the participants indicated that they were introduced to the theory of MI when they were in college.

Alexis stated,

> I remember reading about the theory of MI in my *Theory and Instruction* class and thought it was a pretty cool concept. I had no idea I would be using Gardner's theory as part of my instruction, now I wish I had paid more attention in class.

Many expressed a level of stress and frustration when it came time to implement the theory of MI because they were not sure of the tools needed to utilize the theory. With traditional instruction, they understood they would need the essentials of paper, pencils, and books. However, they also knew it was not going to be the same with the theory of MI and many were uncomfortable. Misty stated, "I am not quite sure how to merge students' multiple intelligences with the instruction I am currently implementing, I honestly have no idea where to begin."

Planning. During her interview Michelle stated, "It seems as if the planning process required me to start all over again as a teacher." Not only was she a former middle school teacher, she also had to learn the nuances of being in an elementary school and the theory of MI all at the same time. However, she did find that once she completed her upfront planning, it gave her more freedom to conference with her students and the students began to actively take learning into their own hands. According to Mutton, Hagger, and Burn (2011), the process of planning is creative and essentially bounded by contextualized knowledge, including detailed understanding of teachers' students. In the focus group session Scharae gave a hearty laugh

when the topic of planning was introduced. She stated, “I have never been a fan of planning.” She expressed that with teaching kindergarten there is no such thing as plans. She continued, Do not get me wrong, I have lesson plans but only because it is a requirement however, rarely are they being followed. I know how to stay abreast of what I am supposed to be doing just in case I am a recipient of a spur of the moment observation from administration, other than that the students guide my lessons.

During her interview, Misty was quite frank about her level of planning and stated that teachers should place a lot of effort into the lessons. As a TAG teacher she believes that planning is the core of effective teachers, she said, “Sometimes you have to abandon old lessons and plan new ones, the old lessons may not work with every child.” Schrae, who admits is not tech savvy confessed,

> I need more time to research before adding technology to my lessons. If we are going to use the theory of MI, I believe technology is a big part of the process however, I am just not there at the moment.

Comfort Level. Another aspect of the theme was comfort level. Teachers admitted that initially they were not comfortable with implementing the theory of MI however, as they gave into the process it started to feel natural. Misty stated that the only way to be comfortable with the change of the instruction process is to not look at it as change but “the process of what teachers should already be doing.” Wendy noted that “The theory of MI is just like traditional instruction it takes practice and a willingness to embrace all that it has to offer.” She went on to say, “I'm very comfortable implementing the theory of MI I see it as a part of my growth

mindset." Misty also added, "I am an observer, when teachers share their positive experiences, it energizes me and I want to have that same positive experience."

District-Level Constraints. During the focus group all participants stated that the district-level constraints such as district level practice tests, and reading and math tests had a major impact on how they implemented and utilized the theory of MI. Curriculum standards also posed a problem for the participants because they did not provide teachers the opportunity of flexibility with the lessons. The theory of MI goes beyond the traditional instruction which indicates that being strong in reading or math is the only kind of intelligence and for one to be deemed intelligent can only be measured by the results of standardized tests (Strauss, 2013). Wendy noted that "It takes time to fully understand the process of MI and still focus on standardized testing and curriculum standards, especially when the standards and how they are evaluated are constantly being changed." Teachers need to broaden their instructional and assessment approaches to include strategies drawing on a wider variety of intelligences (Ozdemir, Guneyzu, & Tekkaya, 2006). Tiffany stated, "Kindergarten is not like it used to be, we are focused on whether students can read and write however, we are not just focused on can students write their name but can they write their first name, last name, a complete sentence, and create a three sentence paragraph."

During the focus group, Ernestine was quite vocal on her views about the district level constraints. She noted:

> Whenever the best practices that relate to the school-wide or district level strategic goals are placed on a rubric which will be used to evaluate teachers, or the report card which is used to evaluate the students, those best practices will not be taken seriously. People are

afraid to do what they are not being evaluated on. It is like a catch 22, they, meaning the district wants us to use what is best for students however, only in theory not in practice. When it comes down to it, the district is known to use a lot of catch phrases in the area of education and what they consider to be best for students, but the one thing that will keep it going is whether or not there is sufficient funding to support its ideals.

Professional Development. An effective way to organize professional learning for teachers is by using the practice-based professional development approach (Ball & Forzani, 2009). Practice-based professional development focuses on developing teachers' understanding and skills to effectively implement an educational practice, instead of focusing primarily on increasing teachers' knowledge about a practice (Ball & Forzani, 2009).

When the school announced that it was going to implement the theory of MI, all teachers were afforded professional development. Some teachers did not want to partake in professional development however, they took it with a grain of salt while others viewed it as a positive experience since they were told by administration they would be provided with continuous professional development. Day's (1999) definition of professional development describes its intended purpose, which should directly affect the transformation of the classroom:

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning

and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives (Day, 1999, p.4).

School leaders believe professional development improves teaching practices and teacher effectiveness (O'Brien, 2010). On the other hand, Boardman, Arguelles, and Vaughn (2005) attest that since professional development is most often a one-day in-service or workshop; attending is not always a guarantee that teachers will meet the variety of academic needs of the students in their classroom. However, Leko and Brownell (2009) suggest that when teachers do attend professional development it should be coherent, content-focused, active, and collaborative. In the beginning, the professional development in the area of MI was a constant attribute of the school however, the participants all agree that the professional development aspect has died down based on the reading and math data indicating a drop in scores. According to Evans and Waring (2006), continued PD has the potential to support teachers in adjusting practices and implementing changes related to instruction. On the other hand, there is little impact in instruction when PD is not directly connected to classroom experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Professional development that is comprised of demonstration, practice, and coaching has a strong ability to increase a teachers' knowledge, skills, and application (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Most teachers desire to improve their instructional practice all while they are creating environments that promote high academic expectations for their students (Bright, 2012). Alexis believed she needed more professional development when implementing the theory of MI because she wanted what is best for her students. In order to support teachers as they implement practices deemed effective through research, administrators frequently engage in observation,

modeling, and feedback. Administrators must carefully assess teacher effectiveness to ensure the academic success of all students (Block, Crochet, Jones, & Papa, 2012). Assessment-based accountability systems in education (Neal, 2013) were created with two purposes in mind when gathering data from a single assessment system. First, the assessment system is supposed to provide reliable and accurate information pertaining to student achievement. The second objective is to encourage teachers to teach well by attributing consequences such as poor evaluations and loss of contract to assessment-based measures of their teaching performance (Neal, 2013). In Georgia, all teachers are evaluated using the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). According the Georgia Department of Education (Georgia Department of Education, 2016), TKES is comprised of three components which provide multiple sources of data, the three components are Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards, which consists of ten performance standards (see Figure 1), Professional Growth, and Student Growth. When an administrator observes or evaluates a teacher implementing a new strategy, the administrator records the data of the teacher implementing the ten performance standards. Once the evaluation has been completed, the administrator provides feedback on the teacher's strengths as well as opportunities for improvement (Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010).

Figure 1. Ga DOE Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards

Planning
1.Professional Knowledge The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences. **2. Instructional Planning** The teacher plans using state and local district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.
Instructional Delivery
3. Instructional Strategies The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content area to engage students in active learning and to facilitate the students' acquisition of key knowledge and skills. **4. Differentiated Instruction** The teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.
Assessment Of And For Learning
5. Assessment Strategies The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population. **6. Assessment Uses** The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents.
Learning Environment
7. Positive Learning Environment The teacher provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all. **8. Academically Challenging Environment** The teacher creates a student-centered, academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.
Professionalism and Communication
9. Professionalism The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school's mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support learning, and contributes to the profession. **10. Communication** The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.

During the focus group, Alexis said that once during her TKES evaluation, the principal asked her how she used MI to differentiate her instruction. "…I was expecting her to say something like, were you able to use the information giving during the last PD? I wanted to let her know that PD was not happening but I did not know how to say it." Ernestine added, "Until the notion of MI is on the evaluation forms, there will not be much buy in for PD in the area of MI." Misty chimed in and said, "Without consistent professional development this initiative could possibly fall to the waist side." In her journal Wendy wrote:

> I wish the school took the theory of MI seriously, I guess it sounded good on paper but there has to be more push in the area of professional development to make it work. Quite frankly, this does not seem to be our only initiative because are focusing on too many things we need to be strong in one area before we can take on another.

Tiffany mentioned:

> I believe that with the professional development we have already had as well as those to come, I will have a better understanding of the process and how to implement it with fidelity within my classroom. I believe that I will be able to truly cater to the abilities of each of my students and allow them the instruction that is needed to not only meet the standards but exceed them as well.

Teachers are always reflecting on their instructional practice and require feedback from their peers to develop ways to improve (Watson, Miller, Davis, & Carter, 2010). This reflective practice is a primary condition to achieve professional development in the area of instructional practice (Weshah, 2007). In order to make informed and logical decisions on educational matters, then assessing the consequences of those decisions, teachers must engage in reflective

thinking (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Henrietta expressed that instead of attending PD where lecturing by others outside of the school building is the focus, it may be a good idea if the teachers who were strong in MI participate in observation sessions among colleagues where they could watch other teachers demonstrate best practices and strategies related to the theory of MI. According to Edmonds & Lee (2002), lecture-style teaching has been looked down upon by teachers, who tend to prefer more active and practical styles of learning. Henrietta continued, "You can feel a little uncomfortable of incorporating something new when you do not have the support necessary to be motived." She recalled going to a professional development training where the presenters gave out lessons for the participants to analyze in order to give them practice on what they were learning so that they can take the information back to the classroom where the information would be the most useful. Jenny added, "Just like the students, I learn different things in different ways, so if I am always being lectured to or watching videos I am not going to learn anything." In order to promote educational reflective practice, teachers should know the different modes of reflection hierarchy. The different modes of hierarchy include; technical, contextual, and dialectical (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Teachers at the technical level have a small amount of information to draw on while focusing on their problems whereas teachers at the contextual level understand the concepts, contexts, and theoretical bases for classroom practices, and are able to defend those practices and explain their relevance as it pertains to academic achievement. Critical reflection is considered the most import because it is the way in which teachers look for and analyze their instructional experiences as well as the effects and outcomes of such experiences on student success.

Support. Price (2012), attests that a positive teacher learning culture equals an improved learning and successful change in schools. Each of the participants commented on a desire for support from administration. They all believe that without support, the process of implementing the theory of MI will not be as successful as it was intended during the planning process with all stakeholders. Tiffany made it known during the focus group that "both administrative support and professional development are lacking in our new initiative." The participants agreed that their challenge mainly centered on time for planning. Michelle replied, "We need lessons modeled as well as someone to serve as a resource for ideas and content." Tammy added, "If administration is not able or does not have time to give support then maybe we need to support each other." Receiving support from each other is more beneficial than when they receive feedback from someone in a position of authority (Topping, 2005). It would be great to have more time to plan with other teachers, and not just teachers on the grade-level but school-wide." Ernestine commented on how she would like to have more opportunities to plan assignments as a whole group during staff meetings in order to bounce ideas off of one another. Supporting each other is beneficial for teachers as they acquire new skills, knowledge, and values needed for their student's academic success. Britton and Anderson (2010) expressed that reflection promotes a deeper understanding of the practice of education while challenging some of the ideas teachers have related to instructional practices. Alexis, Jenny, and Tiffany have the least amount of teaching experience and admitted that they struggled to find appropriate materials and activities to use in their instruction or correlated with the theory of MI.

Theme 3: Student Learning Style

Using the theory of MI focuses on student learning style. Learning styles can be looked at as how students deal with the way in which they study and through the perception towards their surrounding and how they can adjust to the assignment given while producing a good academic end result. All students at Myrtle Crisp elementary were given a MI inventory and from this inventory the students' intelligences began to emerge. All participants stated they used the inventories to create differentiated lessons which were geared toward the academic achievement of their students. The participants also stated they created large choice boards in their classrooms based on the standards the students were working on. Having choice boards provided an opportunity for students to express their choice in the kind of work they wish to complete based on their intelligence. Jenny stated, "All students learn information differently so we have to present options for student expression. As teachers we should be informed as much as possible by detailed knowledge about our student's strengths, needs, and areas for growth." Gardner (1993) stated teachers are encouraged to begin to think of lesson planning in terms of meeting the needs of a variety of the intelligences. Alexis stated, "Creating choice boards helped me to instruct my students' lessons individually and not as a whole class. I was better able to personalize their learning." Most of the participants stated they noticed there was more engagement from their students when they were given a choice about how they were going to show their understanding of their learning. Tomlinson (2010) stated that students have a preferred modality or instructional style that best enables learning to occur and is related to how students take in and process information.

Instruction. During her interview, Michelle noted, "I believe when students utilize their intelligences, it is a uniform cognitive capacity people are born with, however it seems students need direct instruction to recognize that they have multiple intelligences." In her journal prompt Alexis wrote:

> Good instruction whether past or present provides students and opportunity to have a hands on or real world experience for the big concepts they are expected to learn. Traditional instruction that relies on memorization for student learning outcomes is not utilizing best practices.

During the interview as Tammy organized her papers she said,

> With traditional instruction, the teacher is the instructor whereas with the theory of MI, students are the facilitators of their own learning. However, teaching students who are labeled talented and gifted they are expected to be in charge of their learning. As the teacher, I am also expected to provide them with activities that are challenging and engaging.

Caraisco (2007) noted that there is a lack of academic engagement when gifted learners are not provided with an array of choices to showcase their learning.

During the focus group, Tiffany stated, "All teachers should fully utilize the theory of MI. If so, they would then see firsthand that not all students learn at the same time and students are capable of much more than we expect of them." The very nature of differentiation requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching and to adjust the curriculum and presentation of information to learners rather than expecting learners to modify themselves for the curriculum (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2009). Henrietta recalled a time when she took her students outside

for a lesson on insects. She revealed that growing up on a farm she was always outside trying to catch insects. She thought taking her students outside was going to give them the same experience however, she says:

> When we got out there we spotted a grasshopper, as I was trying to catch it, it jumped up high. When it jumped all the students scattered. It was hysterical because I could not believe how startled they were because it jumped!

Jenny added, "It is important that teachers are able to personalize learning for each of their students, as this allows teachers to cater to the abilities of the students." This topic was strong for the participants. Many agreed that instruction on a whole should be in the hands of the students. Wendy responded,

> Sometimes, my lessons are revealed to me as I am observing my students. I then create choice boards based on my observations. I offer my students the use of choice boards as well giving them the opportunity to create their assessment questions. Creating their assessment questions gives them the opportunity to take ownership of their learning.

Ernestine added, "Good instruction should provide students the opportunity to have real world experiences, period."

Engagement. During the interview process Michelle commented that implementing the theory of MI has made her realize something about herself,

> When I teach, I now consider the varied learning styles of my students. I offer the opportunity for the students to engage in activities that meet the needs of their learning styles. I no longer use the one size fits all approach to teaching. I recognized that students learn differently.

In her journal prompt, Alexis described her students' learning by stating, "I like providing students with multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge and skills through the theory of MI. It allows them to increase their engagement and learning, and provides me with more accurate knowledge and skills." Engaging activities that are based on students' curiosities and interests lead to more practical and meaningful learning experiences (Gutek, 2011). During the focus group Tammy mentioned that she is constantly empowering her students to learn through multiple modalities. Jenny spoke up and said, "Exactly, I expect my students to choose their learning activity based on which intelligence they are the strongest, this type of independence engages them and they eventually want to do more and learn more." Gardner (1999), noted that when students are afforded the opportunity to demonstrate learning in ways that showcase their individual strengths, they may be more likely to effectively engage in their learning activities which will then produce academic success. Out of all the participants, Henrietta has been in education the longest and believes that engaging the students in their lessons should not be a struggle. She stated, "If students are provided with a variety of ways to showcase their learning, they will be engaged and from engagement comes learning."

Academic Performance. One of the key points to student learning style was academic performance. Participants stated that the most beneficial part of using the theory of MI was its academic nature. When using the theory of MI students take ownership of their learning and they also take responsibility for their learning. Students learn best when working within their strongest areas of intelligence (Gardner, 2011).

The participants expressed that education takes planning, time, and patience. Some noted that their entire goal of being a teacher is student academic performance. According to

Gardner (2011), teachers should actively differentiate instructional methodologies to best match students' intelligence areas in order to provide the most effective learning experience for students. Ernestine admitted:

> Now I am starting to recognize the strengths of my students, especially those who are kinesthetic and who need to have a hands on experience. I notice that my students with behavior problems are off track when they are given a writing assignment. It seems to be their defense mechanism as if to say, if I have to write I know I am not going to be good at this so let me disguise my lack of knowledge with some sort of acting out diversion.

Schrae noted, "Using the theory of MI is helping me achieve the academic goals I have for my students through differentiation of lessons." Tammy responded to a journal prompt by saying, "Academic goals give the students ownership over their learning, it gives them a feeling that they can accomplish their goals and it makes them feel successful." During the focus group discussion the topic of positive student outcomes came up and Tiffany began smiling as she recalled the first time she implemented the theory of MI and saw positive student outcomes:

> As the students were learning about the engineering design process, the cooperative groups were designing a boat that could hold cargo. It was awesome to see the students working together and using language that had not been heard from them before.

As Scharae was looking at a picture of her students she noted, "As a teacher of younger students, the ability to see growth gives one a great deal of hope and pride in a job well done." She continued by saying, "I am in this profession because I love to see students with the least amount of book knowledge grow and become prepared for the next grade level, it is one of the best feelings in the world."

Research Question Responses

In this section, the lived experiences of 10 Georgia teachers of elementary students who used traditional instruction and who are now using the theory of MI are described through narrative answers to each of the three research questions.

Research Question One

How do teachers of elementary students describe their teaching experiences using the theory of MI after using traditional teaching experiences?

When describing their teaching experiences the participants focused primarily on teacher efficacy. While each participant shared experiences that directly applied to their unique situations, the essence of the shared experience implied that there is an overall desire to use best teaching practices while implementing the theory of Multiple Intelligences in order to impact student learning by giving students the opportunity to choose how they learn. Teachers with high self-efficacy work hard to help students improve their learning (Printy & Marks, 2006).

Jenny stated that she monitors her learning stations more, making sure that her lesson plans directly coincide with what the students are doing in each of the stations. She said that each of her stations have options for students to choose how they learn. It is her belief that incorporating the theory of MI in the stations makes learning more enjoyable for her students. She stated, "My students have indirectly changed how I now look at teaching. I give them a task and they are learning from each other. It is such a beautiful thing to see." Michelle believes that theory of MI is a valid, researched methodology that combats the idea that intelligence is dominated by a single common ability. This notion of intelligence not being dominated makes the teaching experience positive for both the teacher and the student.

On the other hand, Scharae described her experience as an eye-opening moment in her teaching career. She said she began to look at students as individuals who were trying their best to succeed, she no longer viewed them as a project or as something she was supposed to mold and create. Her expectations of her students are more realistic and now her lessons are more realistic. She indicated that there are more student-teacher conversations and her students are making home, school, and community connections.

Tiffany mentioned that she is constantly analyzing her student data to see if it stays consistent. If it starts to fluctuate she then revisits her lessons to see how they can be adjusted. She says, "I really want do not my students to view school as a place that has negative connotations. I am taking full responsibility for their academic experience." She says analyzing her student data helps her create lessons according to each students' learning style giving everyone the opportunity to succeed on their own terms.

Henrietta described her experience as enlightening. She says that although she has been teaching kindergarten for many years, every year she is amazed at what her students can do, she observes her students actions more closely and has noticed they have more independence and autonomy of their learning. She said, "I find myself constantly reevaluating my lessons because my students are showing me things I had no idea they were able to accomplish. I find myself doing more listening because I am in such awe." Ernestine noticed that traditional instruction does not provide her with authentic opportunities to recognize the academic strengths the students possess. Being the STEM teacher already affords her opportunities to create educational experiences where her students utilize their individual strengths. She said she is now

more in tune with her students' abilities since they are able to freely express what they know in a variety of ways.

Research Question Two

How do teachers of elementary students decide whether or not to use the theory of MI?

The decision whether or not to use the theory of MI is two-fold. On one hand the school, with the by-in of parents, teachers, students, and administrators initially decided upon the new teaching initiative during the 2013-2014 academic school year however, some of the participants expressed that afterwards there was not enough professional development and administrative support. Without the administrative support some participants were not confident in using the theory and at times admitted that they reverted back to the traditional method. Ernestine expressed her thoughts by saying,

> This is my belief, I am not sure we really have the power to make the decision whether or not to use the theory of MI. It is unfortunate however, until it becomes part of the TKES platform, or when they have to hold us accountable for using the theory they will not offer us consistent training.

One the other hand, some participants experienced a transformation concerning their confidence while implementing the theory. They stated they will continue with the implementation process even though there is not as much support from administration as they would have liked. According to Mezirow (1997), a transformative learning experience requires that the learner makes an informed and reflective decision to act. Alexis said that no matter what administrative support she receives she will continue to use the theory because she wants to

accomplish a few goals as an educator. She says she wants to teach to each individual student's strength and she wants to increase the academic success for every student in her class.

Instruction should be informed as much as possible by detailed knowledge about students' specific strengths, needs, and areas for growth (Tomlinson, 1999). Jenny mentioned that she chose to continue using the theory of MI because she is trying to address different learning styles in her classroom. She used the example that some students are artistic or may struggle with written expression therefore she usually includes assignments that students can confidently use as an illustration to express knowledge of content. For the most part the participants agreed that the decision whether or not to use the theory of MI in their future teaching career will be based on whether it will benefit the students in which they teach. They also agreed that their number one goal is to use best practices and to make sure all students are comfortable in the learning process.

Henrietta indicated that she likes attending a variety of professional development sessions. She tries to choose professional development sessions that she can immediately use in her classroom. She recalls going to one workshop where they helped the attendees create lesson plans, she says the assistance gave her a different perspective of what the lesson could look like once she adapted it to meet the needs of her classroom. She did state however, "Sometimes when I attend self-chosen professional development sessions I feel uncomfortable incorporating something new when it did not come directly from my principal."

Research Question Three: What benefits do teachers of elementary students identify regarding the use of the theory of MI in the classroom?

In response to what benefits teachers of elementary students identify regarding the use of MI in the classroom, participants agreed that the theory affords students the opportunity to meet the learning targets created specifically for them to reach. In addition, using the theory of MI in the classroom supports the broad and diverse range of learners in every classroom, helping teachers provide instruction for each individual student without hindering the abilities of the students as a whole. Using the theory of MI, teachers can profile their students to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses during the learning process (Moran, Kornhaber, & Gardner, 2006) and then create lessons according to the student's particular strength or intelligence.

Participants have noticed that students are becoming responsible for their learning due to the fact that they are able to self-assess the learning that takes place in the classroom. The use of MI in the classroom is a vital way to motivate both teachers and students (Cash, 2011). As Alexis pointed out, "Through the use of MI we as educators are able to tap into our students' prior knowledge and incorporate it into their learning environment making it a win, win situation for all." The benefit of using the theory of MI is that students would not only learn about their own MI strengths and how to use them effectively but they also would relish the process of learning in general because now they are motivated to do so (Rettig, 2005).

Tammy stated that the benefits of using the theory of MI in the classroom was that it is a way for teachers to understand their students. She also mentioned that is gives her a more structured way to diversify her instructional plans. She stated, "If it has not already, it will take hold in classrooms across the United States because it helps teachers tap into their natural talent of just being a teacher." Michelle and Scharae initially were struggling with the concept of MI

however, they both agreed that the benefits of MI is that it has changed their perception of teaching. Michelle noted,

> I realize that by embracing the theory of MI that I have really grown. I entered the teaching profession believing that the teacher was the sage, the holder of all knowledge. I now can admit, if I want students to learn, I need to provide them with all the necessary tools which could very well mean just letting them learn from each other and themselves.

In addition to students learning about their own MI strengths and how to use them, teachers should also learn their own MI strengths and weaknesses. They should make a conscious effort to use all eight MI's in their lessons to reach all of their students, not just those who think as they do (Rettig, 2005). Henrietta summed up the benefits of using MI by stating, "Students are our investments in education, you get what you give."

Summary

This chapter has focused on the lived experiences of 10 teachers of elementary students in Georgia classrooms who have implemented traditional instruction as well as the theory of multiple intelligences created by Gardner. Each participant was introduced with pseudonyms along with a rich description or portrait. Participant's portraits were provided followed by a description of the three themes that emerged from their experiences. In this phenomenological study, triangulation of data included open-ended and in-depth interviews, journal prompts and a focus group. Repeated readings of the interview transcripts and the journal prompts as well as analysis of data using the inductive approach, which means that the researcher arrived at general concepts or themes from an analysis of the specific textual data which helped me to identify significant statements from the stories shared by all the participants.

Research questions were also answered in this chapter. Participants embraced the implementation of the theory of MI, but would like to have more professional development and administrative support. Participants identified both strengths and challenges of implementing the theory of MI. Strengths were recognizing that all students are engaged in the learning process when given the opportunity to learn in the way that best meets their needs. Participant challenges mostly stemmed from not knowing whether or not they have support from administration during evaluations. Or whether they can alter their lessons and teach across curriculum during the time created in the schedule for specific subjects are designated to be taught. Challenges also arose in the assessment process and how the implementation of the theory of MI will impact student learning.

Lane (2013, p. 45) sums up the assessment process on teaching and learning by saying:

> Policy makers, state departments of education and the measurement community, collectively need to figure out how to evaluate the impact standardized assessments have on teaching and learning. In addition, educators, sociologists, and learning scientists, could possibly help by providing an important lens through which to examine the impact standardized testing has on student learning and instruction.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Myrtle Crisp teachers of elementary students implementing the theory of MI strategically provided differentiated instruction following the premise of TKES by planning with student success in mind. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the perceptions of 10 teachers of elementary students in select Georgia classrooms with a variety of teaching experience and who have implemented traditional instruction as well as the theory of multiple intelligences. The goal of this study is to discover Georgia teachers' perceptions using the traditional method of teaching, and the theory of MI and their views on which one has the most impact on student achievement, Mezirow (1991) defines this as their perspective transformation.

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings as related to the three identified themes, relevant literature, and Mezirow's (1991) Transformational Learning Theory as well as his Perspective Transformation Theory (1991) both of which guided this study. Implications for effective ways to fully implement the theory of MI and the development of a variety of ways for students to show product in terms of assessment. Limitations of the study were addressed and recommendations describe the future research needed as a result of these findings. A summary will wrap up the chapter.

Summary of Findings

The data provided from this transcendental, phenomenological study addressed the lived experiences of 10 teachers of elementary students. The participant's interviews, focus groups, and journals identified themes within the context of the study. Using these three sources of data

helped achieve triangulation or the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection to provide validity to the study (Creswell, 2007). The analysis of data along with the perspectives from each of the participants provided the evidence necessary to answer each of the research questions in this study. The following discussion explains how each of the research questions informed the study:

Research Question One

How do teachers of elementary students describe their teaching experiences using the theory of MI after using traditional teaching experiences?

All the participants described their teaching experiences focusing primarily on the area of teacher efficacy. There is an overall desire to use best teaching practices while implementing the theory of Multiple Intelligences in order to impact student learning by giving students the opportunity to choose how they learn. According to Printy and Marks (2006) it is the teachers with high self-efficacy that are persistently dedicated to making sure students increase their academic goals.

Some teachers have arranged their classrooms to have specified stations that provide options for students to choose how they learn. Creating stations that incorporate the multiple intelligences makes the process of learning more enjoyable for students. Others believed using the theory of MI also made their teaching experience enjoyable since it is a valid, researched methodology that combats the idea that intelligence is dominated by a single common ability. This notion of intelligence not being dominated makes the teaching experience positive for the teacher, which fosters commitment and their lessons are more realistic. Teacher confidence in their ability to implement effective instructional and classroom strategies can lead to positive

student engagement (Klassen and Chiu, 2010). Participants stated that there are more student-teacher conversations and students are making home, school, and community connections. Teachers were constantly analyzing their student data to see if it stays consistent, which helps create lessons according to each students' learning style which gives all students the opportunity to succeed on their own terms. Some teachers described their teaching experience as authentic opportunities to recognize the academic strengths the students possess. On the other hand, they also described the experience in a negative light because they believed there was a lack of professional development and varied levels of administrator support leaving the teachers to support one another. The teachers believed they needed lessons modeled as well as someone to serve as a resource for ideas and content.

Research Question Two

How do teachers of elementary students decide whether or not to use the theory of MI?

The decision whether or not teachers of elementary students use the theory of MI was based on teacher desire to increase the academic success for every student in her class using the process of differentiation not only by content and process but also by product. However, the original decision was based on administration, teachers, and parents. The changes in instruction caused a few teachers to be frustrated because their teaching methods were altered in a new way and they were struggling with trying to make old practices fit into the new practices especially when it comes to producing data that shows student academic growth. The process of change was deemed stressful by some of the teachers because they wanted to implement the theory of MI, but sometimes they would revert back to traditional instruction practices. Mezirow, (1991) stated, that no matter how effective a learner is at making sense of his or her experiences, in

order to transform they have to start with what they have been given and operate within these horizons (Mezirow, 1991).

A teacher conveying knowledge to a set of students, has been perhaps the most fundamental component of traditional instruction however, instruction should be informed as much as possible by detailed knowledge about students' specific strengths, needs, and areas for growth (Tomlinson, 1999). Some teachers chose to continue using the theory of MI because they are trying to address different learning styles in their classroom. For the most part the teachers agreed that the decision whether or not to use the theory of MI in their future teaching career was based on whether it will benefit the students in which they teach. With an understanding of Gardner's theory of MI, teachers can better understand the students in their classrooms. It provides an opportunity for students to explore and learn in a variety of ways, as well as help them direct their own learning. Teachers agreed that their number one goal is to use best practices and to make sure all students are comfortable in the learning process. However, teachers found that trying to teach all of the intelligences was difficult. Some teachers indicated that they wanted to revert back to traditional instruction because they do not know how or do not want to find ways to integrate various activities that will stimulate the minds of all students. Many say it is easier just to follow the one way they have previously taught in prior years or to teach subjects in isolation. Due to their lack of understanding the theory, teachers also indicated that attending a variety of professional development sessions that clearly support them in the implementation process of the theory of MI will also determine whether or not they will use the theory.

Research Question Three: What benefits do teachers of elementary students identify regarding the use of the theory of MI in the classroom?

In response to what benefits teachers of elementary students identify regarding the use of MI in the classroom, participants agreed that the theory affords students the opportunity to meet the learning targets created specifically for them to reach. In addition, using the theory of MI in the classroom supports the broad and diverse range of learners in every classroom, helping teachers provide instruction for each individual student without hindering the abilities of the students as a whole. Traditional instruction rarely take into account the value of differentiating instruction in "multiple ways through a variety of means such as "music, art, mathematics, drama, and language" (Short, Kauffman, & Kahn, 2000, p. 160).

Participants have noticed that students are becoming responsible for their learning due to the fact that they are able to self-assess the learning that takes place in the classroom. The use of MI in the classroom is a vital way to motivate both teachers and students (Cash, 2011). Some teachers expressed the benefits of using the theory of MI in the classroom; it is a way that teachers to understand their students and it provides a structured way to diversify instructional plans. Some of the teachers noted that when using the theory of MI they noticed more student input and student engagement. One teacher noted that they just want their students to learn using any means necessary.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the perceptions of 10 teachers of elementary students in select Georgia classrooms with a variety of teaching experience and who have implemented traditional instruction as well as the theory of multiple intelligences. This discussion addresses the relationship between the study's findings, the empirical research, and the theoretical framework that is the basis for the study. The three identified themes, (teacher-efficacy, implementation and utilization, and student learning style) function as a guide to focus attention on the fundamental elements of this research.

Mezirow's (1991) Transformational Learning Theory as well as his Perspective Transformation Theory are the theoretical framework that support the study, as the findings relate to teacher's learning experiences and the use of theory of MI after using traditional instruction. The learning experiences determine the type of learner the person will become and tend to cause a substantial impact on the learner's future experiences. Mezirow (1991) developed the concepts of *meaning perspectives*, one's overall world-view, and *meaning schemes*, smaller components that contain specific knowledge, values, and beliefs about one's experiences. Kitchenham (2008) stated, "Learning within meaning schemes involves learners working with what they already know by expanding on, complementing, and revisiting their present systems of knowledge" (p. 111).

Mezirow (1991), described perspective transformation as how adult learners revise the meaning structure or their culturally defined frames of reference which define the meaning schemes. Mezirow (1991) stated meaning schemes are the process of becoming critically aware of how and why these interpretations have come to constrain the way one perceives, understands,

and feels about the world. They comprise specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience

As the teachers implemented the theory of MI, they went through a process of learning. They learned what made them comfortable as educators as well as what they were and were not willing to do when it related to implementing the theory of MI. Learning is an active process that requires the learner to change or elicit meaning from his or her experiences. Learning occurs when the learner engages in a variety of activities including the consequences of those activities, and through reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1991). Tomlinson (2010) stated that students have a preferred modality or instructional style that best enables learning to occur and is related to how students take in and process information.

Effective teachers recognize that all students exhibit diverse learning styles and because of this, it is a teacher's responsibility to provide a variety of opportunities for academic achievement. Opportunities for academic achievement resembles teachers providing a variety of ways for students to express required learning such as; creating a puppet show, writing a letter, or developing a mural with labels. The product allows the use of rubrics that match and extend students' varied skills levels. Products provide the space to work alone or in small groups; and this provides the space to create product assignments as long as the assignments contain required elements. It should be noted that many teachers in the study indicated that although they believed in the theory of MI, they were not able to fully adopt any beliefs of the effects of implementing the theory of MI on the academic growth of the students.

Although teachers provide students with a multitude of ways to show academic achievement, it seems to them that measurement of student academic growth is only analyzed

using the end of the year statewide assessment. Hattie (2012) stated that in order for a learning experience to be effective the classroom environment should have four defining characteristics: it should be student centered, knowledge centered, assessment rich, and community centered. With a student-centered classroom environment, the student is on an academic journey from a being a beginner learner to proficient learner. Having a student-centered classroom is important because it provides an opportunity for students to make connections and relationships with their ideas. Assessment-rich classrooms help the teacher measure where students are throughout their academic journey (Hattie, 2012). Assessments are essential, they help students know where to go next so that they can move ahead from their starting point. The teachers stated that many students displayed an increase in engagement when they were given a choice in their learning, on the other hand, the teachers indicated that it was still too early in the process to determine whether implementing the theory of MI worked for all students. They also indicated an excitement when they witnessed students taking responsibility for their learning; however, most teachers admitted the transformation process was still a work in progress. A few of the teachers identified an increase in motivation when they stated students were more interested in the learning process and began to seek help from their peers rather than their teachers.

Currently, the statewide assessment is the Georgia Milestones which replaced the Georgia CRCT in 2014. Both assessments aimed to measure student strengths and weaknesses in the content areas of reading, English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies particularly reading, English/language arts, and mathematics. However, the Georgia Milestones includes open ended test questions, where the CRCT exclusively included multiple choice questions. Teachers are accustomed to teaching a lesson and then giving a test to prove students

understood the lesson. The theory of MI does not revolve around one particular test or statewide assessment, thus leaving teachers frustrated or believing that their teaching abilities are not effective. Teacher's relished having the ability to create assignments where students have voice and choice but since the end of the year test and the theory of MI do not match, the process of implementing the theory of MI stifled how the teachers created student benchmark assessments and they found it difficult to find an in class alternative assessment that was in comparison to the state-wide assessment. The findings from this study indicate the need to provide teachers time and opportunities to support new strategies that will assist in the development of assessments that connect both the theory of MI and state-wide assessments. Mezirow (1991) believed that adult learner's histories can minimize their learning potential and they use his or her past learning experiences to influence their current learning.

Transformation is the manner in which learners transform problematic frames of reference and sets of assumptions and expectations to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow, 1997). The Transformational Learning Theory was useful for ascertaining the nature of the transformation and how this transition influenced teachers. Transformational Learning (Mezirow, 1997) looks at the nature of adult transformation during the learning process. It ascertains that adult learning is a form of transforming understanding and emphasizes that adults have the distinctive ability to reflect upon the context of their personal life experiences. Teacher transformation, whether positive or negative, important or not important, whether it was a choice, a change in role, or influenced by some other hindrance, all were factor in the overall findings of this study. For some of the participants in this study, certain aspects of using the theory of MI resulted in frustration with

different features of the transformation, as well as how the transformation affected student's learning style while the teachers implemented the theory of MI. One of the key points to student learning style is academic performance. Some participants noted that their entire goal of being a teacher is student academic performance. Other participants considered the most beneficial part of using the theory of MI was its academic nature.

Implications

The findings of this transcendental phenomenological study have several implications for administrators, and policy makers in the educational community. The theoretical, empirical, and practical aspects of the data analysis highlighted ways in which the information reduced the gap in research with teachers of elementary students implementing the theory of MI.

Theoretical

The main idea of Mezirow's (1997) Transformational Learning Theory as well as his Perspective Transformation Theory regarding self-efficacy supported the experiences which the teachers had in their elementary classrooms as they went from using traditional instruction to the theory of MI. Perspective Transformation theory explained how the teacher's perceptions were impacted by their belief that although they may not have been completely comfortable using the theory of MI, they pushed through it knowing that it would benefit their student's academic success. On the other hand, Transformational Learning Theory indicated that the teacher's learned that their self-efficacy transformation made them more of a facilitator rather than just a giver a knowledge. As the teachers became more confident in their ability to effectively implement the theory of MI, some participants noted that they will incorporate some aspect of the theory into their lessons for the duration of their teaching career. When implementing the

theory of MI some indicated that they found themselves emerging, and prospering as teachers when speaking of their efficacy.

Empirical

Much of the current literature of traditional instruction and the theory of MI research have not mentioned teacher perceptions regarding the use of both and the preference over which one has the most impact on student achievement. The previous literature shows data that primarily focuses on teacher perceptions of a variety of subjects. The perceptions and attitudes developed by a teacher make up his or her belief system, and teachers use these beliefs to help make decisions on their method of teaching (Alquraini, 2012). However, this study focuses on teacher perceptions regarding the transformation from using traditional instruction to the use of the theory of MI which in previous literature had been limited.

Practical

Myrtle Crisp Elementary is the only elementary school implementing the theory of MI as its primary instruction in the Homewood Brushton School District. Therefore it could become a model MI program for other elementary schools to visit and obtain vital information. This in turn could create the possibility of other schools and/or districts to implement the use of the theory of MI within elementary schools. With the possibility of schools implementing the theory of MI across the county and even the state, the potential of professional development and additional support for the theory of MI could be needed as well. The most important outcome for the teachers in this study was to increase the development of best practices surrounding the implementation of the theory of MI and student achievement. Teachers prefer an MI environment that not only promotes student academic differentiation in content and process but also in product. Teachers noted that they want state leaders to initiate and facilitate teacher-led

groups that will encourage discussions surrounding a change in the assessment process as it relates to TKES and the use of the theory of MI. They want a plan of action that demonstrates how the transition to the theory of MI may benefit both student academic achievement and successful teacher implementation.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study focused on teacher perceptions regarding the use of traditional instruction and the theory of MI. Delimitations in a qualitative study are the elements the researcher controls in an effort to establish clear boundaries (Bloomberg &Volpe, 2012). There were several delimitations for this study. Some delimitations of this study were found with the selection of participants. In elementary schools the majority of teachers are female (Wood, 2012). All of the participants in this study were female because only participants currently teaching in elementary schools were needed for this study.

The participants were required to have at least six years or more of teaching experience, have recently attended some type of professional development in the area of the theory of MI, and currently teach students in grades K-5. The participants could have included both male and female teachers however, since the purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of teachers who taught elementary students in Georgia classrooms, further delimitations in the sample population included all teachers who have taught elementary students in Georgia.

With traditional methods of grading with regards to the mastery of the standards as well as standardized testing, there seems to be an element of teacher subjectivity as to the extent that the student has mastered or exceeded the standard. Teachers continue to receive professional

development with regards to the use of the theory of MI instruction and discrepancy among teacher knowledge existing within the school. Limitations of the study included ten participants across all elementary school grade levels (Pre K-5). In addition all the participants were volunteers. Participants were all female and all African American. All of Participants were interviewed individually in their classrooms in the Homewood Brushton School District. Teaching experience varied among the participants however, all participants had at least six years of teaching experience at the time of the study. The participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study. Only 10% of the school consisted of white teachers however, of those 10% either they did not possess the characteristics required to participate in the study or were not willing to participate. Each of the 10 participants took part in the individual interviews and they each completed the journal prompts, while only six participants were able to participate in the focus group interviews. The study included teachers who have used both traditional instruction and the theory of MI. The study limited the ability to generalize findings to the larger population because it draws from the one school in the district that focuses primarily on the theory of MI. The study also focused on teachers of elementary students and might not transfer to teachers of middle, secondary or college students.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is still a need for more qualitative research in using the theory of MI, more teacher perspectives and experiences are needed to add to the existing research. Additional research could provide insight into how it affects teacher-efficacy, implementation and utilization, and student learning style.

Other recommendations for future research concerns professional development, assessment, and student growth. Research is needed to provide a clear picture of how much administrative support using the theory of MI is being provided in schools, as well as the effects of having active support or the lack of support to foster student academic growth. Berrett, Murphy, and Sullivan (2012) noted that when district leaders facilitate policy changes from the top it creates resistance at the school level. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011), noted that there is a need for targeted and ongoing professional development to facilitate changes in teacher practices.

This study indicated that teachers preferred supporting one another as a means to implement the theory of MI more consistently and more efficiently, rather than attending professional development or relying on administrative support. The most traditional type of instruction is teacher-directed or instructivism, which is the foundation of traditional instructional practices. Instructivism is teacher-directed, with purposeful teaching at its core. Its two foremost purposes are to help students comprehend and interact with the world and to direct students while being the decision makers about the content and sequence of what the student is learning. Teacher-directed lessons use straightforward, explicit teaching by teachers who utilize

a specific standard while expecting students to reiterate the exact information using rote memorization (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

The teachers in the study transformed their perspectives about what they know of instruction and altered their teaching styles. According to Mezirow (1997), the transformation required to implement the theory of MI is a constructivist approach. A constructivist approach reduces the traditional thought that teachers are the possessors of all knowledge, requiring students to take ownership of their learning by obtaining responsibility through voice and choice and differentiated instruction. Proactively modifying instruction based on students' needs is the basis of differentiated instruction (Chamberlin & Powers, 2010). Although much has changed in schools in recent years, the need for differentiated instruction and its academic benefits has only increased (Tomlinson, 1999). However, teachers noted that students do not have choices when it comes to the type of summative assessment or predetermined student learning objectives (SLO) they are able to complete. According to the GADOE (2016), the primary purpose of SLOs and other benchmark and summative assessments is to improve student learning at the classroom level. An equally important purpose of SLOs and other benchmark and summative assessments is to provide evidence of each teacher's instructional impact on student learning.

Levy (2008) emphasized that teachers are preoccupied with getting students to pass standardized tests, that efforts to educate students beyond the testing objective ceases altogether. The teachers recognize that student learning styles vary and that all students need to make personal and significant connections to the content in order to maximize their learning potential (Levy, 2008). Due to this type of learning environment, the relationship between the students and the teacher along with the teacher's responsibility in the classroom include many challenges

throughout the instructional day. More often than not, teachers are preoccupied with having to focus on grades, grade-level equivalents, and percentiles (Hoerr, 2010). The teachers in the study understand the need for assessments to document student academic growth, however, they feel that not only should the summative assessments be grade-level specific, measureable, focused on growth in student learning, and aligned to curriculum standards students should be given a choice on how they demonstrate their understanding of the learning.

A final suggestion is that future researchers study student perceptions on the use of the theory of MI on a variety of levels spanning the academic spectrum of elementary, middle, high school, and college students by focusing on student achievement and their academic satisfaction. A student's academic growth should be measured over the course of the instructional period with a variety of growth measures that are rigorous and attainable. It would benefit the state department of education and the legislatures providing funding for schools to examine the results of this study as it relates to the theory of MI.

Summary

Georgia teachers are evaluated using TKES to ensure that teaching practices are consistent among all teachers throughout the state especially in the area of teacher assessment and performance standards. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of GA teachers of elementary students as they transition from using traditional instruction to the theory of MI. This study was necessary for helping to close the gap in the literature, which lacked research that focuses on the perceptions of teachers of elementary school students particularly GA teachers and their use of the theory of MI. The takeaway is that if implementing the theory of MI intends to improve student achievement, then the theory of MI

and assessment practices should not be separate entities. Assessment practices should not be standardized to only include reading and writing however, it should be partnered with the theory of MI and shared with teachers in collaborative learning communities so that the assessment correlates with the content, process and product. The assessments should allow students to use their preferred intelligences rather than short-answer, constructed responses, and multiple-choice items that depend primarily on linguistic and logical-mathematical skills, which favor students who have strengths in these areas (Christodoulou, 2009) and potentially denying students with strengths in intelligences other than linguistic and logical-mathematical a positive learning experience.

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Appendix A

Emails to Obtain Informed Consent

Dear Educator,

My name is Darcel Hogans and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University conducting research on the transformation teachers undergo implementing the theory of Multiple Intelligences after previously using traditional instruction methods. I am emailing you because you are teaching in a school that has transformed its teaching practices.

Are you a teacher who has at least 6 years of teaching experience and have previously taught using traditional instruction but are now using the theory of MI? If so, I would like to invite you to take part in my research study: **Teacher Perceptions Regarding Traditional Instruction and the theory of Multiple Intelligences**

As part of the research, I would ask you to:

- Be interviewed privately, which should take between 30 minutes to an hour at an agreed upon time and place, and the interview will be audio-recorded.
- Participate in an audio-recorded focus group interview with other participants in the study which should take between 20 to 30 minutes.
- Journal your thoughts and experiences describing your transformation process. (4 Journal prompts)
- Once your interview is written down, you will be given the opportunity to review your interview and double check the interpretation of your words; you can make changes or comments to your written interview using a red ink pen.

If you are interested in participating in this study please email me within **five days** with the words *I will participate* in the subject area. I will then digitally send you an informed consent form to sign and complete. Please note, your participation in the research is **entirely voluntary**. The information that you provide will be confidential: **The data will be linked to your name through a coding system and I will use a pseudonym and not your real name in the dissertation paper.**

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Darcel Hogans, Ed.S.

Informed Consent Form

Please complete the informed consent form to participate in the study. Upon its receipt digitally, I will email you to schedule a time and a place for your individual interview as well as a time and place for the focus group session.

The focus of the journal and interview questions will provide you the opportunity to talk about how you think you have changed as a result of implementing the theory of Multiple Intelligences in your classroom.

I have chosen to participate in the research study on **Teacher Perceptions Regarding Traditional Instruction and the theory of Multiple Intelligences**. I understand that I will complete the following:

- ✓ 4 Journal Prompts
- ✓ 1 Interview
- ✓ 1 Focus Group Session

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study and I give permission to audio-record me as part of my participation.

Signature: _____Date:_____

Signature of Investigator: _____Date:_____

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. How many years have you been using the theory of MI?
2. In what way has using the theory of MI changed the way in which you teach?
3. How do you utilize the theory of multiple intelligences for specific student groups within your class?
4. What concerns did you have about implementing the theory of multiple intelligences in your classroom?
5. How has implementing the theory of multiple intelligences impacted your instruction?
6. Compare and contrast your classroom before and after implementing the theory of Multiple Intelligences.
7. Please describe your comfort level in implementing the theory of multiple intelligences.
8. In what ways do you incorporate the theory of multiple intelligences (content, process, product, other)?
9. In what ways are traditional instruction and the theory of multiple intelligences alike? How are they different?
10. What personal experiences have shaped the way you want to teach using the theory of multiple intelligences in your classroom?

Appendix C

Focus Group Questions

1. Please take a moment to introduce yourself to the group. Be sure to tell us:

a) Your name
b) Highest academic degree obtained: B.S./B.A., M.Ed., Specialist, or Doctorate
c) What you teach, your role, at this school
d) How long have you taught at any location, public or private school in years including the 2016-2017 school year?

e. How long have you taught at only Myrtle Crisp Elementary School in years including the 2016-2017 school year?

2. How often do you attend professional events, inside and outside this school building? Do any of these events provide instructional strategies discussing the Multiple Intelligences Theory? If so, where?

3. Tell me about some of the common strategies used when implementing the Multiple Intelligences Theory?

4. Tell me what assessment looks like in your classroom and provide oral examples.

5. What else you would like to discuss or add to the conversation about your perceptions of implementing the Multiple Intelligences Theory?

Appendix D

Interview and Focus Group Protocol

The following protocols were developed for qualitative research by Jacob and Furgerson (2012):

1. I will chose a topic of interest to me and other educators.

2. I will examine current, refereed literature before composing research questions; I will use research to develop and guide the questions of this proposal that are grounded in literature, yet different from existing studies.

3. I will use a script, not forget to share important information during the beginning and end of each interview and focus group.

4. I will ask only open-ended questions during the data collection period.

5. I will begin each interview with basic, simple questions to develop a trust between the participant and I; then, gradually progress to more challenging questions.

6. The objective of this phenomenology us to be descriptive and go in-depth about the participants' experiences. I will ask questions that allow the interviewees to respond to question in multiple manners.

8. I will use prompts during the interview and asked follow-up questions, as necessary.

Appendix E

Statement of Consent

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 5/26/2016 to 5/25/2017 Protocol # 2535.052616

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

Teacher Perceptions Regarding Traditional Instruction and the Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Darcel Hogans

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of Teacher Perceptions Regarding Traditional Instruction and the Multiple Intelligences Theory. You were selected as a possible participant because you are teaching in a school that has transformed its teaching practices from traditional instruction to the theory of Multiple Intelligences. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Darcel Hogans, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study will be to describe the perceptions of teachers of elementary students who have used traditional instruction and who are now using the theory of MI in select Georgia classrooms.

Procedures: As part of the research, I would ask you to:

 Be interviewed privately, which should take between 30 minutes to an hour at an agreed upon time and place, and the interview will be audio-recorded.

 About a month later, participate in an audio-recorded focus group interview with other participants in the study, which should take between 30 to 90 minutes.

 Journal your thoughts and experiences describing your transformation process over the course of one month.

 Once your interview is written down, you will be given the opportunity to review your interview and double check the interpretation of your words; you can make changes or comments to your written interview using a red ink pen.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks of being in the study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. Participants should expect no direct benefits from their participation.

Compensation: Participants will not receive compensation for participating in the study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. However, I am not able to assure you that other members of the group will maintain your confidentiality and privacy.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Darcel Hogans. If you have questions, **you are encouraged** to contact me at (redacted). You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. James Zabloski, at (redacted).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Signature Date

_____

Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix F

Bracketing Notes

1. How many years have you been using the MI Theory? Somewhere in between 1-3 years-not really sure
2. In what way has using the MI Theory changed the way in which you teach? After years in the profession using the theory of MI now she considers the varied learning styles…
3. How do you utilize the Multiple Intelligences Theory for specific student groups within your class? (was asked to come back to this question)/ she is working on the group aspect sometimes students are not in groups
4. What concerns did you have about implementing the Multiple Intelligences Theory in your classroom? Fear/challenging/too much planning/
5. How has implementing the Multiple Intelligences Theory impacted your instruction? Facilitator/giver of knowledge/personalized learning/strange/weird
6. Compare and contrast your classroom before and after implementing the theory of MI-before: whole group instruction/all students were expected to complete same assignments/ quiet/ calm and peaceful after: too much noise/constant movement
7. Please describe your comfort level in implementing the Multiple Intelligences Theory.-at this moment? Although she is joking, she seriously seems afraid to take on this endeavor,
8. In what ways do you incorporate the theory of MI (content, process, product, other)? Still working on process and product, content is based on the standards: she indicated she has no other way to incorporate theory but through the standards

9. In what ways are Traditional Instruction and the Multiple Intelligences Theory alike? How are they different? Both modes of instruction/one size fits all when using traditional instruction MI has a variety of instruction-???

10. What personal experiences have shaped the way you want to teach using the Multiple Intelligences Theory in your classroom? trying to prepare them for the future but not sure where to begin