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The Effect of a Culturally Diverse Art Curriculum on the Early Childhood Student's Cultural Competency

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**The Effect of a Culturally Diverse Art Curriculum on the Early Childhood Student's
Cultural Competency**

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

This action research project was completed to test the effects of a culturally diverse art program on early childhood students' cultural competency. The setting was a Montessori early childhood classroom of 22 children. There were two Asian students, one African American student, and 19 Caucasian students. Data were collected using a student conference form, self-portrait rubric, and tally sheets - continent symbol matching, group discussions and art activities. A group presentation took place each week about an artist from one of the six inhabited continents which included a biography and examples of their artwork. Following the presentation an art activity was placed on the art shelf. The results showed that the program had a positive impact on the students' cultural competency. This program will continue to evolve by interweaving it with other cultural curricula in the classroom and spending more than one week with each artist and activity.

Keywords: culturally diverse art, early childhood, Montessori

Maria Montessori believed that children were the key to a peaceful future for humanity. She passionately educated children about the whole world. The cultural curriculum in the early childhood classroom educates students about people, places, food, and animals that they may not have experienced yet. Art, music, and language can be further interwoven into cultural studies to allow for a more complete understanding of our world. This action research project focused on the effect of a culturally diverse art curriculum on the early childhood student's cultural competency. An art program with a balanced global representation interested me because of my early art experiences.

I attended elementary school in the late 80s and early 90s, and the only formal art lessons I received were in school. My early experiences led me to associate art lessons with pressure and anxiety, as more emphasis was placed on ability than appreciation. Later, in fifth grade, I had a teacher who was passionate about art; she taught us the process while including artists and their masterpieces. This class is when I first learned about Vincent Van Gogh, and he is still one of my favorite artists today.

In 2005, I attended a Montessori conference and saw a presentation about incorporating artists and their works of art into the classroom curriculum. The presenter taught about the artists and shared famous pieces of their work, then created art projects inspired by the artists. This presentation spoke to me, and I immediately started planning to incorporate this interdisciplinary pedagogy into my classroom, even hosting a few summer camps based on this method. The students seemed receptive, and the parents were always impressed when their child came home with art and was able to tell them the artist that inspired the activity. I spent years gathering resources and adding artists to my repertoire: Van Gogh, Picasso, Monet, Pollock, Renoir, Seurat, Warhol, and Matisse, to name a few. Books published about "artists every child should

know" or books similar to the conference presentation helped teachers incorporate art history and inspired art projects. I felt confident that I was enriching my students and offering a quality art program for my early childhood Montessori class.

In 2021, with additional perspectives from graduate school and the Anti-Bias Anti-Racist curriculum, I started to analyze the classroom in which I had been teaching for 17 years and whether my classroom discussions and activities represented all my students. Turning my focus to the art program that I was so fond of, I immediately realized it fell short of today's standards. This program and the resources that I used were entirely Eurocentric. This realization made me reconsider the whole program. I needed to keep the framework but dig deeper to find artists who represented all of my students and the six inhabited continents. It was a challenge to find resources at the library to support this. I had to explore what the internet had to offer to find artists on all the continents and artwork that would engage my young students. These discoveries led me to pursue a culturally diverse art curriculum that represented artist from each of the inhabited continents.

As a Montessori educator, I wish to inspire children to open their eyes to all the world's people and learn from unfamiliar cultures. My goal for this intervention was to develop a more inclusive art curriculum, with expectations that the program would also increase the children's level of cultural awareness.

Theoretical Framework

This action research project aims to develop a multicultural art program for the early childhood classroom through which all children can both identify themselves and learn about the world around them. The research for this program is informed by Anti-Bias Theory as described by Derman-Sparks. Anti-Bias Theory promotes young children to develop a better

understanding of the world while strengthening their identity and empowering them (Derman-Sparks, et. al., 2015). The Anti-Bias theory's goals align with those of a culturally diverse art program, as they seek to increase a child's positive self-awareness and comfort with human diversity, teach children to recognize unfairness, and demonstrate empowerment (Derman-Spark, et. al., 2015).

Although the program takes the young child as its focus, the engagement of the adults involved is equally important. When teachers become educated and reflective about the biases they bring to lessons, they can provide a more evenly diverse cultural perspective. "Change also includes the perspectives of the individuals who serve the children and the families" (Derman-Sparks, et. al., 2015, p.11). Teachers must first seek ways in which they can work to look within and reveal these biases, so that they can then go forth and educate themselves on different cultures and see what each culture has to offer through a new perspective. This may be through a professional development offered through their school or personal research.

To be a competent citizen of the world, one must have knowledge beyond their own cultural lens, and currently the art resources we use for our students are heavily Eurocentric. One example of this is a book titled *13 Artists Children Should Know* by Angela Wenzel. While the title implies the significance of these 13 artists, the book does not offer representation for artists on any continent other than Europe and North America. "Knowledge can be best given where there is eagerness to learn, so this is the period when the seed of everything can be sown, the child's mind being like a fertile field, ready to receive what will germinate into culture" (Montessori, 1947, p.4).

The Montessori cultural studies offer a perfect opportunity to weave in a multicultural art curriculum that can represent artists from all inhabited continents. The more a child feels

represented both at home and school the better their chance to feel like a respected part of their community (Derman-Sparks, et. al., 2015). In the Montessori curriculum we study geography by presenting each continent and exploring people, places, food, and artifacts from each. It would benefit our students if we added artists from each of these continents, as we know art to be an expression of one's culture. Woywood (2017) states that artist can add understanding to experiences in cultures by using their art as researchers or storytellers would use their writing. The opportunity to look at the cultures from an artist's perspective could add great value.

Anti-Bias research is important because all children deserve the opportunity to grow in an environment that respects and honors their story and offers a place for them to feel valued. Montessori (1949) aligned with Anti-Bias theory, believing that an education with the potential to save humanity needed to include spiritual development and the preparation of children to understand the cultural climate of the times in which they live. The classroom in which I teach is located near a university in the capital city of our state. The proximity allows us to enroll children from all over the world due to their parents' employment at the university. In general, societal power in our city is still situated in the hands of an overwhelmingly white, upper-class population and there are a lot of opportunities for growth with respect to moving toward more diverse leadership. Against this local background, I am especially interested in nurturing my students' cultural competency through the Anti-Bias approach.

The literature I will be reviewing will reveal approaches that various art programs have taken to add a multicultural element. The research will also inform terms related to Anti-Bias Theory and Multicultural curriculum. It will advise how to best proceed to create a program that not only provides an art curriculum in which children find themselves represented, but also broadens their knowledge of cultures other than their own.

Review of Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate the effect of a culturally diverse art curriculum on early childhood cultural competency. The review analyzes past research on themes of multicultural and art curriculums in the early childhood classroom to evaluate whether research supports combining themes to enhance young children's understanding of cultures other than their own. "The arts, when well taught, are fundamental in refining sensibility and cultivating the capacity to think imaginatively" (Eisner, 2002 as cited by Eisner, 2003, p.342). This literature review focused on three major areas art curriculums, multicultural curriculums, and then multicultural art in education.

There are several approaches to art education that have been and continue to be used in the early childhood classroom. The research evaluated for this paper brought to light Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Discipline-Based Art Education, and Visual Culture Education. All three of these methods show strengths and weaknesses in respect to the early childhood classroom. These three approaches offer different perspectives on the methodology, but all three agree on the value of art education for young children.

Methods

In the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), children explore various media to create and express themselves individually. This approach focuses on the process rather than the product (Terreni, 2016 & Blank, 2012). DAP does not create a space for art analysis instead focusing on experimentation with art materials. However, it does create opportunities for children's self-expression without a guided expectation of what must be created.

Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) highlights works of art and then provides opportunities to create inspired art. The purpose of this approach is to allow students to create,

criticize, and learn the history of art and artists. It is criticized for being Eurocentric (Blank, 2012). DBAE offers a method for children to explore artists and create inspired work of their own, however the focus is on European artists, thereby limiting the curriculum.

Visual Culture Education developed as a response to DBAE. Visual Culture Education allows for the child's interpretation of art and understanding of their world. It included such resources as paintings, sculptures, architecture, films, toys, TV, internet, and video games. The Visual Cultural Education places focus on critical analysis instead of making and doing (Blank, 2012). This model of art education investigates what we see and how it impacts us, therefore making art pertinent to all students.

When school systems offer art education there are benefits for the whole child. Art education nurtures the student's mental, physical, and emotional well-being; it allows the child to express feelings, ideas, and beliefs (National Coalition for Core Art Standards, 2014). Blank (2012) suggested that the value of art in education is that it supports students' academic learning and can offer a stimulating and inclusive lens through which to view other subject matter. Research points to the value of incorporating art education in the areas of self-expression, appreciating differences, and understanding cultural expression.

Culture in Art Education

The arts allow students the opportunity to express themselves through sound, sight, and movement (Eisner, 2003). Children are positively impacted both academically and emotionally when offered a program that incorporates quality art that they are allowed to critically analyze and find inspiration to express themselves. Visual art is a sensory vessel to communicate meaning and cultural achievement through sight that can be difficult to express through words (Blank, 2012 & Eisner, 2003). For some students, finding the right words to express their

thoughts can be a challenge, and it is easier for them to express themselves using color, line, and texture.

In art appreciation children learn to recognize the value of differences, which in turn positively affects their self-esteem and self-acceptance. In contrast to older students, preschool children are often more highly attuned to identifying differences and at the same time less self-aware. Art activities make finding detail less judgmental and more educational (Zakin, 2012). When we give students lessons on similarities and differences in art, they can become more self-aware while discerning differences in a non-discriminatory way. Eckhoff (2007) believed that art appreciation is important in the early childhood classroom and cited The National Standards for Education for its support of art viewing at this age level. Viewing a variety of high-quality artwork supports healthy discussion that might not exist in a classroom that only offers process-based art education.

Art education also provides a window to life beyond the child's reach, opening the door for learning about cultural expression. Blank (2012) said that our experiences in life are made evident through art. Visual images convey information about a culture, including values, behaviors, and ideas, and therefore serve to sustain a culture's existence (McFee & Degge, 1977). Allowing children to see the unfamiliar through art does not automatically bring cultural knowledge, however it heightens the child's awareness of the unfamiliar (Blank, 2012). Multicultural art education affords the opportunity to appreciate and understand different cultures (Zakin, 2012). Through viewing art, students find a new appreciation for people and places that they have not seen previously.

To present a quality multicultural curriculum, teachers must be knowledgeable; however, research identifies several challenges faced by educators in this endeavor. Teachers are often

called to help children from diverse backgrounds grow both socially and emotionally with limited time, knowledge, and resources (Boutte et al., 2011, Purnell et al., 2007, & Woywood, 2017). Teachers often run into the problem that we are offering an art education as outsiders experiencing art out of context (Blank, 2012). Seventy percent of our art teachers are white females, a fact that suggests there is a need to transform the curriculum with honesty, vulnerability, and self-reflection so that these teachers may serve an increasingly diverse population (Link, 2019). When teachers create lessons for students, their beliefs about the student's developmental needs often steer them to lessons they think are appropriate based on their values (Blank, 2012). Teachers must share and celebrate art with an understanding of the cultural context in which the art was created (Han, 2019). They are challenged to find ways to teach cultural art that does not reference stereotypes. Finally, teachers must become self-reflective and aware of their biases when creating multicultural lessons. Teachers have a responsibility to discuss racism and reject the idea of "colorblindness" so that their students are ready to be informed members of society, meaning that teachers must move past their comfort zones regarding race (Boutte et. al., 2011).

The early childhood years represent a critical window for introducing a multicultural curriculum. The children in the early childhood classrooms notice differences and begin classifying aspects of their identities between the ages of three and five (Boutte et al., 2011). It is vital that children of these ages learn about themselves in relation to others, which leads to lessons on tolerance (Zakin, 2012). Applied to preschool students, tolerance would mean accepting people who look and act differently than themselves (Zakin, 2012). Culture plays a prominent role in how children interpret the world around, a finding which highlights the value of culturally responsive teaching (Purnell et al., 2007).

Reviewing literature revealed some terminology that is important to a multicultural curriculum. An educator intending to teach cultural *appreciation* (using objects from a non-dominant culture with appropriate context) can make the mistake of cultural *appropriation* (using objects from a non-dominant culture in a way that does not respect their original purpose). This results in a lesson that disrespects the culture instead of bringing awareness to the culture in a respectful and knowledgeable manner (Han, 2019). Teachers must be thorough in their research before presenting to their students in order to convey a true appreciation of another culture. As teachers approach the topic of racism it is important to know the difference in institutional racism and individual racism. Institutional racism refers to a social system that produces inequalities based on an individual's race, whereas individual racism is prejudice from one person against a person of color (Adams et al., 2007). There are many sources attributed to young children's learned racism: adults interacting with other adults, television, internet, and even books (Boutte et al., 2011). Teachers must evaluate these terms when offering a multicultural curriculum, so they do not do further harm in their attempt at a more inclusive curriculum.

In order to teach children about race, tolerance, and cultural differences, these themes must be present throughout all curricula and not be limited to geography and history. When art and multicultural curricula are merged, the result benefits students' knowledge of art and culture in a way words do not. The multicultural art approach allows children to discover new information, have feelings that are both uncomfortable and evoke wonder, and discuss stories from their culture and cultures outside of their own (Woywood, 2017).

When choosing multicultural art to share with the class, the pieces that are chosen and the way they are presented is indicative of how the student will understand and appreciate the

artwork (Eckhoff, 2007). A teacher's choice of works has an effect on many factors, including awareness of culture (both one's own and others') and understanding race and social justice.

Students should have an awareness of their own heritage as well as knowledge of others in order to understand our complex world (Young, 2013). When children see themselves in art and literature, it has a positive effect on their security in the classroom community and makes the content they are learning more meaningful (Purnell et al., 2007). Children are capable of finding meaning in art, and an encounter with art outside their own culture can heighten awareness of another culture (Blank, 2012). To satisfy both of these aims, teachers should not only look within their classroom when choosing cultures to include in the curriculum, but also then reach outside of the cultures represented in the classroom community.

The art we choose to share with children can increase their knowledge and understanding of race and social justice as well (Tereni, 2016). Educators present a history of humanity through images. Showcasing a history of art by overwhelmingly white cultures takes non-white artists out of the conversation and sends the message that human progress is due to whites (Link, 2019). It is important that art programs not be just culturally diverse, but also anti-racist. Art is a tool that can be used in learning to observe similarities and differences. Lowenfield, who made significant contributions in the field of art education, believed the arts developed exploration of self and culture. Lowenfield wanted students to be confident in their creative thoughts and cultural heritage (Young, 2013). A multicultural art curriculum can make finding detail less judgmental and more educational, helping teachers to teach racial and cultural tolerance at a young age (Zakin, 2012).

A culturally diverse art program in the early childhood classroom impacts the student's self-awareness as well as the awareness of cultures outside their own. The programs reviewed

offered components that could merge to create an art program that offers cultural knowledge and self-expression. The literature points to the importance of teacher education on the subject.

When educators haphazardly choose art and give lessons without researching the cultural context, we deepen stereotypes and appropriate cultures instead of cultivating true appreciation.

Young children are ready and able to notice differences and learn how to be tolerant of others.

Art is a great avenue to present this subject matter.

The research I will conduct will share artists from all inhabited continents using the Montessori's cultural studies as a skeletal model. The discussions will enhance the cultural study, and materials provided for art - inspired by carefully chosen artworks - will be open ended to allow for self-expression. Through my literature review I found support for including multicultural art in the early childhood classroom, but not a clear program to follow. The action research will merge what I have learned from the DAP, DBAE, VC, and Montessori curriculum to create an art program that is culturally diverse, allowing space for children to enhance their cultural competency and allow their identities and understandings to be expressed through their art.

Methodology

Intervention

This research was conducted for six weeks in January and February 2022 to answer the question: What effect does a culturally diverse art curriculum have on the early childhood student's cultural competency? This study took place in a primary classroom at a private Montessori school. The student population consisted of three 3-year-olds, eight 4-year-olds, seven 5-year-olds, and four 6-year-olds. There was only one student that spoke English as a second language. The classroom had one Japanese student, one Vietnamese student, one African

American student, and nineteen Caucasian students. I was the researcher and the lead teacher with the help of one assistant in the classroom. My assistant helped the students as needed with the art activity. The participants had just settled back into school after winter break.

Overview

This research project began with a teacher-student conference based on a pre-determined set of four questions designed to assess students' understanding of their own families' culture. I sat beside each child and asked if they were willing to answer the questions, then proceeded to ask them, discreetly taking notes. The students then participated in a matching activity using the Maitri Learning geography cards, which consist of photographs of people and places from each continent. I presented students with a set of six cards, each depicting a landmark from a different continent, and asked students to match them to a picture of the continent itself, using tallies to mark correct matches. The child repeated this matching activity with cards depicting market scenes and then school children. The conference questions combined with the results of the matching activity established a baseline of their cultural competency. Once I had the baseline data, the lessons began.

Each week I presented a group lesson on a specific artist from one of the six inhabited continents. The details of the lesson included information about the artist's life and examples of their work. I also showed other examples of art from varying artists to view people, animals, and architecture from the continent. During each lesson, I kept a tally of the students who participated in the discussions and recorded anything notable brought up by the students. On the second day, I presented an art activity inspired by the artist from that week and then placed it on the art shelf. The students were encouraged but not required to create. I kept a tally of which students chose the projects and the number of times they chose them. I also documented if they

completed the project independently, needed some guidance, or needed full assistance. At the end of week six, the study concluded with a repeat of the teacher-student conference and geography card matching.

Data Collection

This action research used mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative data to form triangulation of data collection. I encouraged students but did not require them to create with the art materials. Every student, however, was required to participate in the group lessons.

During week one, I gathered baseline information using two tools: a student conference form (Appendix A) and a cultural knowledge tally sheet (Appendix B), which I filled out when the students completed a matching activity with the Maitri Learning geography cards (landmarks, markets, and school children). The art activity during week one was a self-portrait which I used a rubric to rate self-awareness (Appendix C). The rubric was designed to measure how many details they knew about their personal features in order to gain a better understanding of their cultural awareness. On day three of week one, I presented the first artist, and marked any participation in the conversation using tallies. I also noted any specific questions or comments that could be of value as the research continued (Appendix D). On day four I presented the art activity and placed it on the shelf for students to choose at will. I used two tally forms. One form recorded if the child was independent, needed some guidance, or needed total assistance with the art activity and recorded any meaningful dialogue from students (Appendix E). The second form noted how many times a child chose the art activity (Appendix F).

Weeks two through six followed the same process as week one. The first day of the week was presentation of the artist and their artwork and day two was the art activity presentation. During the study, I collected field notes for the presentation of the artist (Appendix D) and for

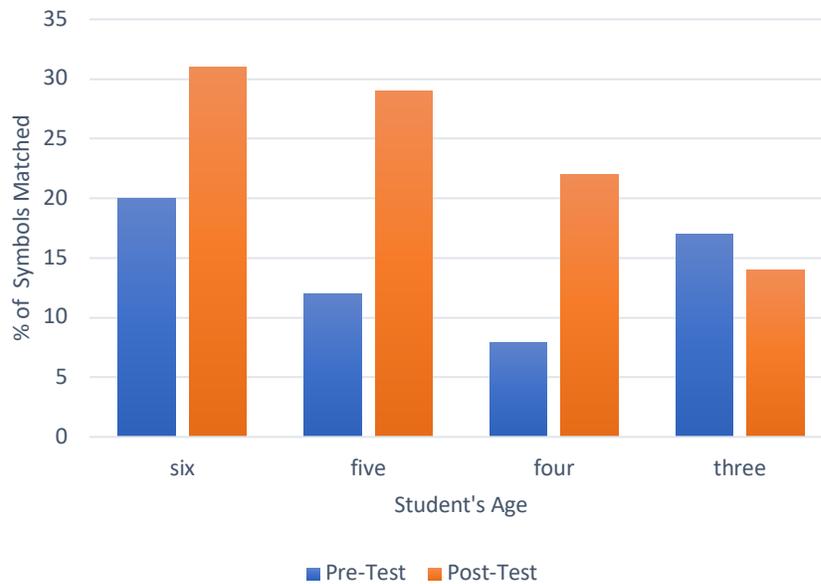
the presentation of the art activity (Appendix E). The number of times a child chose the art activity was recorded using tallies (Appendix F).

On the final two days of week six, I conducted a post-intervention conference using the student conference (Appendix A) and the cultural knowledge tally sheet (Appendix B). These final data collections concluded the study and gauged any cultural knowledge gained as I infused a culturally diverse art program into the classroom for six weeks.

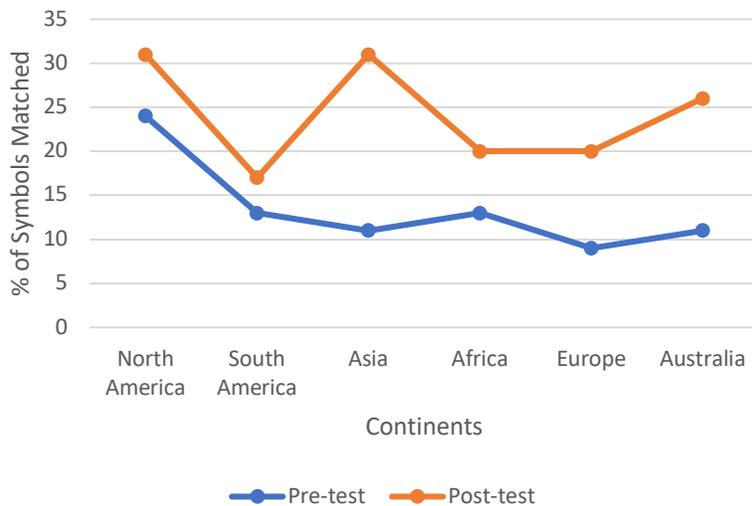
Analysis of Data

After the six-week intervention, I analyzed the data to determine whether a culturally diverse art curriculum impacts early childhood students' cultural competency. The data suggest positive impacts from the art curriculum introduced over the six weeks.

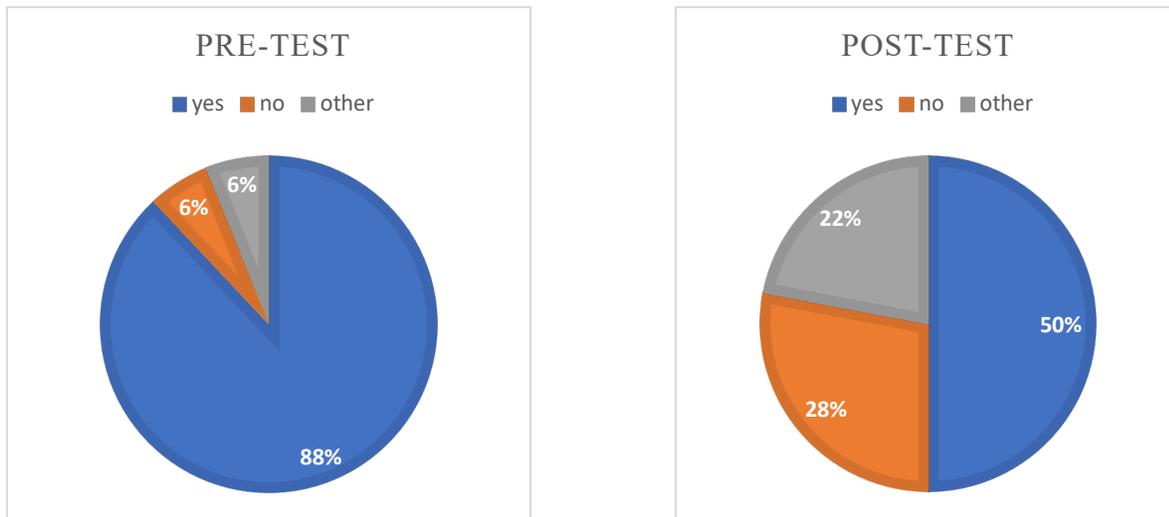
At the beginning of week one and the end of week six, I asked the students to match three pictures of iconic places, markets, and school children to the six inhabited continents using the cultural knowledge tally (Appendix B). Figure 1 shows the data analyzed by the age of students participating. The six, five, and four-year-olds all showed increased continent symbol recognition. The five-year-olds showed the most significant increase in recognition at 17%. The three-year-olds, however, showed a three percent drop in recognition. The three-year-olds were more likely to take the stack of geography cards handed to them and place one under each continent without analyzing the photograph's content.

Figure 1*Continent Symbol Recognition by Age*

The chart in Figure 2 analyzed the same data - cultural knowledge tally (Appendix B) - as Figure 1, except this time I looked at the knowledge gained by the whole class for each continent. The numbers show a positive gain in continent symbol recognition for all six continents. Asia exhibits the most significant gain with a 20% increase, whereas South America has the most negligible gain with a 3% increase.

Figure 2*Continent Symbol Recognition by Continent*

At the beginning of week one, I conferenced with the students (Appendix A) to understand what general cultural knowledge they had about their families. The cultural markers of language, religion, food, or holidays helped the students discuss their families' culture when needed. Figure 3 represents the language prompt, “What language does your family speak at home?” The data showed a decrease in knowledge of their native language from week one to week six. The decrease could reflect a couple of influences. One reason could be that in week one, prior to the pre-test, I explained the definition of culture and what it encompassed. It is possible that this was no longer in the forefront of their minds by week six. The second factor could be that the class had weekly lessons on French songs from August to December. Each song presented new French vocabulary words and their English meaning. These lessons did not take place during the time of the research, suggesting that decreased discussion of language had a negative effect on recalling their own.

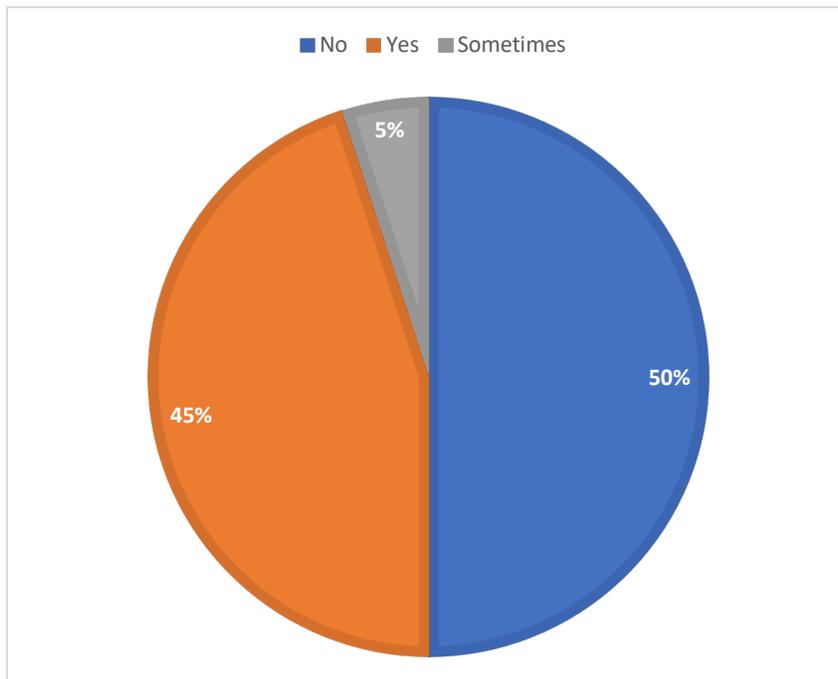
Figure 3*Native Language Awareness*

Note. The category “other” in the above charts characterizes answers such as “normal” or “the one you hear me talk to you.”

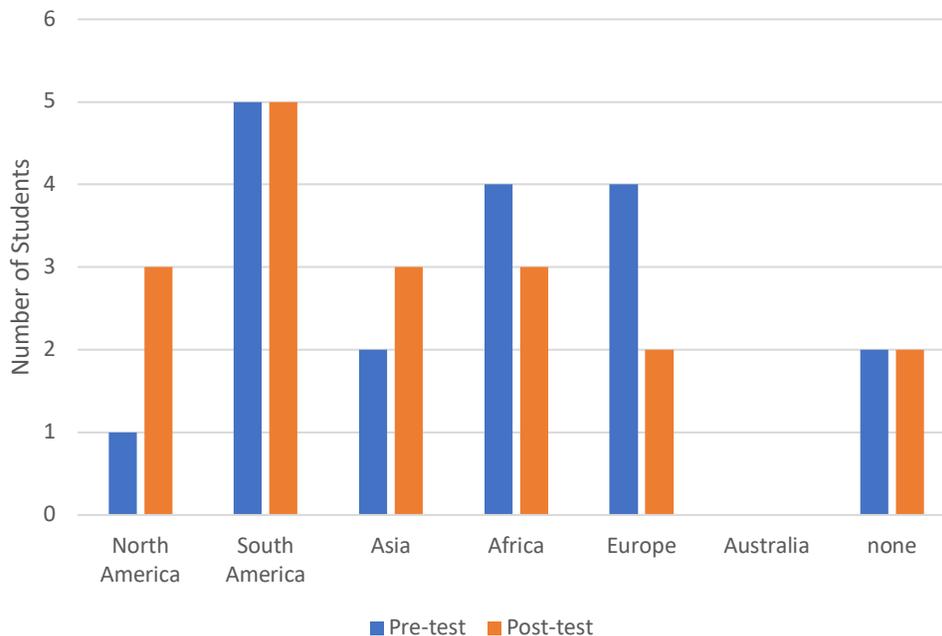
During the student conferences, another prompt used was religion. I asked the students if they went to a place of worship with their families regularly. The data in Figure 4 showed no variation in the students’ responses from week one to week six. If the student said they went to church in week one, their answer remained yes in week six. The only variation came from two children who stated that they went to church in week one, and then in week six, they stated the specific name of the church their family attends.

Figure 4

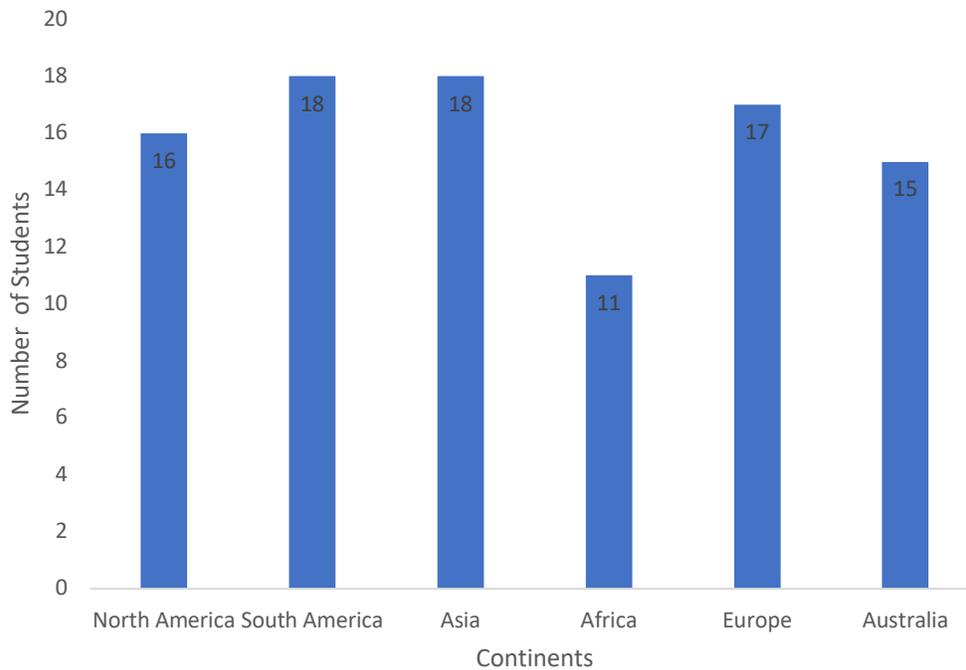
Does Your Family Go Somewhere to Pray or Worship?



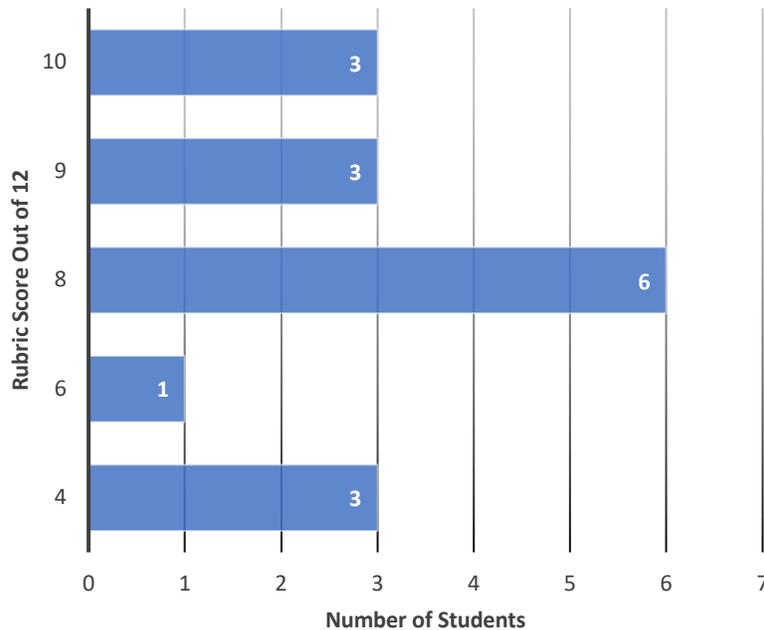
While conducting the student conference (Appendix A), I asked the students which continent they would like to visit and explore more deeply. Figure 5 shows that South America was the continent most children were curious about, while Australia had zero votes. In analyzing this data, I also learned that 33% of the students changed their choice by week six, and 67% kept their original choice. When the students explained why they were curious about the specific continents, 39% said they wanted to learn about the animals on a specific continent. Other reasons the students stated for choosing a specific continent were to learn about food and meet new people.

Figure 5*What Continent Would You Like to Visit?*

There was one art activity prepared for each week of the intervention. The students were encouraged to participate but not required. I looked at who participated and how often they chose the activity (Appendix F). The second piece of information I looked for was how independent they were in completing the activity (Appendix E). Figure 6 shows that the art activities for South America and Asia had the most participation. Africa had the least number of participants; however, the Africa project was the most time-consuming activity and required more assistance from a teacher. These factors may have contributed to the lower number of students able to complete it.

Figure 6*Participation in Art Activity*

The project for North America was a self-portrait, and although it did not have the highest participation rate, four students repeated it two or three times. Figure 7 shows that an equal proportion of students scored ten, nine, and four (19% each) when using the self-portrait rubric. Six percent of the students had a score of six. The highest percentage of students, at 37%, had a score of eight. The self-portrait activity's rubric (Appendix C) measures how much self-awareness the students have. The students' self-awareness was a vital component of the study because it is a piece of cultural competency.

Figure 7*Self-Portrait Rubric Scores*

I noted discussions from students either during the initial artist presentation or during the art activity. The only conversations that came up during the art activities were those regarding the process of the activity. There were no notable connections between the art activity and the continent or artist. The discussions during the artist presentations were limited. The only notable discussions concerned Frida Kahlo's illness and injury that led to her long duration in bed. When it was time to learn about Henri Matisse, the students were equally interested in when he was bedridden and then his loss of vision later in life. There was no conversation brought up about specific artwork shared during the presentation. One student did bring in a book about Frida Kahlo he found at home to share with the class.

During the six weeks, the students had access to books with examples of artwork from the artists. The materials for each art project spent one week on the shelf, and they could use the materials anytime. In the end, only two students remembered an artist presented at group time.

One student recalled David Malangi, the aboriginal artist, and his unique nickname, "Dollar Dave." The other student remembered Henri Matisse because they share similar names. The analysis of these data show that overall, the culturally diverse art curriculum has a positive effect on the student's cultural competency.

Action Plan

This research project indicated that a culturally diverse art curriculum positively impacts early childhood students' cultural competency. The data showed that the students could match more continent symbols during the post-test, concluding that awareness of continents through people, places, and food increased in the six weeks. The reviewed literature states that one component of cultural competency is self-awareness, and the students in my class showed an average score of 7.7 out of a possible 12 points utilizing the self-portrait rubric. These two pieces of data point to the impact this art curriculum had on these students.

Only two indicators achieved less than the desired outcome of all data collected. Both instances are explainable, and neither should be considered a negative reflection on the program. One example is that the three-year-olds' geography matching dropped by 3% between the pre- and post-tests. The researcher noted that when handed the cards, the three-year-old students placed them under the continents in the order they were given, without analyzing the pictures as intended. The process used by the three-year-olds is presumably due to their age and lack of comprehension rather than an actual drop in knowledge.

The other piece of data that was less successful than I hoped was students' retention of information given about the artists or their works of art. At the end of six weeks, only two students out of 22 remembered the names of any of the six artists studied. I presume that a lack of adequate time was a factor in this data point. In the early childhood classroom, repetition is

vital. The pace of the six-week study suggests it was too swift for the students to appreciate and retain details of the artists and their artwork. In the future, if more time is allotted to the artists and their artwork, I predict that students will remember more information.

While this research has proven a need for a culturally diverse art curriculum in the early childhood classroom, the curriculum would be more effective if interwoven with the Montessori cultural curriculum. Art is a necessary component when increasing cultural awareness; however it is only one piece of the cultural pie. Blending art appreciation with the existing cultural studies would also provide a more realistic timeline for presenting and reinforcing material, resulting in increased retention of the information, as suggested above.

Several aspects of my teaching practice will shift to accommodate these findings in the future. Gathering resources to create this curriculum was challenging, as age-appropriate art representing all the continents was not readily available. There is still more searching to do to create enough resources to implement this curriculum for the three-year cycle. I am hopeful that with the current social justice and anti-bias anti-racist movements, resources focused on art for children will become more inclusive and diverse. Until then, I will have to rely on international parents within our school community and internet searches to find appropriate resources. One resource I came upon offered a gallery for art around the world. The lessons attached to the artwork were intended for students older than those in my classroom, but they gave me a starting point and ideas for where to look for additional resources.

In addition, I not only plan to keep the art curriculum developed as part of this research as a permanent part of my lesson plan, but to further expand it into a year-round program. In our school, we present a new continent each month and allow the children to explore the materials for that whole period. This time frame allows the students' curiosities to navigate the areas they

wish to learn at a deeper level. I plan to add this art program to our monthly continent study, allowing the students more time to explore the art activity and appreciate the different processes used by the artists. This timeline will also allow additional opportunities for large or small group discussions surrounding the artists and their work.

This research intends to continue to grow the diversity in the art lessons given in our classrooms and connect them to all cultures, not just the Europeans known widely as "master artists." The classroom in which I teach is in a period of growth, as our school community seeks a more inclusive and diverse presence. Allowing children to see the unfamiliar through art does not automatically bring cultural knowledge; however, it heightens the child's awareness of the unfamiliar (Blank, 2012). I want students to find a new appreciation for people and places that they have not seen previously through viewing art.

This study contributes to the field of education by affirming the increase in cultural competence that a culturally diverse art curriculum provides. I believe art is an integral part of one's culture, and the Montessori cultural curriculum provides an exceptional opportunity to add diverse art history lessons. The data in this research show that this program can be included in the early childhood classroom to enhance cultural competency.

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Appendix B

Cultural Knowledge Tally (based on Maitri Learning geography cards)

Student's Name:

Date:

Check each photograph student correctly matches to continent.

North America

- Iconic building
- School Scene
- Food Vendors

South America

- Iconic building
- School Scene
- Food Vendors

Europe

- Iconic building
- School Scene
- Food Vendors

Asia

- Iconic building
- School Scene
- Food Vendors

Africa

- Iconic building
- School Scene
- Food Vendors

Australia

- Iconic building
- School Scene
- Food Vendors

Appendix C

Self-Portrait Rubric

Key Traits	Beginning (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)
Body Parts	Missing several parts	Basic parts - head, torso, arms, legs	Basic parts plus additional details - head, neck, torso, arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet, and toes
Position of Body Parts	Many parts in wrong position	Some parts in correct position	All parts in correct position
Facial Features	Only eyes and mouth	Most features present – eyes, nose, mouth, ears, hair	Main features plus additional details – eyes, eyelashes, nose, mouth, teeth, ears, dimples, moles
Color Choices	Only uses one color	Uses more than one color, but little thought given to color choice	Thoughtfully selected appropriate colors that match their features

