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Anti-Racist Education Through the Visual Arts: Lesson Plans for Early Childhood Educators

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University of San Francisco

Anti-Racist Education Through the Visual Arts: Lesson Plans for Early Childhood Educators

A Field Project Proposal Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International and Multicultural Education

By
Janet Elder Monsivais
May 2018

Anti-Racist Education Through the Visual Arts: Lesson Plans for Early Childhood Educators

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MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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Janet Elder Monsivais
May 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project (or thesis) has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:


Instructor/Chairperson

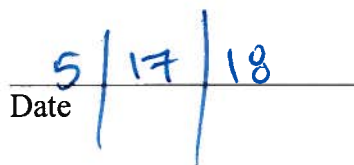

Date

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ABSTRACT

Despite the shifting racial and ethnic demographics of the United States, as well as the increase of children enrolling in public preschools, early childhood educators often lack the resources and pedagogical training needed to teach anti-racist education. Preschool teachers must move beyond simply celebrating cultural holidays and traditions and explicitly counter discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Teaching children in preschool comes with the challenge of considering varying developmental stages. The visual arts can be used as a dynamic learning medium that can be adapted for different subjects and topics, and is an excellent learning source for young children. With the increase in state funded preschools, there is more pressure to prepare students for the academic rigor of elementary, leaving little room for teachers to explore creative modes of teaching. The six week lesson plan uses the visual arts as learning avenue to teach for a critical analysis of race, identity and culture, and counter discriminatory attitudes and perceptions.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Growing up in Japan, in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial family, I had a heightened awareness of my dual-identity. I was fortunate to have been raised in an international community where student voice and experiences were highly valued. It has clearly made an impact on my educational journey, self-esteem, awareness and acceptance of my own cultural background and that of others. Grounded in the belief that student development happens best when their experiences and interests guide their learning, I was incredibly lucky that my learning environment encouraged community engagement, creative exploration, and questioning diversity of thought. Upon moving to the U.S. for college, I was met with the reality that my schooling experience differed vastly from that of my peers, and attending an independent school in Japan in some ways shielded me from the inequality, segregation, and discrimination that many face in and outside of the U.S. public school system.

Working as a preschool teacher in San Francisco, I was met with many challenges, one of them being that I felt I was unprepared to teach in a way that was inclusive and mindful to all student identities. Starting the IME Master's program at the same time I began teaching, centered my focus on the reality that, although many educators commit to multicultural education, the way in which it is practiced is often very superficial, where teachers rarely move past introducing students to cultural holidays and traditions. Celebrating and recognizing diversity through reading books, dressing up, and cooking food are not, in my opinion, the most crucial parts of multicultural education. My understanding of multicultural education is one that delves deeply into critically analyzing the relationships between culture (including race and ethnicity), and

systemic power, bias, and privilege. As a teacher, very rarely did I find that the lessons addressed racial difference, biases, and stereotype correction.

Reflecting on the current and future trends of student demographics in the United States, it is certain that we are fast becoming one of the most culturally and racially diverse countries in the world. Today's students grow up in a world far away from the image of "White America", to one that reflects people with different stories, histories and backgrounds. With the implications of shifting demographic, educators now have the important task of preparing children to build an understanding and awareness towards identities that differ from their own. Teaching for inclusion is especially important in early childhood settings, as it has been proven that children begin to internalize witnessing or encountering discriminatory incidents and/or remarks from a very young age (Vittrup, 2016; Doucet & Adair, 2013; Meece & Wingate, 2009). Preschool settings are often the first point of socialization in large contexts, with children coming from different home cultures and identities, and it is crucial for educators to promote cross-cultural cognition and learning to engender a generation of global citizens. "Head Start programs have enrolled higher numbers of children from diverse cultural backgrounds with 42% of the programs indicating that diversity of their communities had increased in the past five years" (Gichuru, Riley, Robertson & Park, 2015, p. 46). There are a number of State initiatives that aim to increase preschool enrollment, which leads us to the questioning of how equity is being addressed in early childhood spaces.

Typically, early childhood education programs lack the depth and breadth needed for young learners to begin thinking about larger social issues, and this deficit prevents children from developing awareness of self, others and differences. With the increase in preschool enrollments, there is now the question of how teachers are responding to diverse student

populations. Teachers must be prepared to teach for inclusion and equity, “to engage children in understanding and challenging the injustices that divide and diminish their world” (Ramsey, 2017, p. 6). Most often, children below the age of 5 are underestimated in their capacity to understand issues such as power, privilege and inequality, yet many of them are already conscious that there is a power structure that exists between different groups of people. Now more than ever there is a need for curricula that focus on teaching through a multicultural lens. Not only should the curricula have the aim of broadening the understanding of race and racism, but they should also allow for a critical analysis of oppression and prejudice that different groups encounter in schools and in other social contexts. This also acknowledges schools as sites where social injustices and biases are learned and provoked. Thus, they must become the sites for unlearning them. The term “multicultural” has taken on many definitions and meanings, and in some ways, is considered an umbrella term for every aspect of what diversity encompasses including but not limited to race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, sexuality, disability and spirituality (Au, 2014). What I feel best informs my project, is one that Enid Lee speaks to, which frames multicultural education as anti-racist education (Miner, 2014). Multicultural education should extend beyond simply recognizing cultural differences, towards questioning inequality, advocating for equity and representation. Educating students about the historical drivers of social change that have resulted in systematic injustice, racism and prejudices, often falls to the side of multicultural education.

Anti-racist education critically examines racial prejudice, inequality, as well as how institutions sustain racism. Husband (2012), explains that “anti-racist education is based in intensive critique and reflection (related to the ideologies, policies, practices, and texts present in schools) as the necessary first step in identifying and responding to racial injustice in schools” (p.

366). This approach to addressing identity and differences is not often practiced in spaces of early childhood (Kemple, Lee & Harris, 2015). In challenging these understandings, we must ask educators to reflect on how they can create learning environments that are supportive of different family cultures in a society where racism is prevalent, and how to challenge these inequitable structures. Teaching methods aligned with critical, multicultural education that aims to challenge racism, discrimination and inequality, should provide possibilities for children to utilize their voices, stories and experiences as a platform for their learning (Williams & Norton, 2008). However, state implemented curricula are pushing for increasingly rigorous academic programs in preschools, leaving very little room for creative, and experiential learning options for both students and educators. The context of curriculum and enrollment in preschool has dramatically shifted over the last decade, with federal initiatives such as No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds, which aim to increase access to quality education and close the achievement gap between affluent and low-income students (Ramsey, 2017). More and more, schools prioritize academic testing, resulting in a disconnect that the students have to the curricula (Ladson-Billings, 1995). For decades now, “developmental psychologists have been interested in studying children’s developing awareness of human diversity, their developing attitudes toward race and culture, and their tendency to adopt racial stereotypes and use that to exclude others” (York, 2016, p. 29). It has been distinguished that “children begin to construct an understanding of human differences and similarities during their earliest years” (Chen, Nimmo & Fraser, 2009, p. 101). Early childhood educators carry with them the important task of laying a foundation for what it means to live and interact in a world where people come from different backgrounds. A challenge for many educators is to find a way to integrate a multicultural and culturally relevant teaching style that is age appropriate that will engage students with the learning material.

Multicultural education takes on many different interpretations, and what I feel makes most sense for the purpose of this field project is that it aims to simultaneously problematize inequality, bias and prejudice while celebrating difference (Ramsey, 2017; Banks & Banks, 2005). For preschool-aged students, the key is to be able to incorporate these components through interactive, engaging material, and frame it in ways that allow them to incorporate their own observations and experiences.

Visual Arts in Preschool

Reflecting on my own teaching and learning experience, I have found that the creative arts have numerous learning and developmental benefits, and fosters students to develop new ways of understanding and seeing the world. Visual arts have always played a significant role my education; growing up I always felt a strong passion for the arts and was fortunate that my school environment always provided opportunities that allowed me to explore this interest. Going on to study art as an undergraduate student, and volunteering as a teacher's aide in a public elementary school in San Francisco, I came to realize how limited the amount of time and space allocated to the arts is. Arts education has dramatically lost funding by schools over the years, and the importance of incorporating arts enrichment has been overlooked, particularly for young children. Although the No Child Left Behind legislation appointed art education as a core subject, schools have strict curriculum standards to meet, finding it harder to make time for art classes. Arts involvement incorporates focus, experimentation, and collaboration, it allows for students to become their own teachers, and to be at the center of their own learning experience (Kisida, Bowen and Greene, 2017; Menzer, 2015; Bentley, 2013). Unfortunately, public art funding in schools has decreased over the past decade, and although the visual arts have been allocated a significant more amount of funding than theatre and dance, many schools still struggle with finding space to

implement creative arts-based classes. Although there has been research into the long-term benefits of arts education on a student's academic achievement, school commitment and social-emotional development, it continues to be an area that has been pushed out of the everyday curriculum. In early childhood education, it is imperative that arts continue to be a part of the curriculum as it builds from student inquiry and experimentation (Menzer, 2015). In school spaces it is important, particularly for young children, to have opportunities where they can explore their creativity and “while non-school arts education programs are vital resources in communities all across the country, schools are the only institutions that have the potential to deliver arts education experiences to virtually all children” (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011, p. 20). Creative expression and experiential learning is crucial for young children as it allows them to express ideas and opinions through mediums that may otherwise not be possible. Educators can implement art activities to get students to think about their own cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and use that as a platform to analyze social issues such as inequality and prejudice.

Implementing a visual-arts based lesson to provide an anti-racist education creates an excellent opportunity to familiarize students with different perspectives and identities, while examining the forces of discrimination and inequality through creative expression. Nieto (2017) affirms the importance of multicultural education as it “challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect” (p. 29). Souto-Manning (2009), explains that “early educators can play a paramount role as young children move toward fluid identities and start recognizing and navigating within and across spaces of cultural differences—e.g., between their home cultures and the school sponsored socially-dominant culture” (p. 269). Preschools must prepare

teachers on how to respond to the range in student diversity, as well as incorporate a multicultural teaching model that values what each student brings with them to classroom spaces.

The goal for my lesson plan is to create a resource for educators that use the visual arts as learning avenue to teach for a critical analysis of multiculturalism-examining our race, identity and culture, and how the forces of inequality impact our everyday lives. Although there are existing activities for educators that wish to implement multicultural education in preschools, there are few that centers on the visual arts as a critical learning avenue. The act of creation is integral to children and has the power to be fused with serious topic issues concerning the core components of a multicultural education.

Purpose of the Project

Combining my passion for arts education, and preschool teaching, the purpose of my field project is to develop a visual arts-based lesson plan that incorporates components of anti-racist education and identity development. I am devoting my project to creating lesson plans for teachers to become responsive to the needs of an increasingly diverse population of young learners in preschools. It is my hopes that it will be a useful resource to support early childhood educators, as they navigate the challenges in responding to diverse student demographics and practice multicultural teaching through a lens of anti-racist education. As the arts are losing their space in classroom settings, even within preschool, it is my aim to re-center the arts as a crucial component in early childhood learning. Inquiry and exploration are the center of a child's learning. Although there is a growing amount of resources for teachers in early education that provide instruction on how to teach in a diverse society, there are few lesson plans that are creative arts based, which is needed.

The lesson will be divided into four units over the course of six weeks. The lesson plans objective is for children to develop an equitable outlook of different perspectives and identities, while also providing an opportunity to reflect on the inequality, prejudice and biases that we encounter in our lives. As racial demographics are far from being a reflection of “White America,” it is important that children see value in all forms of identities. Teachers will be guided with an initial description of the learning objective and key points beginning each lesson, which can contribute to their understanding of how the activity can help students delve deeper into exploring the outlined components. It is important to consider the role of teacher, and how their understanding of their own identity and outlook towards others, can impact the way in which they teach. My intent is that the lesson plan will guide teachers in breaking down stereotypes, rather than reducing cultures to simply acknowledging and celebrating holiday rituals-which occurs too often in preschools. The lesson will also incorporate an initial framework of how to set-up a supportive and inclusive classroom environment that will foster student-centered learning and teacher-student relationships. In conclusion of the lesson plans, there will be an art exhibit, providing a chance for reflection, questions and an opportunity for students to share their work with classmates, families and friends. Providing a space for reflection allows children to understand the perspective and attitudes of their fellow classmates and teachers.

Theoretical Framework

This project will be guided by anti-racist education and Freire’s critical pedagogy. Both frameworks will help highlight the urgency for critical arts education as a tool for anti-racist education in our earliest learning communities.

Anti-racist Education

Anti-racist education does not follow one teaching approach, rather it contains several guiding practices that aim to combat racism and examine power structures, through the “learning environment, curriculum and student-teacher interactions” (Derman-Sparks, LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 2014, p. 10). Niemonen (2007) defines anti-racist education as “a set of pedagogical, curricular, and organizational strategies that hope to promote racial equality by identifying, then eliminating, white privilege” (p. 160). It is important to highlight the need for educators to work alongside their students in order to confront racism through a multicultural perspective. Nieto (2017) claims that “it is essential to keep the anti-racist nature of multicultural education in mind because, in many schools, even some that espouse a multicultural philosophy, only superficial aspects of multicultural education are apparent” (p. 33). Many schools are reluctant to overtly address racism and discrimination, as it may be an uncomfortable subject to navigate. It also takes a considerable amount of comfort level for teachers to facilitate exploration of diverse realities and identities.

The typical approach of multicultural education implemented in early childhood settings often counts multiculturalism as simply having a diverse student body and reduces culture to the simple representation by celebrating holidays, leaving out an important discussion of race. “Antiracist educators characterize multicultural education as a deracialized discourse that understands only superficially the processes that create and perpetuate racism” (Niemonen, 2007, p. 159). Too often, educators steer away from discussing the reality and history of racial inequality and discrimination, as reference to such would imply that we still live in a world where we see racial differences to have an impact on our experiences and opportunities (Vittrup, 2016; Kemple et al., 2015; Niemonen, 2007; Yosso, 2005; White, 2002). Lane (2017) states that action must be taken to go against the often unnoticed perpetuation of racism. As such, anti-

racist education makes explicit the inequalities that persist and are constructed within social institutions.

Critical Pedagogy

In practicing anti-racist education, it is crucial to take into account the structures of institutions, particularly schools and the way in which they operate. Critical pedagogy was first conceptualized by Paulo Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he posed various critiques against the education system; top-down approach teaching, hierarchical dynamics between student and teacher, as well as the dehumanizing aspect of schooling. The opposite of “top-down” teaching is what Freire calls “critical pedagogy”; problem-posing education that allows for people to critically reflect on their position in the world, while also allowing the freedom for teachers to learn along with their students (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). Students are placed at the center of the praxis and are encouraged to be change agents themselves to develop the skills necessary for them to challenge the inequalities that exist. An educator’s responsibility is therefore to guide students to think critically and equitably, by incorporating techniques that incentive equity of voice, the interrogation of social norms and constructs, all the while learning with the students.

Knowledge is neither an extension nor transfer of facts. True academic inquiry and thought development occurs when we observe our interactions with other people and how they may or may not conflict with previously held beliefs. Simply put, it is a negotiation and navigation of power constructs. As Freire states, it is much easier for an educator to be disengaged with students and removed in the process of learning. The challenge for educators is to be able to create dialogue among the students and to find ways to remove themselves from the downfalls of subtractive schooling.

When examining American public school education system, many students of color experience various forms of isolation and oppression in their schooling. It is dehumanizing because these students neither can't find themselves in the curriculum, nor do their teachers teach to and through their lived experiences. Salazar (2013), says these experiences are dehumanizing because it signals to students that their voices, or cultural and linguistic backgrounds are not sources of valuable knowledge. Color and culture blindness often prevail in public school classrooms, and this lack of inclusive teaching and validation for students of color prevents students from bringing their most authentic selves into the classroom. As Michelle Alexander says in her interview on colorblindness with Jody Sokowler (2014), “we have avoided in recent years talking openly and honestly about race out of fear that it will alienate and polarize” (p. 61). Students will begin to blame themselves as the problem, when in fact it is the history and reproduction of racism at large that lead to isolation.

Henry Giroux, an educator and advocate for critical pedagogy in schools, and has addressed issues within our current school culture and environment. Giroux takes Freire's thoughts and applies them to contemporary neoliberal society and the frameworks which reproduce social inequality and all lines lead back to the diminished quality of education; particularly that which students of color receive. Giroux (2015) claims that “critical education represents both an ideal and a strategy in the service of struggling for social and economic democracy (p. 34). He also states that educators need to understand the confines of the hidden curriculum and the dangers of the neoliberal belief that education amounts to learning a rigid curriculum dependent on the ability to create and cultivate passive students who are evaluated on standardized means. He calls this the enforcement of a pedagogy of repression (Giroux, 2015, p. 451).

The concept of the “hidden curriculum” is also attributed to Anyon (1980) who examines the “different types of educational experiences and curricular knowledge afforded to students across different social classes” (p. 67). She points out that creative curricula are not often found in affluent school contexts, whereas children coming from low-income to working class families, often learn within strict curricular and pedagogical confines, with little room for creativity and expression (Anyon, 1980). This observation gives urgency to the notion that early childhood educators need to reflect on their teaching practices and curriculum, “as it can highlight and interrupt dominant beliefs and bring silent issues to the forefront” (Kilderry, 2004, p. 35). This justifies the need for critical multicultural, anti-racist education for our youngest learners. This, however, has been a challenge, as early childhood spaces are rarely seen as sites of social transformation. Yet as more emphasis is placed on rote memorization in preschools, students and teachers alike are not being asked to question social inequity and prevailing power structures. This makes early childhood learning communities a great place to start multicultural, anti-racist work, all the while endorsing age-appropriate, teacher pedagogical development.

Critical Arts Pedagogy

Another benefit of critical arts pedagogy is its interactiveness; rather than students being passive recipients of knowledge who are then evaluated on test scores. Education reform has devalued the need for interactive and critically engaging models of learning, pushing students away from being active participants in their learning. Giroux (2015) says this is to the detriment [of students] and “the radical and critical imagination is under assault in most neoliberal societies because it poses a threat as does the idea that the mission of education should have something to do with creating critically thoughtful and engaged young people” (p. 451). This is especially connected with the defunding of art programs across the United States, where schools are

homogenized to place academic testing as their main priority. There is little value placed on the creative arts as it is looked upon as less valuable than other core subjects such as math, science and English.

What is known is that the creative arts develop a student's ability to develop higher order thinking and to become critical thinkers in the act of creation, find their voice for self-expression and to engage in an active experience (Bentley, 2013). It is also common for students to hone a sense of self, and an active voice. Additionally, critical arts pedagogy is useful for counter-narrative and inquiry-based arts projects, which engender critical thought and discussions on social inclusion (Chappell & Chappell, 2016, p. 291). Leveraging visual arts, for example, as a medium for self-expression and a way to understand multiple perspectives, allows young students to engage with emotions in a safe and brave way (Bell & Roberts, 2010). Explicitly, this means that the arts open up possibility that allow for exploration and dialogue surrounding topics of race, racism, and justice within and across diverse communities.

Critical arts pedagogy places students at the center of their learning, and breaks down the teacher-dominant hierarchy that exists in classrooms. It sees students as the knowledge holders, which drive their learning experiences. For young children, it provides room to explore intersections of their lived experiences, personal stories and identity, while also looking towards future possibilities. As Quintero (2007) explains, because of engagement with the arts, "through their play, especially when immersed in an environment of literature, art, and story, can provide us with perspectives of possibilities of what is and what can be" (p. 202).

In conclusion, a contemporary American lens, through which early childhood is often seen and taught, prevents students from engaging critically with their own identities, the identities of others and prevents them from developing the skills of navigating difference. The

context of creating an inclusive environment is led by children's questions, mutual learning between teacher and student, and seeing student experiences as opportunities to teach through (File, Mueller, & Wisneski, 2012; Genishi & Goodwin, 2008). In doing so, we prepare students to become their best advocates for justice. This observation lends validity to the idea that critical arts pedagogy, especially for our youngest learners, is crucial. Not only does it place students at the center of their learning experience, but it also breaks down the top-down, teacher dominant hierarchy that exists in many public preschools. This positions students as active learners and uses creative expression as a vehicle through which students can explore and question social norms, inequality, discrimination, and justice in a controlled classroom environment.

Significance of the Project

In order to value all student identities in schools, there must be an approach that is inclusive and mindful of the varying identities in the classroom space, while equipping children to recognize and counter systematic forces of power and privilege. The lesson plan is intended for early childhood educators in preschool settings, to combine inquiry and explorative art making and the components of anti-racist education. It will give opportunities for children to analyze their own positionality in the world amongst others, by exploring identity, family and underrepresented groups in the community. As classroom spaces continue to grow in numbers of students who come from different cultural backgrounds, teachers need support in being able to appropriately respond to and teach to wide-range of students. Many teachers simply touch on surface level topics of culture, with the celebration of cultural holidays by bringing in food or making crafts, reading "multicultural" books, etc., and very rarely extend to analyzing how and why our differences lead to inequality. Race is rarely explicitly talked about with young children. Early childhood educators make an especially great impact on the schooling experience of young

children. Teachers must be prepared to incorporate age-appropriate lessons, in which these very deep and important social topics are introduced and examined without perpetuating stereotypes. Rather than dismissing important issues such as racism, prejudice, inequality, and pretend as though these problems do not exist, educators must learn ways in which to incorporate these topics in the preschool curriculum. On top of this, student lives and experiences are integral to their personal development and engagement within the classroom. It is my hope that this lesson guide will contribute to a deeper understanding of how to teach through a critical, multicultural lens, and expand on using the visual arts as a learning resource. Too often the visual arts in youth settings have been attributed to play and free-time, but it should be utilized in a way that children will be engaged with an inquiry-based art approach, that develops identity, examine differences and empowers them to be positive change agents.

It is my aim that educators can work interactively with students, and have conversations surrounding the above topics, as it is crucial that children develop a sense of understanding of their identity in relation to others, and how these differences play out in society. America is fraught with systematic inequalities, including lack of representation and visibility for certain demographics. I have been compelled to advocate for and design lesson plans that will help educators engage in anti-racist pedagogy in preschools, taking a critical approach in examining discrimination and inequality, while using the visual arts as the learning method to facilitate identity development and familiarize students with images outside of the Eurocentric, white norm. Teacher perceptions and comfort surrounding the topic of race in early childhood will be examined, as well as how the perpetuation of racial and cultural stereotypes under the dominant lens of “White culture” lead to the construction of biases, discriminatory thoughts and actions. It will also center public preschools as a site for early anti-bias/anti-racist work, and also as a place where teachers can counter

potentially harmful, racially discriminatory, or colorblind social behaviors. Questions that will be used to guide my research and lesson plans include:

- How can the visual arts be used in preschools to develop critical thinking surrounding racial identity?
- Why is it important for teachers to speak to topics of race and power beginning in early childhood settings?
- How can culturally relevant teaching and critical pedagogy be used to practice anti-racist education in preschools?
- What benefits does visual arts education have in schools?

Definition of Terms

I will be highlighting key terms that will be used throughout the field project and define them in ways that best inform my project, and have also been shaped by my interpretations and experience. Although I will be using the term anti-racist education most frequently, it is important for me to define multicultural education, and how the two differ.

1. Early Childhood: Typically, this can be defined as the age between 0-8 (World Health Organization, 2012). For the purpose of this project, early childhood will be defined as the age group of 3 to 5-year-olds, the most common age that students are enrolled in preschool.
2. Multicultural Education: There are several different ways in which multicultural education is defined. The scope can range from being referred to as a teaching method, educational focus or policy. For the purpose of my project, multicultural education

challenges and critiques racism, prejudice and discrimination, and aims to approach diversity as crucial to equity (Nieto, 2017; Souto-Manning, 2013).

3. Anti-racist education: Critically assessing and reflecting on ways in which institutions and social constructs perpetuate racism through the environment, policy and curriculum (Husband, 2012). Explicit action towards preventing and disrupting racism, while deconstructing the privilege and power of Eurocentric dominant practices and beliefs (Niemonen, 2007).
4. Culture: For this project, I will refer to culture in the way James Banks and Cherry McGee Banks (2005) define it as “the historical experiences of persons and social groupings of various kinds, such as nuclear family and kin, gender, ethnicity, race, and social class, all with differing access to power in society” (p. 32).

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review will focus on three main components: anti-racist education, culturally relevant pedagogy and the benefits of visual arts practice in early childhood education. The research and literature will inform the need for multicultural education to incorporate anti-racist education that aims to critically analyze inequality and discrimination, rather than the reduction of culture to celebrating traditions and holidays. I will focus particularly on the role of the visual arts as a tool for developing critical thinking and for facilitating an inclusive, collaborative learning experience for both students and teachers. Learning through the arts will help give students a deeper understanding of their identity and allow them to value similarities and differences through explorative practice (Nganga, 2015).

Exploration of Race in Early Childhood

The exploration of race in early childhood education is met by two main problems: 1) the notion that young children may not understand concepts surrounding privilege and power; and 2) the fact that many teachers lack the necessary pedagogical training needed for them to implement and frame discussions about race and racism in an age-appropriate manner, that builds student critical thinking and responsiveness (Durden, Escalante & Blitch, 2015; Husband, 2010; Roberts, 2010; Chen et al., 2009). Husband (2010) states the following:

First, many early childhood educators believe that discussions of race and racial injustice should be introduced during the later portion of the elementary school years where children are better suited to understand and respond to these issues. Second, the field of early childhood education lacks a clear, connected, and developmentally appropriate approach to teaching and learning about issues of race and racial oppression. (p. 61)

The ability for young children to understand concepts surrounding privilege and power is well documented (Kemple et al., 2015; Chizhik & Chizhik, 2005). However, there is an opposing

relationship to this fact. Early childhood development specialists agree that children construct their understanding of their identity and recognize physical differences at a young age and, by preschool, have questions and attitudes towards racial attributes that differ from their own (Kemple et al., 2015; Nganga, 2015; Boutte, 2008). “Physical differences often associated with race and geographical origin include skin color, hair color and texture, aspects of facial structure, and eye color” (Kemple et al., 2015). As children begin to question their identity to that of others, it is important that classroom spaces encourage curiosity of physical similarities and differences. Nganga (2015) says, “creating an environment where children learn and discuss similarities and differences, why people are different and alike, and expanding children’s awareness is key to helping them develop positive identities” (p. 2). This means that the way in which teachers choose to address racial differences, or not, impacts the way in which children form biases towards one another (Boutte, 2008).

Following this issue is the fact that very little research has been conducted where early childhood educators practice anti-racist pedagogy. Oftentimes, teachers consciously choose to take the colorblind approach, by not confronting or discussing the topic of racism, which implies that racial inequality and discrimination do not exist (Niemonen, 2017). Early childhood behavioral psychologist Dr. Brigitte Vittrup (2016) of Texas Women’s University posits that “in reality, our society is anything but colorblind, and the silence surrounding the topic of race can leave children without guidelines on how to interpret the stereotypes and examples of inequality that they are exposed to” (p. 37). In fact, this has led some scholars to define schools as “Institutions of Racism” where the schooling process and environment maintains and perpetuates racism (Husband, 2010, p. 62). The question therefore becomes, why is it that early childhood educators, in addition to the fact that most of them believe that children aged 3 to 5 are not developmentally ready to discuss

race, choose to adopt a colorblind approach when the society in which we live is racialized? The answer can perhaps be found in the fact that many teachers lack the skill set and the basic introductory curricula, as well as frameworks through which to address their implicit biases. Texas Women's University professor Brigitte Vittrup's 2016 study underscores this observation.

Vittrup conducted a study in a metropolitan area in the southwestern United States, with 77 early childhood educator participants with the aim of examining teacher reports of discomfort discussing race in their classroom. Findings suggest, that although "the majority of teachers (86%) stated that they think it is important to discuss race related issues with children, only forty-two percent indicated that discussions of race were part of their regular scheduled classroom curriculum" (p. 38). A color-conscious approach (discussion of racial equity, bias, discrimination) and a color-mute approach (those who do not discuss race at all or do not move beyond recognizing racial difference) were used to determine how teachers discuss race in their classroom. Vittrup's study showed that 70% of the teachers who participated fell in the color-mute category based on their response. Comfort levels and lack of confidence and awareness to appropriately discuss racism were the main factors for why teachers were identified within the color-mute category. She concluded that teaching for anti-racism is integral in providing children with the opportunity to reflect on their positionality among the larger social structure and provide the knowledge for them to recognize and resist racism (Derman-Sparks, 2014; Husband, 2012). Kemple, Lee and Harris (2015) state, "it is essential for early childhood educators to routinely examine their own beliefs, values, and experiences in order to think more critically and intently about their role in the development of children's self-esteem and racial attitudes" (p. 103). From these points we can deduce that in order for teaching to be transformative for our growingly diverse pre and primary school populations, that the instruction provided must move beyond simply teaching and

celebrating difference, and towards critically examining inequities and prejudice. Teachers must ask of themselves and of their students the best ways to promote social change and awareness, both in and outside the classroom.

Power and Privilege

In advocating for anti-racist education, pedagogy extends beyond multicultural education of expanding cultural awareness and perspectives, but explicitly examine power relations and racial favoritism in school structures and society as a whole (Nieto, 2017; Salazar, 2013; Banks, 1995). This begins with teachers being aware of “white power and privilege in the American education system” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 73). There is a significant disconnect between the actual racial demographics of students in public schools, and the “White-centering,” Eurocentric curricula that are offered in schools; meaning many of our students lack the context and/or relevance of what their learning. Although more educators are aware of this disconnect, many find it hard to break free from this practice because state-mandated testing requires that students be assessed on white-centering curricular content. With limited instruction time, creating space for diversity, anti-bias and, anti-racist education may seem like a chore.

As children begin the process of schooling, teachers carry the responsibility of balancing their instructional workload and the need to provide students with the social-emotional skills needed for them to safely and bravely navigate the world outside the walls of their schools. If teachers cannot explicitly provide spaces that allow for reflection and the critical analysis of race and racial and inequality, many students will leave the education system having neither fully developed a sense of self, in addition to having internalized an inferiority complex. Ramsey (2017) confirms this in their statement that, “whereas most Whites need to unlearn a false sense

of universality and superiority, many people from other groups need to overcome false assumptions of inferiority” (p. 70). This behavior is learned from an early age.

This said, rather than overlooking the ability of young children to understand this critical approach to talking about race, it is important that teachers are equipped with the awareness and knowledge needed to begin discussion on the realities and constructs of race and identity.

However, before teaching strategies can be thought of, teachers must be aware of their own identities, biases and beliefs and how they can interfere in their teaching approaches, specifically their ability to leverage anti-racist education in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Chen et al., 2009). Teachers play a significant role in shaping a child’s perspective, particularly in a schooling system that is met with many flaws and challenges (McCarther & Davis, 2017). It is therefore imperative that we provide educators with the tools and knowledge to explicitly deconstruct discrimination and biases that develop at a young age.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Implementing an effective anti-racist framework, one of the main components is to empower each student to see value in their identity, as well as examine the intersection of power and privilege. Teacher plays a crucial role in the classroom, determining culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) focuses on various aspects of the classroom including the students, teacher and learning environment. It gives the opportunity for students to see a reflection of their identities embedded throughout the curriculum and see a link between their home culture and school (Chen et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although it has taken on many definitions over the past decade, Ladson-Billings (1995) was one of the leading scholars in identifying the components of CRP, which include academic success, maintenance of culture, and development of a critical consciousness of the current sociopolitical context. CRP sees power in connecting home and

community life, with school culture for academic success and cultural competence. Paris (2012), moves beyond the terminology of CRP and uses *culturally sustaining pedagogy* as a way to support students to maintain the assets and values of their culture, while also being able to access “dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). Current educational systems have shown limited support of underrepresented students, forcing many to leave behind their home cultures and unique cultural backgrounds to fit into White, U.S. culture (Salazar, 2013). In CRP, it is important that all student voices are considered valuable as they share and reflect amongst their peers and teachers. This is especially important in early childhood education, as children begin to develop opinions towards others as they begin social interaction, impacting their analysis of their own identity as well (Gichuru et al., 2015). According to Gay (2003), “students need to understand how multicultural issues shape the social, political economic and cultural fabric of the United States as well as how such issues fundamentally influence their personal lives” (p. 30). CRP allows for a critical analysis of the dominant culture and rethinking ways in which to incorporate the home cultures of students into the classroom as a valuable resource to enhance their learning potential. Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014), has long-time advocated for teacher education that focuses on building from student assets and critically reflecting on their own identity. Teachers must navigate through the task of being inclusive to all, yet research has shown that there is a lack of resources and training of CRP in teacher preparation.

Many educators face the challenge of how to critically reflect on their own identity, in relation to that of their students, and how that impacts their teaching practice and perspective. Questions that teachers may ask themselves include: “am I aware of my own cultural identity, biases I may hold, and do I view diversity and exceptionality as strengths that all children can succeed?” (Chen et al., 2009, p. 104). Studies have indicated that there has been little research

done in the work of preschool teachers with practicing CRP in the classroom. Since 1995 only 45 in-depth studies have been done on the practice of CRP, and of these 45 studies, only 2 were done in preschools (Gichuru, et al., 2015, p. 46). Teacher preparation that focuses on how to respond to diversity and be inclusive for all is necessary in moving forward within changing student demographics and allowing all voices to be heard and recognized. Teaching through a white, monoculture framework leaves out many identities, and leads to a construction of racial privilege and hierarchy. Existing research and examples of CRP is predominantly found in upper grade levels, but there is also much potential in early childhood spaces where this can be practiced. Multiple studies have shown that although teachers are more conscious of responding to the growing amount of diversity, many still struggle with providing quality, responsive education (Gichuru et al., 2015; Durden et al, 2015). Souto-Manning and Mitchell (2009) suggest that “early educators can play a paramount role as young children move toward fluid identities and start recognizing and navigating within and across spaces of cultural differences—e.g., between their home cultures and the school sponsored socially-dominant culture” (p. 269). In a case study done in a head start program in the Midwest for 1 year, research found that teachers find it challenging to move past teaching about cultural diversity on a surface level and connect it to the greater sociopolitical issues of racism, power and inequality (Durden et al., 2015). Teachers that were part of the study expressed understanding of the diverse classroom population, yet had a hard time connecting theory to practice. Also, teacher participants expressed understanding that embedding children’s culture was important to include in learning units but did not often mention their own identity and perspectives as having a direct impact on how they teach (Durden et al., 2015). Teachers must be aware of their own positionality in the classroom and how that impacts their approach in teaching. Educators must be inclusive and

reflective of the students in the classroom, building from their identity and lived experiences as integral components to teach through and to.

Equity Pedagogy

As established above through culturally responsive pedagogy, teaching approach and instruction play a significant role in the facilitation of curricula. On top of culturally responsive pedagogy, equity pedagogy sees opportunity in the curricula to adapt to and teach to diverse student backgrounds. According to James Banks (1995), equity pedagogy is the “teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society” (p. 152). In providing equal opportunity to each student, there must be a reexamination of the power relations in school structures (Banks, 1995; Salazar, 2013). This begins with teachers being aware of the growing amount of diversity and the “White power and privilege system in American education” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 73). More educators and teachers are becoming aware of this disconnect, but many find it hard to break free of state-enforced curriculums that disengage many students. Paris (2012) questions, “what is the purpose of schooling in a pluralistic society? It is brutally clear that current policies are not interested in sustaining the language and cultures of longstanding and newcomer communities of color in the United States” (p. 95). As children begin the process of schooling, teachers carry the responsibility of responding to cultural diversity and seeing it as a valuable asset, rather than a learning barrier. Before teaching strategies can be thought of, teachers must be aware of their own identity, biases and beliefs (Chen et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Equity pedagogy encompasses teaching practices that are committed to bringing in multiple perspectives and constructing knowledge from inquiry

and reflection. It relies on teachers working together with the students and constructing a supportive learning environment.

Student-Centered Learning and Role of the Teacher

Culturally responsive pedagogy and equity pedagogy are key approaches that must be considered when implementing anti-racist curricula. In addition to the curricula, the positionality of the teacher and role of the student in the classroom is integral in allowing for an engaging, transformative and learning experience. One of the main elements in supporting student-centered learning is building from student experience and molding lesson plans around their questions and interests. In order for teaching to be transformative, it must incorporate a student-centered approach to teaching; the experiences of students must be at the forefront of the lessons, as well as valuing all student identity. For young children, building from their interests, experiences and findings are all important components that must be considered in building lesson plans.

Preschool classrooms are the first context in which children begin to interact with others, and educators must be made aware of how their experiences and opportunities in this setting can make an impact on their future. Student-centered learning provides opportunity for different outlooks and opinions to be shared amongst everyone, which provide a rich learning experience for the whole class. Making students feel they are significant in their learning process and classroom space is important for all age-groups, but for young children especially, it allows them to see power in their voices and opinions. In early childhood education, inquiry-based learning is a way in which teachers build the curriculum around the knowledge and experiences of students, empowering them to be at the forefront of their learning. “From a critical perspective, inquiry is multicultural because it transforms the curriculum in ways that address both personal and culturally relevant teaching as well as rigorous educational opportunities” (Souto-Manning,

2013, p. 41). Inquiry learning is a process that involves meaningful dialogue and time spent learning and working alongside children; it is not structured, nor does it have any time constraints. (Souto-Manning, 2013; Genishi & Dyson, 2009). According to Souto-Manning (2013), “as learners ask questions they consider the multiple ways to pursue answers, thus considering many perspectives that are socially and culturally located” (p. 42). It is important to make available a variety of teaching strategies and activities, as it cannot be assumed that each student will react positively to the same approach. This requires teachers to be flexible in molding the curriculum by observing and reflecting student engagement and response. Traditionally, early childhood settings see teachers talking to the students and giving direct instructions, rather than engaging in collaborative discussion with them (Husband, 2010). There is an increasing amount of resources and activities that have shown to be successful in bringing in student lives into the classroom, while allowing teachers to learn alongside their students. For instance, Linda Christensen is dedicated to incorporating the lived experiences and backgrounds of students to the forefront of their learning, giving teachers a chance to learn more about the identities of their students. Christensen’s *Where I’m From* lessons, where students’ write poems based on their lived experience has been adopted by numerous educators for a wide-range of age groups. Christensen (2009) explains that in finding a way to make a student feel significant, there must be care and trust, as well as space for their lives to be a part of the curriculum. Shaping lesson plans from the children’s cultural knowledge directly impacts their involvement and engagement with their learning. Another lesson that has been taken and modified by several educators is drawing visual maps of students’ home cultures and lives as a way to initiate conversation surrounding student identity, and their experiences (Christensen, 2017).

In supporting student-centered learning, the role of the teacher in relation to the students is extremely important. Particularly in practicing anti-racist education, teachers must be conscious of their own identity, and it is crucial that there is no dominant hierarchy present between students and teachers. Rather there should be a mindset and approach that teachers are learning alongside their students. There must be a constant reflection that happens amongst the teachers, asking themselves in which ways they are committed to equity and inclusion (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016). Critical teachers must constantly be reflecting on their own positionality and allowing flexibility in their curriculum. As File, Mueller and Wisneski (2012) suggest, teachers must focus on the possibilities from bringing in student voices and experiences, rather than resorting to lesson plans that is not inclusive for all. Particularly for early childhood education, teachers can fall into the pattern of taking control of the classroom, guiding much of the lesson and forming an unintended power over students.

Another important component is that teachers must care for the well-being of their students, and support student experience, home culture and knowledge, which directly relates to their engagement in the classroom. Souto-Manning (2013) says, “to care means to learn from and with each child, to form authentic relationships with the child and with his or her family” (p. 123). Commitment of early childhood educators to promote these values starting at a young age is important in establishing that we must all be respected and treated equally, no matter where we come from, and the histories and experiences that students possess as valuable assets to their learning process. Anti-racist education challenges discrimination and strives for quality education that is committed to transformation, equality and justice (Banks, 1995; Gay, 2003). Simply teaching about cultural diversity is not effective in challenging stereotypes and power

structure. Teachers must aim to challenge restrictive curriculums by incorporating student voices and stories as crucial to their learning about inequality, prejudice and discrimination.

Visual Arts and Early Childhood Education

The visual arts are most often attributed to young learners, as it adapts to a wide-range of learning styles, and easily adapts to different learning topics (Menzer, 2015). Arts participation in the early years has been shown to have a particularly strong impact in developing motor skills, cognition and creative thinking, but also allow them the opportunity to express themselves outside of the traditional structured curriculum (Menzer, 2015; Reif & Grant, 2010). Although the field of art taught through a critical framework within early childhood is relatively new, there has been increasing research and learning guides that show how the arts contribute to a child's development and shaping their understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives. "In the early years of life, art-making is characteristic to childhood. Children do not question whether their artwork is of quality...it is play, it is fun, and it is a language of learning" (Barblett, Knaus, & Brratt-Pugh, 2015, p. 91). There has been proven research that the act of creating art in our early years transcends through the rest of our schooling experience and beyond. As researched in the *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, "students who have a strong arts engagement in educational settings experience advantages over time and the positive effects of such learning last long after the student has left formal schooling" (Barblett et al., 2015, p. 91). The demands of testing and regulated curriculum are pushing the arts out of classrooms, leaving many students less exposed to the benefits of arts education. According to Narey (2009), as the pressures of academic testing become increasingly present in early childhood learning, teachers rarely have time to allow children to engage with art practices. As art making incorporates focus, experimentation and collaboration, it allows for students to become their own teachers and be to be at the center of their

learning experience (Reif & Grant, 2010, McClure et al., 2017). Existing evidence shows that “students exposed to the arts in early childhood and beyond see improved outcomes across a broad range of measures...academic skills, neurocognitive outcomes, and social-emotional development” (Kisida, Bowen & Greene, 2017, p. 1). In combining visual arts with critical pedagogy, art-based reflections can be used for students to express their experiences and existing opinions to topics of inequality and discrimination. In an example seen in Noel’s (2003) work with preservice teachers, the visual arts are used as a platform for expression and responses in coming to a “clearer understanding of their own identities within a complex structuring of race, class, gender, and power” (p. 15). Steering away from the traditional practice of having her students write papers, Noel challenges her students to express their thoughts through visual interpretations. One of Noel’s students, Gabrielle, says in response to the exercise:

“Art ties to all cultures and genders, as well as prejudice and privilege. Society uses art as a way to bring people together; tear-apart prior beliefs, create thinkers, represent a piece of a heritage or culture, as well as aesthetically challenge our brains” (2003, p. 17). Changing the way in which students typically engage with classwork and assessment (reading, writing), and allowing them to use a different learning medium, such as the visual arts, provides an opportunity to think and respond in new ways.

Very few existing research has been done which studies the intersection of early childhood, anti-racist education and the visual arts. However, as a growing amount of literature points to the need for anti-racist education for young learners, lesson plans and activities that focus on anti-racist/anti-bias, have become readily available for educators. Teaching for Tolerance (2018), an online portal that provides teaching materials for educators working with students between K-12, is committed to the components of social justice and anti-bias that

empower students to challenge prejudice and be change agents in their community and beyond. For instance in a series titled “Art and Activism” for K-2 students, students look at artists that advocate for racial equality and justice, portraiture that fights against racial stereotypes, and select a message to create a communal mural. The objectives and lesson goals state “art is a natural way for children to express their feelings and ideas. Looking at, thinking about and particularly making art together helps children build community and see themselves as important parts of their world” (Teaching for Tolerance, 2018). More resources that connect the creative arts with social justice issues, will provide educators a platform to interactively engage students, all while promoting positive change.

Critical art educators must be “committed to the democratization of society through art education” and is also a “tool for exposing and addressing oppression and encouraging social transformation” (Darts, 2004, p. 316). In early childhood settings, there are many opportunities to allow for children to participate in visual art activities, including drawing, painting, sculpting, and building. Mostly any art medium can be placed through a critical lens, allowing for a praxis that involves action and reflection (Shulsky & Kirkwood, 2015; Menzer, 2015). Reif and Grant (2010) say, “the arts represent a direct connection between creative and analytical thought, and they provide highly successful methods to convey academic ideas in an engaging and substantive manner” (p. 101). The goal for educators is to ultimately provide students with the “awareness of immediate political and social realities” (Noel, 2003, p. 17). The art-based approach to teaching allows children to examine their own beliefs, but also “create an artistic vision that will allow others to take up the project of social transformation” (Noel, 2003, p. 18). Marshall (2015), art educator and artist who works with school-aged children to raise awareness around violence and conflict, claims that art is integral to youth development in allowing them to collaborate and

make experimental artwork that will help students find their voice for agency and change. Critical art is embedded in Freire and other scholar's ideology of the need for a collaborative learning process, centering the students' lives, as well as heightening their social awareness. Freire's hope for a transformative education, can be applied in the dimension of early childhood, where power structures and inequality must be addressed. Blaise and Ryan (2012) depict that "studies of children's play using critical theory have shown children are active agents in the curriculum, regulating each other's subjectivity and yet also using spaces to subvert adult discourses" (p. 89). It is important that children have an avenue for expression and have a balanced mindset that will allow them to navigate expression of their emotions. The action and reflection process in the visual arts can be used as a form of expressive and transformational teaching that is fundamental to the learning process for young children.

Summary

The above literature has shown that multicultural education must be taught through the lens of anti-racist pedagogy, which has the power to critically assess the intersection of race with power and privilege. Through the visual arts, children can explore the components of their identity, bringing in their experiences and home cultures as a base for their learning. Through interaction and group learning, children will become aware of different perspectives in the classroom and teachers will play a role in facilitating discussion surrounding inequality and discrimination. Thus, it is crucial that teachers are aware of their own biases and how that may play a role in their teaching.

Culturally responsive teaching brings the lives of students to the forefront of their learning experiences, and when combined with visual arts education, has the power to reach a stage of transformation that begins in the classroom, and hopefully extend beyond. In order to

practice a responsive approach, a visual-arts based curriculum is integral to the learning of young children as it is developmentally appropriate and engaging. Not only does arts participation build creativity and exploratory skills, but it has the ability to connect to a wide range of learning styles. Early childhood education spaces must keep creative arts-based learning at the center of the curriculum, while preparing educators to be inclusive of the growing amount of diversity and preparing students to engage in cross-cultural settings. Although much work needs to be done in teacher preparation and addressing racism in early childhood education, it is a crucial component of education that is much needed.

CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

The series of lessons was created with the intention to be used as a resource for early childhood educators to teach for anti-racism through visual art projects. The intended participants will be 3 to 5-year-olds in preschool settings. Although it may vary by each classroom structure and environment, teachers should feel a level of comfortability with their students and families, as they implement a lesson plan that relies on student and family engagement, and the involvement of discussing personal stories. Getting to know students and their families is an important component, not only for these lessons, but for any classroom space to allow for a mutual learning environment. Before beginning the workshop, I would also advise teachers to honestly and critically assess any biases and judgements they may have, as this can impact the way in which they facilitate discussions and lessons. A teacher reflection portion is the first component of the lessons. I will also highlight that the classroom/norm guidelines are placed ahead of beginning the workshop, as it helps to create a classroom environment where each student feels respected and valued. Particularly when involving topics surrounding discrimination, prejudice and bias, the guidelines are implemented as a means of reference, and I encourage that they continue to be referred back to throughout the course of the teaching year. Lastly, although the series of lessons are estimated at about six weeks of class time, I encourage teachers to continue their commitment to be culturally, instructionally and curricularly responsive to the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Within the outlined activities, children will begin to engage in conversation surrounding race and identity, but continuous, on-going work by educators and administrators is needed

Lessons will span a course of six weeks. Teachers may allocate two or three days per week to the lessons. Each lesson will vary between 45 minutes and 1 hour for each set of activities. Attention span of young children must be considered, so I recommend that no more than 1 hour a day is spent working on the activities. The timeline for each module is outlined as follows.

Week 1

- Complete teacher reflection questions with all teachers
- Classroom norms (2 class periods: 55 minutes each)

Week 2

- Beauty Across the Globe (2 class periods: 55 minutes)

Week 3

- This is Me (2 class periods: 45 minutes each)
- Family Portrait (2 class periods: 45 minutes each)

Week 4

- Heritage of Ohlone Tribe-Class Visit (estimated 2 half-days)

Week 5

- Art as Activism: Favianna Rodriguez & Printmaking (1 class period: 60 minutes)
- Quilt Making (2 class periods: 45 minutes each)

Week 6

- Class Art Exhibition (1 half-day)

The timeline is an estimate and considering that teachers have 2-3 days per week to spend on the lessons. I encourage educators to modify the pace in which they move through the lessons, according to their own classrooms.

Teachers carry the responsibility of facilitating the lessons and discussions, and it is important to highlight that educators must reflect on their own understanding of how race operates in their lives, including the institutions in which they work. I have included teacher reflection questions that I encourage all educators to consider in before beginning work with the lessons:

- How do you identify ethnically?
- How comfortable are you discussing race and racial differences?
- What is your personal experience with racial bias and prejudice?
- Are you affected by bias/prejudice?
- Do you consider yourself racially privileged or disadvantaged; or somewhere in between?
- How were you introduced to racial difference as a child?

The reflection portion is an important component to the series, as it allows teachers an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and comfortability discussing racial bias and prejudice. Concluding the reflections, the first class will focus on setting classroom norms and guidelines and making visual representations to be placed on the wall as a reference and reminder for all. Students will be able to:

- Identify why classroom rules are important.
- Work collectively as a class to brainstorm keywords and/or practices that they should all follow. For instance, be respectful, help each other, listen quietly, etc.
- Create posters with agreed upon class rules that will serve as their “behavioral honor code.”
- Identify scenarios when students are not following classroom rules.

Ideally, it is my hope that the lessons will be used in consecutive order, as the units build on each other and the final project a reflection of all the artwork that will be produced by the students.

The following sections are a summary of the four units.

Unit 1: Identity Development

The beginning unit will introduce race in relation to our self-identities, which will allow children to delve into the topic by exploring their own racial identities through their physical attributes. It will also aim to challenge racist beauty norms and push against the mainstream ideal. This unit is divided into 2 parts. The first will include viewing portrait images of people from different countries, familiarizing students with the beauty in diversity. As children are very aware of physical appearances at this age, this is an introduction to breaking down stereotypical beauty norms. The objective of this activity is to increase representation and visibility, exposing children to different appearances. The second portion entails mixing paint to match each student's skin tone and making a class mural of handprints. The lesson's aim is to allow students to discover the different skin tones and variations and expand their vocabulary surrounding physical traits. It will also allow for a visual representation of the different skin tones that make up the class. Lesson 3, *This is Me*, builds from the previous, and is a full-length self-portrait activity. It aims to grow identity development and awareness. Using various art mediums like paint, crayon, or fabrics, children will build a self-portrait of themselves. This activity allows children to develop a stronger sense of their heritage and reflect on traits that they embrace and are proud of.

Unit 2: Family Structures

This second unit extends to exploring different family structures and demographics. Lesson 4, *Family portraits*, allows children an opportunity to connect their home life with school projects. This entails making a family portrait, along with composing phrases that describe their

family and home. Teachers will need to assist with the writing portion. Families will be encouraged participate, and lead a discussion at home to discuss family heritage. Students would incorporate words to finish the sentence “*I am grateful for...*”. The objective is to begin thinking about identity in relation to larger structures, and that families too are made up of people from different races and ethnic backgrounds.

Unit 3: Communities

The third unit will bring voice to an underrepresented community/group that has connection to the geographic location of the school. It will explicitly address how some races and cultures have historically been valued more than others. For the purpose of this project, I will choose to delve deeper into the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe in particular, as they are embedded in the history of the Bay Area. This allows an opportunity for this community to be seen as alive and present. I would then invite members of the Tribe to the class to share stories and facilitate a lesson that showcases their values and beliefs. Although this portion does not explicitly involve the visual arts, it is my hope that the teacher can communicate with guest speakers before the visit to collectively create a lesson plan that will integrate an interactive, experiential component. The Ohlone are known for their deep connection to the living environment, and are also known for their basketry, which they make from items collected from the land. I am mindful of time and planning that must be coordinated ahead of time and have put this lesson as optional, but it would provide extra insight for the students’ to gain a new understanding of a community that is underrepresented.

Unit 4: Art as Activism

The concluding unit explores artists as activists, and the power of art in social transformation. The first will be looking at artwork by artist and activist Favianna Rodriguez,

watching a clip on her stance on the power of art, as well as her process in creating print artwork. The children will then make their own print artwork, while using the artistic style that Rodriguez uses as a reference, experimenting with color mixing and creating shapes and patterns to express their feelings.

The final activity will be a class quilt. Students will each be assigned a square where they will draw images in relation to who they are and their heritage, and/or a message/response as a conclusion to the series. Teachers will refer back to the previous units on identity, family and the communities that we are a part of. The quilt will represent the diverse identities that exist in the classroom, as well as empower each student to take ownership of their contribution, and recognize their classroom as a valuable community.

The conclusion to the lessons will be an art exhibition that is open to all members of the school. This even provides an opportunity for families to see how students have been exploring the topic of identity, family and community. This portion allows children to see the visual arts as a powerful platform for expression. The exhibit will entail showcasing all of the artwork that was produced during the six weeks, as well as unveiling the class quilt to the students. The teacher and students will work collectively together to curate the layout of the exhibit.

Each lesson will have teacher notes, objectives, guided practice and closing. A critical reflection portion will also be provided at the end of the lesson for teachers to highlight points that were successful and/or those that need modification.

Development of the Project

The project developed out of my previous experience as a preschool teacher, working in a diverse classroom setting that prompted me to question how early childhood educators are teaching for a diverse cohort. I became particularly aware of how often the effort in trying to

teach for multiculturalism led to the celebration of cultural holidays that did not extend much beyond food and dress, which in my opinion perpetuated many cultural and racial stereotypes. My initial intent behind the project was to create an arts-based, multicultural lesson plan that would expose children to different cultural practices around the globe. I knew that I did not want to create a series of lessons that would ultimately be a celebration of holidays and traditions. I also had to keep in mind to create lessons that were age-appropriate and would engage children aged 3 to 5-years-old. As there is a developmental gap between the age range of 3 to 5, I was conscious to create activities that would not be too challenging for a 3 year-old, and not too simple for a 5 year-old.

After researching various interpretations and frameworks of multicultural education, I decided to re-shape my project with the objective to teach for anti-racism. I have made it a point to explicitly counter discrimination, prejudice and biases, as well as foster identity development for positive social change. Young children fast develop and internalize racist attitudes and behaviors through the environment in which they interact. Exploring diversity through the lens of race, and explicitly countering and acting for change against discrimination and prejudice are some of the key components that is often missing in the narratives of multicultural education.

I chose to use the visual arts as the main focus of the lessons, because I have found from my experience that preschool aged children engage and focus for longer periods of time when there is an interactive component. It also comes from my personal preference of using the visual arts as a learning medium, as it can be adapted for a wide range of topics and age-groups.

Before writing out the lessons, I read through the California Department of Education (2008) Preschool Learning Foundations, particularly focusing on the portion of social-emotional development. After establishing the core components of developmental support of children under

the age of 5, my next step was to brainstorm ways in which I incorporate the foundations in my lesson plans. The next step was to research age-appropriate visual art lessons. I reflected back on previous activities I had used in my preschool classroom. I also referred to the California Department of Education (2010) Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2, which covers the skills and knowledge that children can attain from the visual arts.

The greatest challenge for me in the development of the project was that I did not want to focus solely on defining or teaching about race because there really is no right or wrong answer. I wanted to give children an opportunity to see positive, diverse images and embrace their own identities. I wanted to stay true to my goal in making a project that reflected my passion for early childhood teaching, the arts and valuing diverse identities and cultures. Explicitly referring to identity and race in relation to discrimination and prejudice is rarely seen in early childhood spaces, but I wanted to create lessons that would begin conversation surrounding this. I made an effort to educate myself with anti-bias and anti-racist lesson plans, many which were targeted for older age groups, but used them as guides when writing my lessons. Resources that were particularly helpful were taken from Teaching for Tolerance (2018) a website that compiles classroom resources and lesson plans committed to social justice and anti-bias. For the art component, I took art activities commonly used in preschool classroom and considered how I could tailor the activities to adopt a critical arts approach and be anti-racist in their objectives. Feedback from my co-workers and peers, particularly those who have had extensive experience in early childhood education was helpful in shaping the lesson plans.

I decided to organize my lesson into four different units: self-identity, family, community and art activism. This made the most sense, as children would expand from small to large scale understandings in the course of the six weeks.

The Project

The project in its entirety can be found in the appendix.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Despite the growing amount of racial diversity in the U.S., a continued prevalence of racial discrimination persists throughout society. In particular, the educational system creates a system of hierarchy that privileges white superiority. Seldom is racism addressed as a current and ongoing issue that impacts people across the country. Teachers must be equipped with the knowledge to counter “white power and privilege in the American education system” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 73). Multicultural education frameworks are becoming more prevalent in school systems for younger students. However, in countering stereotypes and biases that form at a young age, anti-racist education that has explicit conversations about race in relation to discrimination and prejudice are particularly important in early childhood learning. Much of the existing research surrounding anti-racist education is found for middle school and high school students, rarely examining the potential that lies with educating young children about racial power and privilege. Particularly in preschool, children are often overlooked in terms of their capability to fully understand racism from its history to how it impacts people in their everyday lives. This is both because the vocabulary and complexity in understanding the hegemonic nature of race is even complicated for adults to fully grasp.

The context of early childhood education has changed over the last decade, with federal programs pushing for regulated curriculums that are centered on academic achievement. This shift in curricula has overtaken the need to foster social-emotional development in early childhood. More time in the classroom spent focused on literacy and numeracy, also means there is less allocation of time to explore creative avenues of learning. Development of children during their preschool years (3 to 5-year-olds) is particularly crucial as they begin to form a deeper

understanding of their identity, along with their growing time spent interacting in different social spaces. Educators working in early childhood should incorporate anti-racist education as part of the curriculum to deconstruct racism and examine the roots of discrimination and racial inequality. The potential that lies with teaching children not only about diversity, but countering bias attitudes and beliefs that form at a young age is integral to anti-racist education.

I created the field project as a culmination of my passion for the arts and experience working as a preschool teacher in a diverse classroom setting. Beginning the International and Multicultural Education program at the University of San Francisco, at the time of my transition into teaching was a turning point for me. I became aware of the lack of training and resources provided for early childhood teachers that moved beyond simply celebrating holidays and traditions. Especially in early childhood education, efforts that aim to heighten students awareness of other cultural groups often misses the critical aspect of incorporating issues of discrimination, prejudice and bias. The lessons reflect what I believe is an age appropriate introduction to exploring self-identity, along with deconstructing racism by examining different family and community structures. Through the visual arts, children will also practice explorative, interactive ways of learning that are essential in childhood development.

Recommendations

As each lesson is informed by components of the visual arts, the lesson material can be used and modified by art educators working in settings such as in children museums, arts enrichment programs or youth art centers. As the sector of art museums and programs grow in their capacity to work alongside schools, my hope is that the lessons will be a leading example of using the creative arts as a means of exploration of self and differences. Art has the power to be particularly impactful for young learners and an avenue to promote positive social change. As I

continue my work in the subject area of art and early childhood, I hope to continue expanding on the lessons and one day make it a full year length curriculum. As critical reflection is a crucial component to anti-racist work, to further expand on this lesson plan would be to incorporate a feedback loop where teachers that have used the lesson plans can provide helpful feedback to fellow educators.

There is much needed work and research to be done in the field of anti-racist education and early childhood learning. My goal is to continue my commitment to equipping young children to see value in their unique identities; to become active, powerful change agents.

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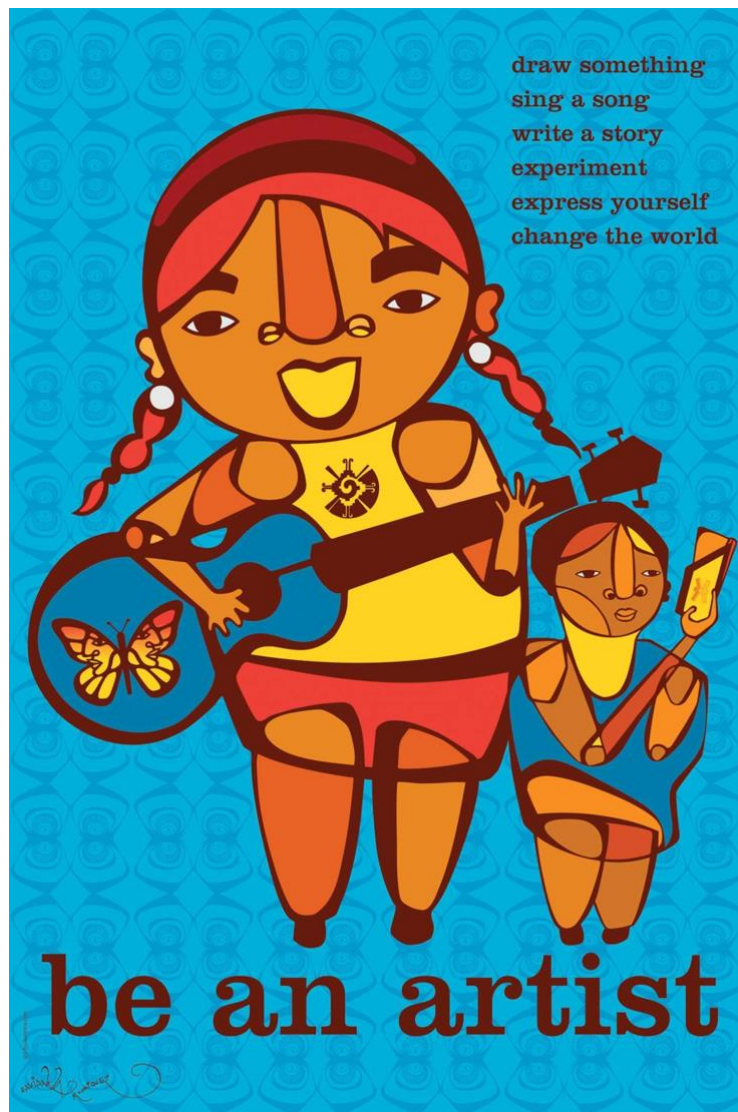
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APPENDIX

Anti-Racist Education Through the Visual Arts:

Lesson Plans for Early Childhood Educators

Teaching for Anti-Racism through the Visual Arts: Lesson Plans for Early Childhood Educators



Rodriguez, F. (2016). Be An Artist.

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Teacher Welcome

The following series of lesson plans will be a guide to teaching components of anti-racism through the visual arts for young learners. Whether you are a classroom teacher, administrator, or arts educator, my hope is that the lesson plans will allow children to explore their identities, families, and communities, all the while deconstruct discriminatory attitudes and perceptions. As an outcome, young learners will learn to express themselves through the arts and become advocates of positive social change. Components of the lessons are influenced predominantly by my experience working as an educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. I encourage teachers to modify components to highlight local communities and prominent figures specific to the region of the school. Please modify in ways that best make sense to your classroom space.

As children are asked to draw from personal stories and experiences, it is important that families are aware of what students are learning in the classroom. Family engagement is crucial in early learning and I would recommend that an e-mail or note is sent out to parents. If possible, have note(s) written in a language that best accommodates the student's family. This is to inform parent(s) that for the next six weeks, students may be asking lots of questions related to identity and family. Hearing the phrase "anti-racist" education may initiate questions and responses from families, but make clear in the note that students are developing identity awareness, self-esteem and recognizing diverse figures that are in their classroom and beyond.

Before beginning work with the lesson plans, all educators working in the classroom space are encouraged to reflect on their own racial positionality and experiences. In practicing anti-racist education, critical reflection on one's own values and beliefs are integral to self-awareness, and how that may impact teaching attitudes.

I encourage that the following questions be used when reflecting:

- How do you identify ethnically?
- How comfortable are you discussing race?
- What is your personal experience with racial bias and prejudice?
- Are you affected by bias and prejudice?
- Do you consider yourself racially privileged or disadvantaged; or somewhere in between?
- How were you introduced to racial difference as a child?

Timeline for Modules

Note: this timeline reflects a classroom that has the flexibility to offer at least 4 days in a week to offer lessons. Please modify accordingly to your own classroom setting and do not feel obligated to follow this format.

Week 1

- Complete teacher reflection questions with all teachers
- Classroom norms (2 class periods: 55 minutes each)

Week 2

- Beauty Across the Globe (2 class periods: 55 minutes)

Week 3

- This is Me (2 class periods: 45 minutes each)
- Family Portrait (2 class periods: 45 minutes each)

Week 4

- Heritage of Ohlone Tribe-Class Visit (estimated 2 half-days)

Week 5

- Art as Activism: Favianna Rodriguez & Printmaking (1 class period: 60 minutes)
- Quilt Making (2 class periods: 45 minutes each)

Week 6

- Class Art Exhibition (1 half-day)

Student Evaluation

Formal assessment will not be given to students. Reflection questions embedded in each lesson and a final art critique will highlight students' grasp of the learning outcomes. Continued observation of their engagement and performance will also be a means for evaluation. As some components may be a sensitive topic for some, such as the family portrait, please be aware of any student's hesitation to engage in the lesson(s).

Note: Each lesson plan has prompts marked **StP** and **TP** throughout.
StP-direct prompts from teacher to student.
TP-prompts and directions for teachers.

Setting Classroom Norms

Duration: 2 class periods (55 minutes each)

Visual Art Activity: Poster making

Students will be able to:

- Identify why classroom rules are important.
- Work collectively as a class to brainstorm keywords and/or practices that they should all follow
- E.g.: Be respectful, Help each other, Listen quietly
- Create posters with agreed upon class rules that will serve as their “behavioral code”
- Identify scenarios when students are not following classroom rules

Teacher Notes:

- Ensure that each student gets a chance to contribute
- Remind students that the classroom is only one part of our community and that they should keep these norms in mind both in and outside the classroom
- Emphasize that we treat others the way we want to be treated
- Highlight that when rules are broken or if there is a problem between classmates, that forgiveness and an opportunity to understand both sides, is more important than punishment

Materials:

- Butcher paper for the teacher
- Drawing paper (1 sheet/student)
- Crayons, colored pencils & markers
- Whiteboard and washable markers
- Magnets for pinning things on board
- Glue, tape

Opening:

StP-Today we will be working together to come up with classroom rules.

- Why do you think classroom rules are important?

TP-Emphasize that rules are important because everyone decides on what they are and most importantly, they tell us how we should treat and act with each other

Guided Practice:

Class 1

StP-Think about how we make sure everyone is happy and feels respected. How should we treat our friends?

TP-Brainstorm rules with students on the whiteboard

- Make sure each student shares a rule
- Brainstorm a corresponding image that represents the rules that you've come up with as a class
- Write the final words and/or rule on the whiteboard and then break the class up into pairs or small groups
- Hand out poster paper and markers to students
- Instruct each group to come up with images that correspond with the rest of the words/rules (e.g. respect, kindness... etc.) that are on the board
- *Note: have 1 teacher assigned to each group (5-7 children) to assist*
- Ensure that the groups are working collaboratively and that everyone's opinion is being honored

To Do: Make individual cut outs with the rules written on them after class as students may have difficulty writing at that age.

Class 2

TP-Lay out the posters and rules on a table

- Read the rules out and they should tell you what pictures the rules go next to
- Repeat until each image has a rule assigned
- Once the rules are glued on the individual posters, hang up the "Classroom Rules" sign on the wall and then have each student hang up their signed rules contract around it

Closing:

- The individual posters will serve as contracts but also an expression of ownership of the rules
- Leave the classroom rules up for the remainder of the year

Teacher Reflection:

- What components of the lesson plans were successful?
- Did each student get an opportunity to contribute?
- What could be modified?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement?

Additional Notes:

1. Beauty Across the Globe

Duration: 2 class periods (45 minutes each)

Visual Art Activity: Portrait photography

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- Recognize and see examples of beauty and positive attributes in other models that are not only white/light skinned individuals
- Challenge mainstream beauty norms of Eurocentric/white beauty standards
- Understand that there is no standard of beauty
- Familiarize themselves with diverse images from around the world
- Examine self-portrait photographs from different ethnic and racial backgrounds
- Embrace their attributes that are unique to them
- Develop awareness of self and others in the class
- Experience using photography as a way of self-expression

Teacher Notes:

- Facilitate the students through looking at portraits of different people from around the world.
- Use opening questions (see below) as a guide, but be open to shift the conversation to the comments/interests of each student
- Explicitly breakdown white, Eurocentric beauty norms by showcasing portrait photographs.
- Alexander Khimushin Photography <http://khimushin.com/the-world-in-faces/>
- Portraits by Mihaela Noroc <http://theatlasofbeauty.com/>
- Empower students by giving them the responsibility and task of taking portraits of their peers

Materials:

Class 1

- Create a slideshow of images from teacher notes portion
- Laptop for slideshow
- Whiteboard and markers

Class 2

- Cell phone or digital camera for photographs
- A4 size photo paper
- Colored sharpies

Opening:

StP-Today we will be looking at photographs of people from around the world

- What do we notice in the images?
- Are there are similarities or differences that you recognize?

TP-Emphasize that there is no beauty standard, this is an opportunity to showcase a range of diverse, positive models around the world.

Guided Practice:**Class 1**

StP-Today we will be looking at photographs of people from around the world

- What do we notice in the images?
- Are there are similarities or differences that you recognize?
- Is there something that stands out to you?

TP-Allow children to explore the images and give open feedback

- Write down key responses on the board
- Explain that children will now be the photographer, and take a portrait image of their classmate
- Have students break into pairs and provide them with a digital camera or phone.
- This can be done either in the classroom, or in a space outside
- Demonstrate the way in which to take a portrait image e.g. focusing mostly on the upper body and face

TO DO: print photograph of each student on photo paper for next class

Class 2:

TP-With the images printed on photo paper, have students find their own photograph

- Students will identify an attribute(s) that is unique to them
- Lead by example and point out a trait that you like about yourself

StP- What does unique mean? What is special about you?

- Finish the phrase “I am unique because...”

TP-Write the phrase for students underneath their photograph

Closing:

- Once the student has the photograph with completed phrase, assist them with hanging it on the wall
- Conduct a class share where each student stands by their photograph and presents their statement of “I am unique because...”

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- What components of the lesson plans were successful?
- What could be modified?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement:

Additional Notes:

2. Colors of Me, Colors of You

Duration: 1 class period (55 minutes)

Visual Arts Component: Paint mixing and hand printing

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- Identify skin tone and shade.
- Recognize that there are different shades and variations of skin color.
- See beauty in our similarities and differences
- Embrace the color of their skin

Materials:

- Multicultural paint (e.g. Colorations Colors Like Me Washable Multicultural Paint)
- Paint brushes
- Blank canvas paper (large enough that will fit handprint of each student)
- Art smocks

Opening:

StP-Today we will mix paints to find the shade that closest matches our skin color”

- *Have the paint set-up on a table*
- What color should I start with, what do I need to add? Does it need to be darker or lighter

TP-Test by painting hand with the matched paint color, and make a handprint on the canvas.

- Sign your autograph next to the handprint

Guided Practice:

- *Have the paints set-up at each table*

StP-Now let’s experiment with the paint to make a color that matches each of our own skin tones

- Although it may take several tries, think about the different colors that need to be mixed together to get your shade
- *Divide students in groups*

TP-Encourage experiment, using descriptive vocabulary such as lighter, darker etc.

Closing:

- Once students find a match, have them paint the color on their hands using a paintbrush and make a handprint on the canvas paper.
- Reveal the finished canvas to the class with all of the handprints.
- Allow children to share their process in mixing the paint,
- Explicitly state that each of us has our own skin tone, similarities and differences alike, we are all beautiful
- Write down a list of their observations and place next to the canvas.

Extension:

- Invite parents to participate in the activity during drop-off, if time permits.
- Have students help their parent(s) mix and match colors.
- Add their handprint and signature next to their child’s on the canvas.

- Reflect on whether there are similarities/differences.

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- How did the children respond to matching their skin color?
- Were parents interested in contributing?
- What could be modified?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement:

Additional Notes:

3. This is Me

Duration: 2 class period (55 minutes each)

Visual Arts Component: Full-length portrait

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- Reflect on how they feel about their identity/ where they are from/heritage
- Appreciate and understand differences of their peers
- Embrace and take ownership of their identity
- Recognize and respect the different individuals in the class
- Point out areas they appreciate of their appearance

Materials:

- Roll paper
- Sharpie
- Self-photograph
- Small hand mirrors
- Paint
- Markers
- Fabric

Opening

StP-Our activity from today will be making a full-length self-portrait.

- This time we are going to do a full-portrait, and we will be experimenting with different art materials
- We will also have mirrors for you to use, to take a closer look at our features

TP-Refer back to the previous activity of skin color matching.

Guided Practice:

Class 1

TP-Present self-photo of themselves and highlights physical attributes that stand out to you (e.g., I like my eyes because they are big, I like my hair because it is curly)

- Demonstrate how they will create the body outline by having another teacher or student make their outline on the roll paper.
- Have students get into pairs
- Lay out the roll paper on the floor, have one student lie down on the paper, and the other student will trace their outline using the sharpie (*teacher assistance may be needed*)
- After the outlines have been created, have the students begin filling in the components of their “identity”

Class 2

- Continue working on self-portraits
- Encourage students to work with a range of different art materials
- Have them use the hand mirrors to look closely at their features

- After the image is complete, have the students write words that they associate with their identity
- Encourage students to describe attributes that they appreciate of themselves
- Note: assist students with the writing portion

Closing:

- Hang up each student's piece on the wall or in a visible area in the room.
- Take time as a class to look at each student's self-portrait.
- Provide an opportunity for positive feedback on art pieces of among students.

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- What features did students most often point out about themselves?
- Were there any similarities/differences amongst the students?
- What could be modified?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement:

Additional Notes

4. Family Picture

Duration: 1 class period (55 minutes each)

Visual Arts Component: Frame making and drawing

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- Explore different family structures along with different identities that make up their family (race, ethnicity, gender, disability etc.)
- Breakdown stereotype of what a family “should” look like
- Appreciate and understand the different appearances and heritages that families have.
- Develop deeper connections to their identity
- See that family is important to who we are

Teacher Notes:

- Be open and mindful to the way children interpret “Family”.
- As this may be a sensitive topic for some students, be particularly mindful in emphasizing that each family has a different dynamic.
- Perhaps during reading time, pick a book which speaks to different family dynamics

Materials

- Drawing paper
- Markers, crayons
- Paint and paintbrushes
- Popsicle sticks
- Craft materials such as buttons, beads, fabric etc.

Opening

StP-Today we will explore our family and appreciate them by making a frame and picture portrait of them

TP- Share with the students your family’s racial/ethnic background.

- If possible, bring in a photograph of your family
- Explain that the students will be making frames with the popsicles sticks and drawing a family picture

Guided Practice

- Demonstrate an example of making a frame with the popsicles [make a square by placing 2 popsicles sticks on each side. Glue or tape so that they stick together and place on top of blank sheet of paper]
- Students will then draw an image of their family
- Encourage students to think that there are many different structures of family
- Then think of words to finish the sentence “I am grateful for...”
- Teachers will assist children with writing these phrases above the family portrait

Closing

- Reflect on the different drawings and lead a class discussion of all the variations of “family” that exist in the classroom.
- If time allows, have each student present to the class IF they want to.
- E.g.: “This is my family portrait, I have two moms, a brother and a dog”
- Highlight the uniqueness in all of our different family demographics and dynamics

Extension (optional)

- Have students interview a family member at home, which will allow them to have a deeper understanding of their family heritage.
- Print out a sheet of paper with the following questions and have children fill it out with the person they are “interviewing”
- Where are you from?
- Where did you grow up?
- What language(s) do you speak?
- Do you have a family tradition that has been passed down?

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- What components of the lesson plans were successful?
- Did you come across any difficulties/challenges?
- Is there a wide-range of family structures and demographics in the classroom?
- How comfortable did students seem about opening up about their family?
- What could be modified?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement:

Additional Notes:

5. Communities Around Us

Note: Requires advance planning.

Coordinate, if possible, with local Native American tribe(s) and invite them to the classroom.

For the purpose of this lesson, I will use the Ohlone Tribe as an example, as they are part of the history of the Bay Area and continue to be active in the community.

Duration: 2 half-days

Visual Arts Component: TBD

Coordinate with guest that you would like to incorporate an art lesson

Teacher Notes:

- Highlight local Native American tribe(s) specific to region.
- Talk about the history of the tribe(s) and highlight how they still exist and are present in our community, although we may not know, they were the first on the land we live on

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- Familiarize and engage with members of the Ohlone Tribe
- Be exposed to different perspectives
- Develop a deeper understanding of the historical roots of the surrounding community
- Appreciate the land we live on
- See the Ohlone as alive and present

Materials/Resources:

- Map of Bay Area (*change if geography is different)
- Ohlone Basket Project. <http://museumca.org/collection/ohlone-basket-project>
- Ohlone Customs and Traditions. <http://www.muwekma.org/culture/customstraditions.html>

Opening:

- Beforehand, talk to the class about the Ohlone and their historical roots to the Bay Area
- Have a map to show geography of the land
- Show clips that are provided under resources
- Introduce that we have a guest speaker in the class today

Guided Practice:

- Assist in the lesson/activity that the speaker prepares

Conclusion:

- Conduct a reflection with student, asking them questions such as what did you learn?
How did it make you feel knowing more about this tribe? Do you want to learn more?
- Have student sign a thank-you card as an act of appreciation

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- What components of the lesson plans were successful?
- What could be modified?
- How did the children react to having a guest speaker?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement?

Additional Notes:

6. Art as Activism: Favianna Rodriguez & Foil Printmaking

Duration: 2 class periods

Visual Arts Component : Printmaking

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- See art as a form of social movement and positive messaging
- Promote positive values through artmaking
- Experiment with the process of printmaking and explore shapes and colors
- Use colors to express emotions and feelings
- Be exposed to an artist that stands for diversity and social change

Materials:

- Select a few images from: <https://justseeds.org/artist/faviannarodriguez/> (either use a projector or print to display)
- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m23otH5cFsY>
- Paint roller
- Colored construction paper
- Printing ink or paint
- Aluminum foil

Opening:

StP-Our lesson today will be looking at images from artist and activist, Favianna Rodriguez. Present video on Rodriguez's print making style:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m23otH5cFsY>

- Following the video, look at the images you have selected
- Lead a class discussion, use the following questions as a guide:

StP-What do we see in the images?

- What emotion do you feel is shown?
- What do the colors and shapes express?

Guided Practice:

Now the students will do a print making activity that is similar to the way Rodriguez makes her prints.

- Give a piece of aluminum to each student
- Break students up into small groups at tables
- Lay out the paints and have them select colors that they want to use in their print
- Put selected paint on the aluminum foil
- Using their fingers, guide them to create shapes and patterns
- Once completed, place the construction paper over the aluminum foil
- Run the roller over the construction paper back and forth
- Carefully pull off the construction paper and set on a rack to dry

Conclusion:

- Once all the prints are complete, hang each one using a hanging pin and string

- Examine all the different shapes and patterns
- Have some students volunteer to share what image they made, what message were they trying to send?
- What were they feeling?
- Write down what the students say on the white board

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- What components of the lesson plans were successful?
- What could be modified?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement:

Additional Notes:

7. Class Quilt Project

Duration: 2 class periods

Visual Arts Component: Quilt Making

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- Reflect on heritage, home and self-identity.
- Build community in the classroom space
- Work collectively to make a piece that will represent and encompass each students identities and values
- See themselves reflected in the learning space

Materials:

- Glue gun (Teacher supervision REQUIRED)
- Fabric marker
- 8” poly/cotton squares
- Satin cording OR;
- Full quilt making kit can also be purchased from oriental trading-DIY operation cooperative classroom quilt

Opening:

StP- Today we will be making a class quilt, each one of us will be assigned a square where we will draw an image of something that is of value to us:

- What are values?
- What is important to us?
- What can we bring in from the previous lessons?
- The quilt will represent not only our individual values, but a collective representation of the classes’ values

Guided Practice:

- Give each student their “square”
- Using the fabric markers, have children recreate a visual representation of their “values”
- This interpretation can be something that is special in their lives, an image depicting a memory or multiple pictures of things that hold meaning to them
- If they want, students can practice drawing their images on paper beforehand
- Once each student has completed their drawing, have them bring their finished square to the teacher

Note: after class, teachers will work on stitching the fabric together.

Conclusion:

- Unveil the quilt to the whole class
- Have each student come up to the front and point to their square and share one thing about the image they created .
- Have the students decide where to hang the quilt in the class
- Once decided, take a class photo next to the finished quilt

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- What components of the lesson plans were successful?
- What were the main themes that students incorporated in the quilt?
- What could be modified?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement:

Additional Notes:

8. Art Exhibition

Duration: 1 class period for set-up (45 minutes), half-day for exhibition

Visual Arts Component: Exhibition planning and art reflection

Teacher Notes:

- Conclude the lessons with a final art exhibit.
- Send a note home and/or email parents once the date for the exhibition is set
- Decide if an open format where families can come in and out, or a start and end time is assigned for chosen day
- If possible, have the exhibit on the weekend so more families can participate

Anti-racist component AND student outcome:

- Reflect on how art can be a powerful tool in representing our identities and cultures.
- Take ownership of their artwork.
- Engage in critical reflection of student artwork.
- Respond positively to and respect other student work.
- See their identity as a valuable asset to the classroom space and beyond.
- Develop a deeper understanding of self, family and heritage.

Materials:

- Compiled artwork produced by each student over the course of the six weeks
- Hanging material such as tape, wall sickies, thumbtack etc.

Opening:

- Have each of the student's artwork compiled together

StP-Today we will be planning our art exhibit, where we can show our families and friends all that we have learned and created over the last six weeks.

- Ask reflection questions

StP-Have you ever been to an art museum? If so, what did you see there? What did you do?

TP-Come up with a title for the exhibition as a class. This will allow them an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and the key themes that stand out to them.

Guided Practice:

- Actively engage student in the design/layout of the class exhibit
- Do they want to divide it by sections? Or have a variety?
- Be mindful that everyone should have a say in the planning, if there is a split decision do a class vote.

Conclusion:

- Complete the student art reflection portion (see below), giving an opportunity for reflection and celebration of other students work
- Teacher congratulate the students for each of their work put into all of the art pieces
- Art pieces can be kept on the wall, or some may be taken home if the students wishes to

Teacher Reflection/Observation:

- How did children react to presenting their artwork?
- What was the feedback from parents like?
- Any specific observation to children's' responses/engagement?

Additional Notes:

Student Art Reflection

- After the exhibition, print out the reflection sheet with each student's name
- Give them their sheet with names
- Read out the questions to the class and have them circle the appropriate face
- Collect each survey and assess the answers with the other teachers

Name: [write student's name]

- Are you proud of the artwork you made?



YES



MAYBE



NO

- Do you want to continue doing more work with art?



YES



MAYBE



NO

- Do you know more about yourself?



YES



MAYBE



NO

- Do you want to learn more about your family, peers, and the community?



YES



MAYBE



NO

Teacher Reflection

*Please complete the reflection portion with all teachers that were engaged in the facilitation of the lesson(s). Use a blank sheet of paper to write responses and share in discussion format with other teachers.

1. In which lesson did student engagement seem the highest?
2. Were any students hesitant about lesson(s)?
3. What was the most challenging lesson(s)?
4. What was the most successful lesson(s)?
5. If you were to do the lesson(s) again, what would you change/add?
6. Based on the art reflection feedback, do you think students have a better understanding of their identity and have a broader knowledge of positive, diverse models?
7. Did you feel comfortable facilitating and engaging in the lesson(s)?
8. Are you interested in continuing work that engages students in anti-racist education?
9. Did any parent feedback stand out to you?
10. Please share any additional comments/feedback.

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