

**Weaving Together Culture, Diversity, and Identity:
Incorporating Multicultural Education in a Non-Diverse Art Classroom**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Multicultural education continues to be an integral component of preparing future educators for the classroom. Since schools across the United States are becoming increasingly diverse, such a shift in demographics means that it is imperative for educators to adapt their curricula to reflect these social changes (Gay, 2002). Howard (2020) found that within the last three decades, there has been a rapid increase in diverse populations. One such example was found in Latinx populations, where numbers have tripled from 1980 to 2018, rapidly growing from 14.6 million people to over 58 million across the United States. With an increasingly diverse population, the emphasis on future educators implementing lessons that promote diversity and multiculturalism also continues to grow.

Multicultural education tends to center around the diversity and inclusion of minority groups, with a greater emphasis on the disparities that Black, Latinx, and Native American populations experience both throughout history and in modern day society. Such an emphasis is important considering the fact that history and academics has been centered around White European ideals for centuries. Yet, in many areas across the country, especially in more rural communities, the majority of school demographics is composed of White students. Oregon, the state that I grew up and attended public school in, is no exception to this phenomenon. In Philomath School District, a small town situated just five minutes from the city of Corvallis and Oregon State University, the ethnic demographic of the district were and continue to be overwhelmingly White. Because of this reality, culturally responsive teaching was not at the forefront of educational practices. Instead, the school year was dedicated mostly to ensuring high

graduation rates and preparing students for the workforce by meeting state standards for math, language arts, and science.

Through my experiences as a developing educator, I found that a lack of multicultural education underprepared me for life beyond the classroom. In my first grade class, we learned about Christopher Columbus and how he sailed the ocean blue. I learned about the history of Thanksgiving and how the Indians (the incorrect term still used at the time) helped the pilgrims, and we reimagined this historical event with candy “corn” and feather headbands made with paper. Many of the historical figureheads that we learned about were typically white men, such as Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, and so on. My education felt like the stereotypical European-centric experience that is seen in Hollywood teen movies; I felt a disconnect between the material that we learned because I could not relate to it in any way, and, honestly, it was incredibly uninteresting. Memorizing dates of the battles in World War II or reading *1984* by George Orwell made me anxiously look at the clock in hopes of speeding up time to make the school day end faster.

This is not to say that *all* of my education lacked diversity. In fact, the most memorable experiences I had in school were projects and assignments that were completely different from the usual lessons that were taught. In high school, I learned about the unethical practices and cultivation of sugarcane in the Dominican Republic. I remember the disturbing visuals described in *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah as he recounts his past as a boy soldier in Sierra Leone. I remember our whole social studies class spent half of an entire trimester planning and executing an event to raise funds for a non-profit organization, which was both incredibly stressful and rewarding at the same time. In retrospect, these moments were integral to my educational experience, as they opened my eyes to different ways of thinking and opposing viewpoints. Even

still, these special moments in my education were not enough to make me feel prepared to engage in much more diverse settings in college.

Many courses that highlighted differing worldviews, specifically by decentering histories written through an Anglo-Saxon lens, greatly challenged my core beliefs and previous knowledge. Because of this, discussing topics surrounding issues such as race, inequality, and social justice were difficult and uncomfortable. While I did eventually expand my knowledge and embrace these new perspectives, a small part of me felt robbed of these experiences while in high school. I remember taking a U.S. history course in my junior year of college, and there were many times that the professor would end discussions with “You probably learned a lot of this in high school already.” I couldn’t help but feel a bit embarrassed, since I didn’t recall learning the deep histories of the Civil War, the displacement of Native Americans and the Trail of Tears, or the rich and complex histories and cultures of the Aztecs. Much of my education centered around the typical European-centric ideals, lessons, and histories, and now all of that knowledge seemed incredibly outdated compared to all of the other complex histories in the world. If there was more emphasis put onto multicultural education and highlighting diverse perspectives, I would have felt better prepared to engage with material and discussions.

Perhaps a reason why there was a lack of multicultural education was because such topics were considered taboo in a rural district. Part of multicultural education relies on discussing tough topics and challenging preconceptions. There are misconceptions that such discussions primarily focus on painting White individuals as the root of everything bad in the world, and therefore White students will be shamed for their ethnicity and heritage in the process. Yet, rather than address these concerns in a productive manner, these conversations were instead pushed to the wayside or abandoned altogether to avoid discomfort.

Given these experiences, I felt that focusing my research on multicultural education and pedagogy would be the next step towards preparing students for life outside of the classroom. The purpose of this action research project is to incorporate more culturally responsive pedagogies into my own lessons and future classroom. Because much of Philomath's ethnic demographic continues to be white, I want to develop lessons that incorporate more diversity and celebrate people's differences. Rather than avoid uncomfortable conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion, they need to be embraced in order for students to have the skills to work in a diverse society. Creating safe spaces for students to openly discuss issues around race, inequality, and social justice in a healthy and productive way is the first step in my research process. It is vital for students to feel that they can discuss such issues because having such conversations is the first step in developing a multicultural framework in education. Additionally, these conversations can spark a greater purpose for students in their communities and, eventually, society as a whole. When students have a greater purpose where they can apply their knowledge in real world situations, they begin to understand the core principles of multiculturalism and can be better prepared to navigate a diverse society.

Guiding Pedagogical Theories

The National Association of Multicultural Education defines multicultural education as "a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity" by affirming the "need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world" (NAME). While such ideas and practices may seem to have developed in recent years, their roots run deeper into American history around the 1960s. Multicultural education developed as a discipline as a response to the civil rights movement. At this time, curriculums were very Anglo-centric, writing history in a way that was very one sided and often excluding

the experiences, perspectives, histories, and cultures of other ethnic groups. As African Americans made strides in gaining civil rights, other minoritized groups such as women, Asian Americans, Latinx, LGBTQ, and people with disabilities also began to fight for equality within society and education as well. A product of these efforts was the emergence of multicultural education, which developed as a response to the growing aspirations of these different groups (Banks, 2019).

Banks (2019) articulates five guiding principles, or dimensions, as a way to help educators navigate their curriculum through a multicultural framework. The five dimensions or tenets of multicultural education are: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture.

Content integration, the first tenet of Banks' theory, refers to how teachers integrate multicultural education into the general curriculum, such as math, science, language arts, and so on. This includes the use of examples of concepts or ideas that stem from diverse cultures.

The next dimension, the knowledge construction process, is exactly how it sounds. Teachers help students identify and analyze the ways in which people's worldviews can influence the disciplines that they learn about. Banks gives the example of the theory of evolution, and how supporters of eugenics used this knowledge to further their ideas under the guise of "scientific evidence."

Third, prejudice reduction focuses on minimizing negative attitudes of diverse cultural groups. Banks notes how most students enter the classroom with preconceived notions of various groups of people or cultures. However, it is also noted that "lessons, units, and teaching materials that include content about different racial and ethnic groups can help students to develop more positive intergroup attitudes if certain conditions exist in the teaching situation" (Banks, 2019, p.

18). In other words, when students are exposed to content that reflects positive attitudes towards people who are different from them, they are more likely to develop overall positive attitudes about them as well.

The next dimension focuses on teachers developing an equity pedagogy in their classrooms. This typically looks like modifying curriculum to ensure the academic success of all students, especially those who may be in need. While many teachers may have a set curriculum to teach, there may be a lack of diverse learning strategies. Modifying curriculums to include various learning styles and strategies ensures that students from multiple racial, cultural, linguistic, and gender backgrounds will also have a greater chance at academic success.

Finally, the last dimension focuses on fostering an empowering school culture and social structure. Such a vision means that educators promote the equity and inclusion of all students, no matter their background, race, culture, gender, or cognitive capabilities. There are many ways that teachers and other staff members can promote an equitable learning environment, such as participation in various sports or afterschool programs, analyzing enrollment data, and interacting with students or staff across diverse backgrounds, to name a few. However, the main point is that all educators, administrators, and other school personnel actively participate in promoting an equitable social structure.

These key pillars of multicultural education provide a foundation for my research. Understanding these tenets gives more insight to some of the concepts that were lacking in my own education. In particular, I plan to focus on these specific pillars in my own research because they were insufficient to my own learning experience in school: building an effective knowledge constructive process, building equity-based pedagogy, and fostering an empowering school culture. I plan to implement an effective knowledge construction process by inviting guest

speakers from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and integrating their curricula into the art classroom. Equity-based pedagogy will be developed by implementing Universal Design for Learning practices, where students can choose how to show comprehension and mastery of the material. In order to promote an empowering school culture, I plan to incorporate an additional project segment to the basket weaving lesson where students can make connections to their own personal identities/cultures and see how they compare and contrast to those of the Siletz Tribe. By understanding these principles, students begin to develop deeper critical thinking skills, build stronger social emotional skills, and become better equipped to engage in diverse settings in society.

Connections to InTASC Standards

One of the core standards for the Interstate Teaching Support Consortium (InTASC) is for educators to understand how to foster students' learning development. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) states that "The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards" (2013, p. 8). What this means is that educators utilize student differences to encourage success both inside and outside of the classroom. Part of multicultural education is not only to celebrate diversity in minority groups, but to celebrate diversity in every student. Every individual has knowledge, skills, and abilities that they bring to the classroom, and celebrating these diverse qualities encourages students to build positive relationships with those around them. Additionally, creating spaces where students have the opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension with their strengths helps build self-efficacy and achieve success. For example, one of the principles of Banks' theory outlines the importance of teachers creating equity in their classrooms. In order for all students to achieve success,

curricula, materials, and lessons may need to be adapted in a way that is better suited to individuals in need. This gives students the tools they need to meet high standards while also being accommodating.

Another core standard that aligns with my research is standard five, where educators develop their content area in a way that they help students connect knowledge to local, state, or global issues. The second and third pillars of multicultural education connect to this standard through prejudice reduction and the development of students' knowledge construction process. Creating experiences where students are challenged with new and different perspectives allows them to think more critically about their own biases and preconceived notions.

Summary

In conclusion, multicultural education is the focus of my research because of the lack of its integration in my own educational experience. Having a lack of diversity in the district meant that multicultural education was pushed to the wayside, and instead focused on preparing students to engage in society through college or a job. Ironically, this seemed to only inhibit my preparation for life outside of the classroom, as I did not have the necessary skills needed to contribute to such a diverse society in a meaningful way. While engaging with new perspectives and worldviews, I realized how vastly underprepared I was, which instilled in me a drive to incorporate more culturally responsive pedagogy in my own future classroom.

Researching the core principles of multicultural education has given me a foundation in which to base my study. Banks proposes five tenets of multicultural education in order for teachers to establish a classroom environment that celebrates diversity: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture. The plan for my action research focuses on three pillars: knowledge construction

process, equity pedagogy, and promoting an empowering school culture. Through the implementation of Siletz Tribal history and culture, and using this knowledge to build on students' own identities, I can begin to develop and execute content that reflects an increasingly diverse society while also preparing students and helping them succeed both inside and outside of the classroom. For chapter 2, I will outline the relevant literature related to my research that further supports this study.

Chapter 2: Annotated Bibliography

Since my action research focuses on culturally relevant pedagogy, I looked for articles that discussed how these practices would be interpreted in an art classroom. While the pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy can be adapted to any classroom, I wanted to focus my search to the field that I would be teaching: art and design. I also wanted to look for articles that focused on Indigenous education and its impacts on student achievement levels and identity development, as this will help me navigate my own research when implementing Siletz Tribal Knowledges and histories into the art curriculum.

Acuff, J. B. (2018). 'Being' a critical multicultural pedagogue in the art education classroom.

Critical Studies in Education, 59(1), 35-53.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1176063>

This article aims to analyze the surface level multiculturalism that resides in many art education classrooms and critically examine how racism, power, and narrative contextualizes how art is perceived and viewed. Acuff (2018) utilizes a teacher action research study to reflect on her own teaching practices in two college courses she taught,

both of which centered around cultural conceptions, identity, and practices in art education. The author stems her description of critical multiculturalism from the framework of Critical Race Theory. After analyzing students' written responses and artwork centering around their personal exploration of critical multiculturalism, they found two key themes for success in this framework: narrative and critiques of power. Narrative not only pertains to the cultural lens of art analysis in these courses, but also the development of student voice and dialogue around art and art history, which is just as important as knowledge provided by the teacher. Critiques of power refers to both students and the teacher "questioning the status quo and exercising a critical consciousness" (p. 45). This article helped me understand the necessary components of 'being' a multicultural educator and a framework for discussions around analyzing art and art history through a critical lens. However, because this study focuses on students in college courses, these suggestions will need to be adapted to a younger audience (adolescents and teenagers) so that the information is more digestible.

Alba, R. (2025). Two-Eyed Seeing as a Potential Way Forward in Art Education: Bringing Indigenous Knowledges Alongside Western Knowledges in the Classroom. *Antistasis*, 14(1), 27–33. <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/antistasis/article/view/34561>

This article examines how incorporating Indigenous education and knowledge into current art curricula can create a more inclusive and socially conscious understanding of art education. The author describes a Two-Eyed Seeing theory approach, where indigenous knowledge is taught alongside Western philosophies, in order for students to

develop a deeper and more well-rounded understanding of the world. The author recommends using storytelling practices as a way for students to reflect on their own identities and lived experiences to develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous content and knowledge. Additionally, the author also acknowledges the importance of being mindful of the way Indigenous content is presented and discussed and the need to engage with members of Indigenous communities to genuinely reflect the deeply rooted knowledge that they hold. This article provides significant insights into implementing Indigenous content into art education. More importantly, the implementations suggested in this article, such as engaging and collaborating with Indigenous community members, are ones that I intend to include in my own research development.

Cameron, T., Brown, V. A., Katz-Buonincontro, J., Anderson, R. C., Edmunds, A., Land, J., & Livie, M. (2024). "Mirrors and windows:" a case study of educators' culturally responsive teaching aspirations and syllabi transformation in the arts. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2024.104714>

This article analyzes the impact of educators transforming their art education lessons and pedagogy to one that is more culturally responsive/sustaining. Twenty educators were interviewed after they participated in a 20 hour online training that included readings, discussion, and construction of lesson plans that engaged in culturally responsive practices. Rather than use culturally responsive or culturally relevant pedagogies, the authors focus on the theoretical framework of culturally sustaining pedagogy due to the continuous reflection and practice of methods used inside the classroom. The authors found that after taking the training, all of the educators reported recognizing the

importance of creating a culturally sustaining classroom environment through activities that valued students' identities.

Additionally, teachers were able to adjust/revise lessons to be more reflective of student perspectives, cultures, and values. This article gave some great insights into how art education can be transformed to be more culturally sustaining and reflective of our increasingly diverse nation. Furthermore, this article articulates the importance of educators' self-reflection towards their own cultural identities. While my own research will most likely not entail a 20 hour training session on culturally responsive pedagogy, it is clear that creating a space to explore personal cultural identity is an essential part of developing an anti-racist environment, activities, and curriculum as a whole.

Eldridge, L. (2018). An Indigenous Reframing of Art Education Historical Research:

Acknowledging Native American Spiritual Values. *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*, (35). <https://doi.org/10.2458/jcrae.4861>

This article analyzes art history and suggests ways to decenter art from a Western perspective and expand art history and education through Indigenous spiritual values.

Eldridge uses a theoretical framework known as “salvage education,” which was coined by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton to save Native American cultures, practices, beliefs, and values from being completely erased due to colonization. The author aims to promote Native American perspectives in art history and art education through Indigenous reframing, which infuses knowledge and perspectives from Indigenous peoples into current understandings of art education and history. While this article presents important critiques to current art education curricula, there is more of an emphasis on the history of

incorporating Indigenous art as a means of decentering Western perspectives rather than demonstrating how current art educators can actively combat this issue.

Gillespie, L., Morency, M. M., Fajemirokun, E., & Ferguson, G. M. (2025). Promoting Identity Development, Multicultural Attitudes, and Civic Engagement Through Ethnic Studies: Evidence From a Natural Experiment. *Institute of Child Development*, 96 (3), 966-979. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.14219>

This article examines how ethnic studies (ES) courses influence students' development of their own racial and ethnic identities, attitudes towards multiculturalism, and civic engagement with their communities. The authors observed four schools in a district in Minneapolis, MN, where ethnic studies courses were included as part of the 9th grade sequence, and compared measurements to U.S. History courses within the same student demographic. The study was analyzed through the lens of ethnic-racial identity development (ERI) within ethnic studies courses. The authors found that these ethnic studies courses included key frameworks such as exploring personal identity, analyzing the structure and history of racism, and examining counternarratives. Through these guiding frameworks, both students of Color and White students experienced positive ERI development. Additionally, students in ES courses were found to have more positive attitudes towards multiculturalism, participate in their communities through civic engagement activities, and were more likely to engage with people from other ethnic groups. Comparing the findings of this article with my own educational experience, it is clear that there were key components missing from the ethnic studies courses that I took. For example, while some of the classes at my high school encouraged civic engagement

with the community through the planning and execution of a fundraising project, ERI development was not explored or expanded on. Because of this, the rest of the class lacked a clear understanding and foundation towards embracing multiculturalism, which also led to a lack of positive ethnic identity development and positionality. It is clear that this study highlights the importance of establishing ERI development for all students so that they can continue to build on multicultural practices and be comfortable with engaging in such dialogue.

Howell, K. (2021). Diverse Approaches to Multicultural Art Education: Some Policy Considerations. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*, (110467).

<https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/110467/>

In this article, Howell(2021) describes possible considerations for educators applying multicultural practices in their lessons and classroom settings. Multicultural education is the theoretical framework that is discussed throughout the article. The author argues that multicultural education in the art classroom is imperative due to the diverse ethnic makeup of the United States, yet this reality is not reflected in the Eurocentric ideals and values that are embedded in art education today. Two propositions are made by the author to remedy this issue: including more non-European artworks, artists, and traditions with equal validity, and examining art through the lens of social and historical contexts. This article brings up an important note regarding teaching art history: social and historical context is just as integral to art education as the discussion of aesthetics and core concepts. Not only would such conversations help students develop critical thinking

skills, but it would also deepen their understanding of history and how various factors influence the way in which art is created and perceived.

Jacob, M. M., Sabzalian, L., Jansen, J., Tobin, T. J., Vincent, C. G., & LaChance, K. M. (2018).

The Gift of Education: How Indigenous Knowledges Can Transform the Future of Public Education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 20(1), 157-185.

<https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v20i1.1534>

In this article, the authors analyze various testimonies from Oregon State Legislature Hearings (in particular, the Oregon Senate Bill 13), as well as other past nationwide efforts of Indigenous education implementation, as a means to advocate for the integration of Indigenous Knowledges in public education across the United States. The authors reviewed the 34 total testimonies that were given at the Senate Education Committee meeting in Salem, Oregon in 2017. The culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies were the key theoretical frameworks used throughout this article, as well as Shawn Wilson's theoretical framework of *relationality*, or utilizing relationships with Native Americans and their communities to implement Indigenous education. What they found was that there were many reasons why Indigenous Knowledges should be implemented more deeply into national curricula across the United States, in particular benefits for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike. First, much of Native American education and knowledge has been systematically eradicated throughout history, which is reflected in today's education system through the lack of representation. This leads to stereotypes and misconceptions of Native American students, which can have negative effects on their mental and emotional wellbeing and

instills a lack of cultural identity. Second, many testimonies argued that Indigenous education should be considered a fundamental right for all; both students and educators should learn about Tribal histories “so that students are no longer ignorant of nationally relevant historical events” (p. 170), which gives a more accurate and holistic view of American history. Lastly, Indigenous education actually benefits all students because they provide an extensive and rich resource for all sorts of curricula, including language arts, STEM fields, visual arts, and social studies. The implementation of Indigenous Knowledges also improves student relationships and achievement levels. While this article is not specifically geared towards the arts, it does highlight an important aspect of my research, which aims to utilize Indigenous Knowledges to integrate more culturally responsive practices into art education. Furthermore, this article helps narrow my research practices by illustrating the importance of utilizing Indigenous elders and Tribal members to promote Native American voices and teach accurate Tribal history to the Philomath community.

Kong, Y. (2021). The Role of Experiential Learning on Students’ Motivation and Classroom Engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.771272>

In this article, Kong(2021) describes the role of experiential learning on students’ engagement and motivation in the classroom. He discusses how engagement is shaped by student perceptions, feelings, and motivations, all of which are heavily influenced by the student, the teacher, course content, teaching method, and learning environment.

Kong(2021) also uses the self-determination theory as a theoretical framework for his review alongside the experiential learning model that was developed by Kolb in 1984.

The author argues that the use of experiential learning allows students to contribute to their own learning through direct action. By giving students a more tangible method to obtaining knowledge, they become more flexible, incorporate all forms of learning, and develop better meta-learning skills. While this article does not delve into art education specifically, key components such as hands-on learning can be easily adapted to an art classroom.

Leck, M. C., & Baptiste, H. P. (2024). Valuing and Honoring Diversity: Autoethnography in Classrooms to Promote Multicultural Education. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 26(2), 145-151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2024.2380984>

This article examines how autoethnographic activities, or sharing stories and personal experiences with others, can be utilized to promote multicultural education in the classroom and initiate conversations surrounding cultural and social issues. The authors shared their own experiences as a student with their classes in order to demonstrate that regardless of background, both teachers experienced a time when they felt seen by their teachers, which contributed to their inspiration to achieve more as students. The authors use the theoretical framework of autoethnography for their research along with fostering positive relationships with students. They found that students who engaged in autoethnographic activities were more likely to create a sense of community and belonging, which in turn led to action within their communities. This article was impactful on my understanding of multicultural education because demonstrating vulnerability with students allowed the teachers to initiate conversations around social and cultural issues in a way that was also culturally affirming for students as well. Not

only did this deepen their understanding of course content, but it also strengthened positive relationships with students by allowing them to have the space to feel heard and seen.

Reif, N., & Grant, L. (2010). Culturally responsive classrooms through art integration. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 5(1).

<https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/jpme/vol5/iss1/11>

This article articulates how integrating various art forms can promote a more interactive and engaging learning environment for students of all backgrounds and abilities to thrive. Reif and Grant observed how a third-grade teacher in Colorado utilized various artistic avenues to deliver mathematics, language, and science content to a diverse student demographic. The study was analyzed through culturally responsive teaching practices as well as Gardner's multiple intelligences theoretical framework. The authors found that these varied instructional techniques greatly improved student engagement and achievement levels. Drawing and painting demonstrated an alternative communication approach for ELL and ESL students, theater arts integrated Total Physical Response Storytelling to demonstrate proficiency in a symmetry lesson, and music or chants were utilized to aid students in understanding liquid measurements and remembering their relationships between each amount. While this article demonstrates how the arts can be utilized in teaching a diverse classroom with a wide array of learning styles, it barely touches on the cultural significance of each student's background. Instead, the focus leans more on the importance of arts integration in all facets of learning and how it increases student engagement and achievement levels.

Wasson, R. F., Stuhr, P. L., & Petrovich-Mwaniki, L. (1990). Teaching Art in the Multicultural Classroom: Six Position Statements. *National Art Education Association*, 31(4), 234-246. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320543>

This article presents art educators with key ideas/position statements that will help guide them on developing a more culturally responsive curriculum and classroom environment. The six position statements are: focusing on knowledge of the makers of art and their social/cultural contexts, be aware of personal cultural/social biases, utilize student values and beliefs when planning art curricula, using an anthropological approach when analyzing diverse artworks, advocate for culturally responsive pedagogy, and give a voice to those who have historically been excluded. The authors utilize the Cultural Pluralist views of Boas, Bunzel, and Benedict. This article provides a good foundation for multicultural education in the art classroom. Even though it was written in the early 90s, these statements still resonate within many other scholarly articles advocating for multicultural pedagogies in art education.

In conclusion, many of these articles demonstrate the importance of implementing culturally responsive pedagogies and the positive impacts that it has on all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or background. Multicultural education is just as important within the art classroom as it is for any other subject, and many of the articles outline how teachers can implement culturally responsive practices when students create, analyze, and discuss art. Additionally, the teaching of Native American histories, beliefs, and cultures is a practice that continues to be marginalized, and many articles outline how educators can make changes into

their own practices to represent and uplift Indigenous Knowledges. Because Philomath has historical ties to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, I wanted to focus my research on implementing culturally sustaining pedagogies through the teachings of our local tribes. In doing so, I can teach the importance of diversity and inclusion in a way that is meaningful and close to home. In chapter three, I will discuss in more detail the methodology I intend to use to further my research.

Chapter 3: Methods

What is Action Research?

According to Sagor (2000), action research is defined as an inquiry-based process where the individual conducting the research strives to improve their own field of work (p. 3). Sagor (2000) also outlined seven steps in which action research should be conducted: selecting a focus, clarifying theories, identifying research questions, collecting data, analyzing the data, reporting the results, and taking informed action for future endeavors. These same steps of the action research process are what I will be following as I develop my own research, although they are adapted to fit the complexities of education and the teaching profession.

The reason why the action research process is the most appropriate method for my own research is because multicultural education was, and in some ways still continues to be, underrepresented in PMS. Due to my unique advantage of having the experiences of both a student and an employee in the school district, I am able to observe how multicultural education has been implemented throughout the years, and hopefully build upon new ways of developing curricula with more diversity in a non-diverse school area. Teaching diversity through the

implementation of localized Indigenous knowledge serves as the core to my research, while also driving the research for these questions:

- How does multicultural education affect students' development of self identity?
- How does multicultural education, more specifically learning about local Native American tribes and their culture, prepare students to interact with a diverse workforce and society?
- How does multicultural education affect how students create, analyze, and reflect on their artwork?

Participants and Setting

My action research will be conducted in a small, rural town at PMS. Due to the majority of the ethnic demographic of the school being white students, the classes that I will be teaching in will also reflect this. For the purpose of this study, I will be combining the two afternoon art classes together so that the sample size would be bigger. Each class has 12 students each, making the total number of students 24. There are 7 students that are boys, and 17 are girls. Since art is an elective class, 5 of the students are 8th graders, while 19 are 7th graders. Five students have taken the same art course previously, although three of those students were enrolled last school year, so many of the concepts and lessons are being introduced for the first time. There is only one Hispanic student who also receives ELL services from the school. Nine students are on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which may affect the data due to prioritizing student's social-emotional needs.

After taking a quick poll on how many students have heard of the Siletz Tribe, not a single student raised their hand. This was an interesting finding, especially because the Siletz Tribe is only an hour and a half drive away from the town of Philomath. However, this also meant that most of the information that I presented to students would be new, and hopefully serve as a foundation for continued learning of local tribes across grade levels as well as other disciplines.

Much of the student's funds of knowledge come from their experiences around the community. Many students enjoy hobbies and activities that involve being outdoors, such as camping, hiking, hunting, dirt biking, and visiting the coast. Additionally, many of the students have a deep love and connection with animals, as many of them have pets, live on farms, or participate in 4H during the summer months. These funds of knowledge that directly correlate to the environment will help students make connections to the ways in which Indigenous people used the landscape to not only survive, but celebrate through their culture and traditions.

Since I work as an instructional assistant at PMS previously, there are five students who I have worked with directly and have developed strong relationships with, and many of the other students have seen me in various core subject classrooms assisting students with IEPs. Regardless, all of the students began taking art at the beginning of the second semester, which started towards the end of January. Since I was able to introduce myself and teach a small lesson during the first week of the semester, the students have become familiar with me and feel comfortable asking me questions throughout the period. Although I take great pride in the fact that I am very personable with the students, I also acknowledge that there are some things I would like to improve on. Checking in on students while they are working is something that I must remind myself to do more often, especially in the early stages of the lessons. It is important

for students to receive feedback, especially while students are still in the process of their work, so that they can make adjustments immediately rather than reflect on mistakes after they have finished their projects. Engaging in thoughtful dialogue with students is an important part of the art-making process, and one that I will continue to improve upon in the future.

Data Collection and Analysis

Throughout my action research project, I accumulated a wide variety of data to ground my inquiries. First, I developed a multicultural unit with lesson plans that focused on the basket weaving process and its importance to the Siletz Tribe. This unit was adapted from the Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians shared history curriculum, specifically the basket weaving lesson plan. While I only planned out 5 lessons, this unit ended up being a month long project. Sagor (2000) notes that drawing a timeline of what, when, and how lesson plans are taught are a great source of data to analyze how effective or non-effective the unit was. This is because a timeline provides a record of specific assignments, projects, discussions, presentations, and so on throughout the unit, which can give insights into the specific areas of the unit that did or did not work, as well as note which ones were relevant to the research project as a whole.

The second source that I gathered my data from was a variety of assessments and reflections that were assigned throughout the unit. These include a pre and post assessment on general knowledge of the Siletz Tribe and basket weaving techniques, guest speaker questions and reflection, basket weaving assessment, and an artist statement worksheet. The assessments gave me evidence of how much the students retained the knowledge throughout the unit, while the reflections gave me valuable insight into student rationale and interest in the lesson material. Sagor (2000) mentions that keeping student work can provide a robust collection of data, especially in terms of measuring student writing proficiency. For example, while the basket

weaving rubric can be used to measure learning targets, the guest speaker and artist statement reflections provide a more comprehensive look into how students have absorbed the unit material and translate it into other aspects of their education and daily lives.

Lastly, I utilized feedback from my mentor teacher, Ms. H, to measure student engagement and other informal observational data throughout the unit. Sagor (2000) notes that since teachers are constantly observing student behavior, engagement, and progress on a daily basis, this can be a valuable source of data to record and analyze throughout the research process. At the end of each lesson, my mentor teacher and I would discuss the observations that we made for both class periods, noting what worked well and what did not, and possible factors that could have influenced the observations we made.

Researcher Positionality

As stated before, I have the unique opportunity to conduct my research in the same place that I received my own education. Though there are many things that have changed since the time I graduated high school, there are also many things that have changed very little. While multicultural education is starting to slowly be incorporated into classrooms across the district, there still continues to be pushback against these implementations. Concerns about making students feel guilty about a history that is rife with death, destruction, and erasure are at the forefront of many community members' minds, especially because much of this history was dealt by the hands of White people.

While it is important to me to teach diversity and multiculturalism and inclusion, these concerns still hum at the back of my mind. I would be lying if I said that White guilt has not affected me and my understanding of culturally responsive practices, but just like any uncomfortable feeling, they should be dealt with head-on rather than be pushed to the wayside.

Without a proper outlet, feelings of guilt will only fester and grow into resentment, which will only continue the cycle of racial superiority.

Chapter 4: Findings

Since my own educational experience lacked multicultural practices, my research aims to seek out these practices that are tailored for an art classroom. The five key tenets of multicultural education that are outlined by Banks (2019) serve as the foundation for my research and will help me continue to develop my pedagogy as an art educator. My main goal for my research was to understand three things: what multicultural education looks like in an art classroom, what multicultural education looks like in an ethnically homogenous classroom/community, and how multicultural education can help students prepare for the “real world.” After analyzing various sources of data collected throughout my basket weaving unit, there are three major themes that have emerged. The first being that multicultural education must be adapted in a way that is culturally responsive to an ethnically homogenous classroom. The second is that utilizing diverse community voices can be more impactful to student learning than simply teaching diverse material. Lastly, the final theme I found was the important distinction between making art and understanding art.

Theme 1: Multicultural education looks different in an ethnically homogenous classroom.

Since the district that I conducted this study in had little ethnic diversity, I knew that multicultural education would have to look a bit different. In most of the articles and research I had analyzed for this project, one key factor that stood out to me was the fact that there was more ethnic diversity amongst the study candidates. Because of this, multicultural education reflected the student demographics, where teachers would present materials that represented these various

backgrounds such as race/ethnicity, gender, culture, beliefs, and so on. Yet, since my classroom was ethnically homogenous, I had to think about other ways to show the diversity between students, such as hobbies and interests, family dynamics, clubs, sports, socioeconomic status, and other aspects found within the community.

More importantly, I was concerned with how I would be able to make the content culturally relevant to the students in my classroom while also teaching content that showcases other cultures. If my goal was to help students develop empathy and an overall positive attitude towards other cultures, I had to ensure that students developed that same mindset with both their peers and themselves.

One set of data that I looked at was students' self assessments that gauged how they felt about their artistic abilities, their values, and their personal feelings about culture or their cultural background. Each student was given a questionnaire with various questions about these topics, and students were asked to rate each one on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree). The section that I looked at in particular had statements that focused on culture and roots, such as:

- I feel a strong connection to my family's history or ancestors
- Family traditions (holidays, celebrations, food) are a big part of my identity
- The language(s) I speak at home shape how I think about the world
- I often see characters in movies or books who look like me or live like me
- My neighborhood or city has influenced who I am today

The reason why these particular statements stood out to me is because these would give me a starting point to how students felt about their own self-identity, their knowledge of their own culture and heritage, and how much both of these factors influenced their daily lives. Since

this was a pre-assessment at the beginning of the semester (long before I had introduced the basket weaving unit to them), this data allowed me to understand how best to approach these topics in future lessons and units in a way that was also culturally relevant to their own lives and experiences.

The biggest trend that I noticed was that most of the ratings for each question were 3, which meant that students either felt neutral or were unsure altogether about all of these particular statements. This meant that overall, students did not feel as confident about their stance on many of the statements. It is hard to say why exactly students may feel this way about their cultural background, as there could be many factors that influence their opinions. Perhaps students didn't know where to begin when thinking about their cultural roots, or maybe students did not feel the need to pursue a deeper understanding of their cultural identity. Regardless, since most students did not have a solid foundation of how their culture influences their identity, this meant that students needed to first understand what culture *means* altogether.

Since students seemed to not feel confident in their cultural identity, the first place to start is by teaching them what this would look like in an ethnically homogenous classroom. Before I started the basket weaving unit, I also developed a separate unit that focused more on developing students' sense of self-identity. First, we discussed what identity means. This of course included various facets of life, such as hobbies, interests, where they live, how they were raised, their beliefs, traditions, and so on. To coincide with this idea of identity, students also learned about totem poles of the Pacific Northwest and their significance to many different Indigenous tribes along the Pacific coast. They watched videos of tribal members not only crafting these massive works of art in the modern age, but the people who carve them discuss how the process and imagery within the totem poles showcase their family history and their identities as tribal

members. With these two concepts in mind, students learned how to make their own version of a “totem” by thinking about symbols that represent their own identities, which were then made out of cardboard and paper mache clay. The symbolic imagery that they were required to incorporate in their totems were an animal that they think best represents their personality, and at least two other forms that show their hobbies, interests, beliefs, and so on.

As students made their totems, I was pleased to see each student’s unique design for their templates. There was a wide variety of animals and forms, including books, brushes, sports equipment, and even Dr. Pepper cans. It was clear that students were able to understand how their interests influence their identities, but this did not really help in developing their understanding of their *cultural* identity. There is a misconception in America that white people do not have a culture, that it is something that belongs to many other ethnic groups instead. Yet, if culture is rooted in the traditions, beliefs, and communities that we live in, then everyone has some form of cultural identity, whether they know it or not.

To help students deepen their understanding of cultural identity, I made sure to incorporate a section of my basket weaving unit to develop this idea even further. Not only would students learn about how basket weaving is an important part of the Siletz Tribe’s cultural identity, but they would also learn about what cultural identity looks like in their own households. In my third lesson plan, I had students create an idea map of an everyday object that holds significance to them or their lives. As an example, I discussed how my family had a tradition of making a sit-down dinner on Sundays. We would set the table, make all sorts of dishes in serving platters, and we would all sit down together to say grace, eat our meal, and engage in conversation with each other. One item that stuck out to me as significant was a specific pot that was always used to make a potato side dish. It was white with a blue flower

pattern on the sides, and the lid had a piece missing from the plastic handle. It was worn down from years of use, but I remember it being specifically used for making mashed potatoes for family dinner. This item was not just an everyday, run-of-the-mill pot; to me, it symbolized family, tradition, and heritage, all of which defined my understanding of culture.

Students were then supposed to make an idea map of their own everyday object, where they would write down the item's use, where it originated from, and the memories that are tied to it. This activity was designed to help students deepen their understanding of identity, specifically in regards to how even many of the traditions that they may view as monotonous can be considered part of their culture and identity. I also made sure to give examples that students may be familiar with, such as going to church every Sunday, participating in 4H every summer, or going to the local rodeo in July. From there, I worked with students to develop their ideas, encouraging them to include details that are unique to their experiences and lives so that their item truly represents their cultural identity. I was yet again pleasantly surprised by the unique responses students gave, particularly because each item tells a different story. One student chose her favorite baby blanket that was made by her aunt. Another student chose an intricate cameo necklace that was passed down to her by her grandmother. Another student chose his Apple watch because he uses it to call his grandmother everyday after school. No matter the object or the reason, the students were able to understand how those simple traditions or rituals shape their identities.

Throughout my research, it became evident that multicultural education can be beneficial to all students, even those that reside in ethnically homogeneous communities. Even if the classroom demographics lack ethnic diversity, if given the proper scaffolding and materials, students can be given a foundation to understand what culture and identity means to each

individual. With that said, when thinking about *how* multicultural education affects the development of their identities, there was one more observation that I noticed in my students. Presenting diverse materials gives students the opportunity to think critically about diverse ways of thinking and being. One example of this was when I presented various artworks about identity for students to analyze as part of my unit plan. I wanted to show a range of artists from diverse backgrounds across history, so some were hundreds of years old while others were from modern artists. For each picture, students were able to give all sorts of great insights and interpretations to what they thought the artist was trying to communicate about their own views on self-identity. Another example of students being able to think critically was evident during our 4 Corners game. Again, the prompts revolved around identity, but students walked to the side of the room that indicated if they agreed or disagreed with a statement. With each prompt, students were able to give thoughtful and insightful responses, demonstrating their awareness of nuances in various situations.

While multicultural education can be an important part of a holistic learning experience, it is even more important to ensure that students feel heard and understood in their own ways of life as well. If students do not feel connected to the material, if they feel that they do not fit into the spaces of a diverse framework, then the entire foundation of multicultural education falls apart. Of course, it is important to empower minority students, such as women, disabled students, students of Color, LGBTQ students...but it is also important to empower students who do not identify in these groups. Teaching diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism in an ethnically homogenous classroom means that identity has to be at the forefront of the conversation. It is acknowledging that identity comes in all shapes, sizes, and formats, and that each person, no matter their identity, is deserving of respect.

Theme 2: Utilizing diverse voices is much more impactful than teaching diverse material.

One important aspect of this unit was utilizing diverse voices to help teach the content. Since Philomath is located only an hour's drive away from the Siletz reservation, inviting a member of the tribe to be a guest speaker was my top priority for incorporating multicultural lesson material in a meaningful way to students. Not only would students be able to get a first-hand account of the culture, traditions, and modern lifestyle of a Siletz tribal member, but my hope was that such an experience would help students make more meaningful connections due to their own knowledge with the landscape of the Oregon coastal range.

Since utilizing diverse voices was such an important aspect of my research, this ultimately became the focal point of my unit as well. In fact, my unit depended on it. There were many components of my lessons that revolved around preparing for and reflecting on having a guest speaker. Because of this, I created two different worksheets: guest speaker expectations and prep questions, as well as a reflection. Part of the artist statement worksheet incorporated this part of the unit as well, as students were asked to use what they learned about the Siletz Tribe and make connections to their own artwork and personal experiences.

Another reason why I placed so much emphasis on incorporating a guest speaker into my lesson was because...well, in all honesty, I felt way out of my depth. I will be the first to admit that my baseline knowledge of the Siletz Tribe, and most other Native American history, is very minimal. While I am always happy to learn more about the history, knowledge, and culture of any and all Indigenous groups, my lack of expertise would be evident, even to the students. If my goal was to create a meaningful multicultural experience for students, then I had to go beyond the inclusion of diverse material in my lessons. Lectures, note-taking, tests, and research can only do so much to teach students the importance of diversity and multiculturalism; students

have to feel that what they are learning is meaningful and relevant, and the best way to do that is through first-hand experiences.

Throughout my unit, I would make sure that I included other materials that showcased the local tribe in a way that felt real to students. For example, during the first few days of lecture, I incorporated various pictures from the Siletz website, such as pictures of the Tribal Council members that are in office to this very day. Additionally, I was able to find some videos that included said council members, where they would discuss the importance of traditional practices like basket weaving and caring for the environment where they have gathered materials for several generations. My hope was that this would help ground the learning material in the present, to show students that Indigenous people, their culture, and their beliefs are not just part of history, but a continuous way of life that lives on to this very day.

In order to see how students would be influenced by the incorporation of a guest speaker from the very tribe that was discussed in class, I created materials that both prepared the students for his arrival as well as gave students the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. The day before our speaker arrived, I had students fill out a very simple worksheet where they would write down a minimum of two questions to ask the guest speaker. I also included a guide at the top of the document, where I had listed four “rules” or expectations whenever there is a guest speaker present at school. These expectations focused on being present, respectful, and appreciative of the guests, as they took time out of their busy lives to come and share their knowledge with the students.

As students thought about what sort of questions they would like to ask, I went over each of the expectations that were listed on the worksheet. While most students were familiar with guest speakers and how to behave, I still couldn’t help but worry that students would say or do

something disrespectful toward the guest. Working with middle school students for almost five years has taught me that their adolescent brains sometimes cause them to act or say things without thinking them through. While I was used to such behavior, I did not want our guest speaker to be subjected to that as well. So, while going over the expectations, I made sure to be firm and clear of how I wanted students to behave, as well as what kind of questions would be appropriate to ask. One student raised his hand to make a silly comment on what sort of question he would like to ask, but I shut it down immediately. Their questions and behavior were to remain respectful, otherwise I would not hesitate to give out detentions.

After I discussed expectations with the students, and they had some time to write down their questions, there seemed to be a shift in their behavior. I noticed that many students would raise their hands and call me over to check their questions that they wrote down. They expressed that they wanted to make sure that they were “good enough” to ask the speaker. I was actually surprised with just how insightful and thoughtful the questions were. Students came up with a wide range of questions asking about the guest speaker’s personal interests, how someone can become part of the tribe, traditions that they celebrate, other sorts of basket weaving techniques that they use, and how they prepare materials for weaving. This made me incredibly hopeful and excited for the next day, as I was expecting a fun, engaging dialogue between the students and the guest speaker based on the wonderful questions the students had prepared.

Even though I had high hopes for the next day, I found that my expectations fell a bit flat. I was, however, incredibly proud of the way students conducted themselves while our guest was speaking. They were very respectful and demonstrated all of the active listening skills that I had taught them the day before. Yet, when students were finally allowed to ask any questions to our speaker...it was dead quiet. I even encouraged them to look at their worksheets, as this was the

time to ask the great questions that they had prepared. Even still, most of the students did not raise their hands. This perplexed me because I thought I had given them enough encouragement, especially since many students had specifically asked for my opinions on how well their questions were. Did students feel intimidated by the guest speaker? Perhaps students were worried about saying the wrong thing to him, and they were afraid of being punished for any perceived disrespect? It is possible that may be the case, but it is hard to say for sure. Both of my middle school classes are fairly quiet, even when I am giving lectures on a day to day basis, so I suppose that a lack of response was not out of character for them. It is also possible that the students felt that they had most of their questions answered, or they were just unsure of what to ask even with their prepared questions.

I would be lying if I said that I wasn't disappointed in the lack of engagement, but I learned that students had learned a lot more than they had let on. The second piece of evidence that I used, the guest speaker reflection, gave me really valuable insights into what students had taken away from the experience. Upon further investigation, I had observed a pattern: students clung to information that was more personable to our guest. Since I did not have a specific framework of topics for the guest to discuss, rather just to speak on some of the history of the Siletz Tribe and his personal experiences as a tribal member, it was a very open conversation. The most memorable parts that students remembered and found the most interesting were ones that reflected his everyday life and history. For example, many students commented that they were surprised to hear how his grandparents had to lie to get married, as the law at that time forbade interracial marriage if one individual was more than half Native American. Students were also surprised to hear about how long it takes him to make one basket, and that he even admitted to not quite finishing projects at times due to his busy schedule. These first-hand

accounts and personal experiences seemed to have made a much greater impression on the students than what I had taught them. Basket weaving and Native American traditions became more than just words on a page or screen; students could actually see how these traditions continue on today through its people, and how the culture shapes their identities.

Figure 1: Students interacting with various Siletz regalia alongside the guest speaker, Robert Kentta, who is a member of the Siletz Tribal Council.

Even though students may not have been enthusiastic about engaging in dialogue with the guest speaker like I would have hoped, it is clear that they still found the experience to be memorable in some way. Our guest had also brought in a plethora of baskets, materials, clothing, and other tribal regalia that had been crafted by him or other tribal members. Students loved spending time towards the end of the period touching and viewing all of the items, and some students did ask a couple of questions to him directly. They were impressed with the craftsmanship and materials used for each item, such as the purse made from an elk horn, the



fabric of beads on a rawhide skirt, or the intricate woven fabric of the baskets and hats. The fact that students were able to feel with their own hands the dedication, history, and traditions of the Siletz Tribe through these works was more valuable to them than anything else I had taught them because it was a testament to how *real* their learning was. Having an experience that is tangible, that engages the senses, that encourages dialogue with other people within the community, is something that students will hold onto much longer than anything else I would have taught them during this unit.

The second driving question for my research was how learning about local Native American tribes will prepare students to interact with a diverse population and workforce. While I cannot definitively say that students will be better prepared after just one multicultural unit, my findings suggest at least two positive outcomes from having experiences rooted in diversity and multiculturalism. The first outcome is that students learn how to interact with other people from diverse backgrounds. While interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds is just as important in developing social skills and behaviors, such interactions likely don't have the same impact as interacting with community members they are unfamiliar with. For the most part, students have grown up with their peers since kindergarten, which changes the dynamics of the way in which they interact with each other, regardless of their background. However, guest speakers give students the opportunity to learn how to interact with people who are unfamiliar to them in a respectful manner, similar to how they would engage with others in a work environment. Even if the interaction is brief, people must be able to hold a certain level of professionalism for customers, co-workers, managers, and so on in order to be successful in any facet of the workforce. By giving students the opportunity to practice these skills with community members in a safe environment, they can be better equipped to face an increasingly diverse world.

The second outcome suggested by my findings is that students gain a deeper appreciation for diversity when they have hands-on experiences alongside the learning material. Not only did students learn about how basket weaving was an important part of the Siletz culture, but they also were able to see for themselves the amount of time and effort they put into each basket when they made one for themselves. More importantly, using traditional weaving materials, such as reed strands, empowers students to learn how the gathering and preparation of materials is just as important as the weaving itself. Even if they struggled a bit with some of the weaving techniques, many students commented on how relaxing and enjoyable they found the process of weaving to be, and they eagerly came to each class excited to continue moving forward. Giving students hands-on experiences alongside the learning material allows them to develop a deeper appreciation for multicultural education in a way that feels meaningful to them.

Theme 3: *Making art does not equal understanding art*

The third question that drove my research was “How does multicultural education affect how students create, analyze, and reflect on their artwork?” In order to answer this question, I looked at three different pieces of data: students’ artist statement worksheets, their finished basket weaving rubrics, and both the pre- and post-assessments that were given at the beginning and end of the unit.

The first piece of data that I analyzed was the completed baskets, which I evaluated with a curated rubric. There were three main pillars that I graded each student on: requirements, technique, and craftsmanship. The first category looked at whether or not students met the minimum requirements while building their baskets, such as making the base 4 inches across and the walls at least 3 inches tall. Technique focused on the basic process for weaving, such as consistently going “under and over” each warp. Lastly, the last category that was worth the most

points, was craftsmanship, which focused on grading how well students were able to keep a tight weave throughout their basket as well as finishing the top edge and sides to make it look uniform.

After grading each of the baskets, I was very impressed with the overall quality of each student's finished product. For the first two categories, 100% of students were able to exceed the criteria for requirements and technique, whereas only 74% of students were able to exceed in the craftsmanship category. Students who scored lower in the craftsmanship category had one of these issues: the first is that some of the students struggled to keep a tight weave due to not pulling the runner strand tight as they worked, or some students forgot to trim off excess strands that stuck out of the basket. Overall, I found that students were able to understand the basic weaving techniques and ended up with beautiful finished products. Clearly, students were able to replicate art based on what I had shown them. Yet, this does not demonstrate how students are able to analyze their own work in a critical manner. For example, I had students use a specific weaving technique along with specific materials, and because most of my students had never woven a basket before, this allowed them to understand the foundational concepts of weaving. However, the Siletz Tribe uses a wide variety of materials and weaving techniques to create their baskets, which is reflected in the diversity of the shape, size, and purpose of each basket. One way that I could have expanded the creative process of weaving into an analytical practice is by having students experiment with other materials and/or other weaving techniques. Doing so would encourage students to think about *how* these different factors influence the kind of artwork that they make, rather than simply replicating each of the steps.



Figure 2: Images of finished baskets from 6th and 7th period classes.

The part of the lesson where students created their own baskets and developed weaving techniques was an overall success, so I was eager to see the rest of the lesson come together. However, I quickly realized that a student's understanding of how to make baskets does not mean that it will translate well into analyzing the *why* behind basket making and its importance to Siletz culture. This disconnect between making art and analyzing art can be suggested in the second piece of data I had collected, which was the artist statements worksheets. These questions focused on how students analyzed their own work, as well as making connections to what they learned about the Siletz Tribe and their own culture or identities.

There were two ways that students responded to the questions: they were either long and thoughtful responses, or they were very minimal. However, regardless of how much the student wrote for each question, I found that the answers across the board lacked much depth. One example of this was found in the question “How does your artwork connect to what we learned about the Siletz Tribe?” My hope was that students would reference the cultural significance of

prepping and making baskets, or perhaps how the tradition of basket weaving plays an important role in sustaining the Siletz culture. Instead, most of the answers were very surface level. Much of what students wrote referenced the basket weaving techniques themselves, as in the Siletz Tribe practices basket weaving, so the class learned how to weave as well. For example, one of the answers that was given to this particular question was “Because they did a lot of basket weaving as well”, or “The Siletz Tribe did a lot of basket weaving too”. One piece of evidence that was intriguing was that one student began to write something that was closer to my expectations. She begins her statement with “My basket connects to the Siletz Tribe because the Siletz people...and how important their traditions...” and scribbles out the second part of her sentence. Instead, she finished with “...did a lot of basket weaving,” which was the same answer that I had seen over and over again. While it was frustrating to see a potentially great response be cut short, it also made me think more deeply about how or why students were not quite making those deeper connections like I would have wanted.

So why weren't students giving me the answers that I was looking for? Unfortunately, there is no direct answer to this question. In fact, it can be due to a multitude of reasons. The first is that there may have been a lack of information around the Siletz Tribe and their culture altogether. Admittedly, the central focus of art class is usually the physical production of art. I wanted to give students enough background information about the cultural practices and history of the Tribe to give a foundation to build their knowledge, while also making sure that art remains the central focus of the lessons. Due to this, it is likely that students did not have enough information to make these distinctive correlations like I was hoping for. Additionally, students may not have had enough scaffolding for this unit either. Even if they did have enough information to make meaningful connections to what they had learned over the course of the

unit, perhaps they needed more time and practice developing these thoughts both verbally and in writing. Other reasons could be a lack of motivation, not understanding expectations, or not making any sort of connections to their own lives at all.

However, another piece of evidence that continued to puzzle me about this entire predicament is from my third lesson plan in my unit, more specifically when students played a game called “Four Corners.” As an opening activity to get students thinking about identity, I created a slideshow filled with various prompts relating to self-identity, how we present ourselves, and their preconceived notions about others based on our views of identity. If students agreed with a statement, they walked to the left side of the room, and if they disagreed, they walked to the right side of the room. Students were also welcome to stand in the middle if they felt unsure about a particular statement. After each statement was read and students picked a side, we would discuss each one as a class. I was pleasantly surprised by all of the different responses I heard, especially because they were very insightful. For example, one of the statements presented said: “Your bedroom decor is a perfect reflection of your personality.” Many students chose to disagree with this statement or were in the middle. When asked to explain their reasoning, many students brought up various exceptions that would impact the layout of a room. One student asked “Well, what if you have siblings? Not everything in that room is going to be yours.” Another student commented, “I usually consider myself a clean person, but sometimes my bedroom gets really messy. Like, I don’t have time to clean it right away because I get busy.” Hearing such thoughtful answers made me delighted. It was evident that the students were able to think critically about any given situation.

If one of the goals driving my research was to see how students were able to create, analyze, and reflect on their own artwork, then the results are not as straightforward as I had

previously thought. First, the recipe for creating artwork has two parts: the *how* and the *why*. If students are taught how to utilize a material, tool, or medium in art, and they are able to follow directions, they can make a tangible, physical item that can be displayed on hallway walls or in galleries. However, replication in art, or the *how*, is in of itself a very surface level part of the art making process. This is why the *why* of art-making is such a crucial aspect of the creative process, because it demands that students dig deeper into how it reflects their experiences. In fact, most modern art hinges on this very idea; Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko, for example, were more concerned about how the process of art made people feel by utilizing the most abstract forms and unconventional techniques. Although I would not expect middle school students to be able to articulate such higher forms of thinking like those artists did, they are capable of expressing their thought process or motivation behind their work.

The second part that my research suggests is that students need to be guided in how art is analyzed and how to make those deeper connections that I was searching for. This requires continued practice over many days, even weeks or months. Students are more than capable of critical thought, but they may not see the same patterns or come to the same conclusions without the continued practice of analyzing how their art connects to other aspects of their life. For example, since I wanted students to articulate how their knowledge of the Siletz Tribe and their culture connect to their own lives, I needed to incorporate more opportunities for students to have guided conversations and activities. This could be in the form of guided class discussions, exit tickets, think-pair-shares, and so forth. I realized that I tried to set expectations for something that I did not create scaffolding for, and if I want different results in the future, I need to create more opportunities for higher level thinking.

Ch. 5: Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion

Since multicultural education was the driving force behind my research, and because I utilized other research surrounding this topic, I was able to apply similar methods, models, and ideals into my own project. In doing so, there were a few ways in which my research aligns with other published articles. First, I ensured that my basket weaving unit incorporated text, images, and techniques from diverse communities. Howell (2021) urges the use of artwork that is not Eurocentric, and to instead utilize examples from diverse artists and present them with equal validity. Not only did my entire unit focus on local Indigenous tribes and traditions, but I also included opportunities to analyze artworks from other modern artists with diverse backgrounds.

Another way that my research aligns with similar articles is the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in the art classroom. Both Alba (2025) and Eldridge (2018) discuss the importance of Native American art, culture, and beliefs being infused into curricula to help combat Eurocentric perspectives. More importantly, by doing so, students actually benefit from these diverse perspectives because they develop a more well-rounded understanding of the world. My research utilizes not just Native American knowledge and perspectives, but focuses on tribes that are local to the school district where I conducted my research. In doing so, students gained a deeper understanding of the land that they reside on, their local history, and the community and its members as a whole. Developing art lessons that honor local Indigenous practices allowed students to make more meaningful connections to the learning material as a whole.

While there were many similarities between my research and articles with similar subject matter, I found that there was one glaring difference between them as well. Most of the research that I analyzed integrated multicultural practices in classrooms that were ethnically diverse, yet

my own classroom was ethnically homogenous, consisting of mostly white students. Even though these articles outlined how incorporating various practices, images, and representations in an art classroom can help diverse students develop a deeper sense of identity, they didn't really touch on how such practices would impact students in ethnically homogenous classrooms, or white students in general. This meant that I had to refine these practices and adapt them to fit the needs of my students, focusing on methods of inclusion that would not only empower their sense of belonging and cultural identity, but also develop empathy and positivity towards people from diverse backgrounds as well.

Limitations and Implications

Theoretical Limitations

One of the major theoretical limitations of my study is that multicultural education typically follows five tenets or guiding principles, yet my research only focuses on three. These tenets were building an effective knowledge constructive process, building equity-based pedagogy, and fostering an empowering school culture. The other two that Banks (2019) articulates also include prejudice reduction and content integration. While focusing on specific principles of multicultural education can help pinpoint more effective teaching practices and pedagogy, the shortcoming of such methods means that key components of multicultural education are lacking or missing altogether. Banks (2019) acknowledges that to have a successful multicultural framework in a school setting, all guiding principles should be addressed because they are all closely related and intertwined. In my own study, the lack of representation from the other two guiding principles can potentially explain the lack of a deeper connection and appreciation towards multicultural integration in the art classroom.

Another limitation with the theoretical framework that I used throughout this study is the tenets I chose to focus on. While I anticipated that my research would focus on building an effective knowledge constructive process, in hindsight, what my research actually focused on was content integration. This is because much of the content that I had introduced to students was new and informative, but it did not give them enough scaffolding to analyze or investigate implicit cultural assumptions. For example, students learned a bit about the definition behind “confederated tribe” and “since time immemorial”, but we did not go any further than surface level understanding. Students did not investigate how these terms were developed or what they mean through the lens of the Siletz Tribe and their account of historical knowledge.

Methodological Limitations

Part of my data collection and analysis, which I have discussed earlier in chapter three, was accounting for the length of time that was spent on this unit. First, it is important to acknowledge that many art projects, lessons, or units may fluctuate for time that is needed to complete. This will vary depending on the group of students, as some may tend to rush through projects while others would take an entire month to complete if they are allowed. With that being said, the other timing issue that may have greatly impacted my results is the number of interruptions throughout this unit. Events such as fire drills, long weekends, breaks, assemblies, and the like are a given in every school, which is something that is out of my control. These events also impacted my ability to schedule our guest speaker in a timely manner, as I kept needing to push back this part of the lesson later and later in the month.

Another limitation I found with my methods is simply having enough data to show significant findings in my research. Since both of the middle school classes were so small, I decided to combine them in hopes that having a bigger sample size would help solidify my data

collection. However, due to a number of factors, the number of students that participated in the study kept dwindling. Three students had dropped the class completely, one student was absent for almost the entire unit due to health issues, and at least three students had consistently missed class for at least half of the unit, which meant that they were excused from many of the assignments altogether. While such events are inevitable in a classroom setting, they made an even bigger impact on my data results due to the small number of students enrolled in both classes to begin with. For future research, it may be more worthwhile to repeat this same study to multiple groups of students.

Practical Limitations

When it comes to evaluating the potential for other teachers to replicate this unit, there are definitely areas of success and areas that need improvement. The most successful part of the basket weaving unit was having students replicate basket weaving techniques themselves. Not only would this be the one of the simplest parts of my study to replicate, as I had utilized and modified the basket weaving lesson written by the Siletz Tribe, but it also proved to be one of the most engaging parts of the entire unit. Little modification was needed, even for students who were on IEPs or 504s and usually required some sort of accommodation. Every student was able to replicate the basic weaving technique and produce a stunning final product.

On the other hand, the biggest challenge throughout this unit was trying to encourage deeper and more meaningful connections to diverse cultures, in this case the Siletz Tribe. This limitation of the study could be due to a variety of factors: not enough scaffolding or background material about the Siletz culture, students not understanding the objectives or prompts, or simply a lack of motivation to write long, thought-out answers to basic questions. It is hard to pinpoint

the exact reason, but the fact of the matter is that more time needs to be spent on developing this aspect of the unit in order to develop more substantial results.

Conclusion

As a White, female educator who has spent the majority of my life in ethnically homogenous areas in Oregon, diversity and multiculturalism in education continues to be at the forefront of my practices and pedagogy. While many strides have been made to incorporate more multicultural perspectives and practices in education, and the plethora of studies that suggest its positive impact on both students and teachers, there is still room for improvement. My research aims to not just incorporate multicultural education in the art classroom, but strive to find the best practices and methods for ethnically homogenous classrooms and communities as well.

In the end, I found that students engaged with diverse material more enthusiastically when they were given hands-on experiences. The art of basket weaving and the amount of time and effort that goes into each piece was appreciated more when students were able to be part of the process themselves, which also made the final product that much more satisfying. Students also developed a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and knowledge when they were exposed to community members from diverse backgrounds. Inviting a guest speaker from the Siletz Tribe was much more enriching to student learning than anything I could have taught from a screen, as personal narratives, stories, and experiences resonated deeper than the surface level material that I had shown them. If utilizing diverse voices and perspectives can create such an impact on a small group of students, then advocating for every classroom across the country to do the same might just change our entire framework of education for the better.

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