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Multiculturalism & multicultural education : where do minority teachers teaching minorities fit?

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Multiculturalism & Multicultural Education:
Where Do Minority Teachers Teaching Minorities Fit?

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Abstract

Upon the abundance of literature pertaining to multiculturalism and multicultural education, there appeared to be a large gap in the research: how do minority teachers teach minority students when in reality, they are both the majority? In an attempt to fill a portion of the gap, a study was conducted at Fremont Elementary in Salinas where not only the teachers and students were predominantly Latino, but the community as well. Key elements for the study consisted of teacher surveys and one-on-one interviews with both students and teachers. Ultimately, a research report filled with the analyzed data was created and presented to the Liberal Studies faculty at California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) with the intent of providing research that appeared to be missing in regards to multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Backstory

Within my first semester at CSUMB, I couldn't help but notice the great deal of emphasis placed upon multiculturalism and diversity. It made me realize that throughout my entire academic career, I couldn't think of a school, let alone one class, that incorporated multiculturalism. Unless of course, learning about ancient civilizations in social studies counts. This realization in connection with my dream of becoming a teacher really made me think; how am I expected to connect with students without having the slightest clue about their culture? How do I even begin to bridge together the cultural gaps between not only my future students and myself, but the students coming from different backgrounds?

The fact that I couldn't recall a single multicultural experience while in school as a child, or even at the community college level, really bothered me. Was it because the teachers didn't consider it to be relevant? It wasn't as if standardized tests were as frequent as they are now. I just couldn't wrap my brain around why it wasn't incorporated within the classroom environment especially since a majority of the schools I attended were made up of such diverse backgrounds. Clearly, there was something worth questioning on the level of teachers – where was the culture? What was their perspectives on it?

Growing up, I was raised to always embrace both my culture as well as the culture of those around me. However, that was in result of my upbringing. It had nothing to do with my schooling. I wonder what kind of person I would be now had multicultural education been a part of my academic career as a child. I feel that there is so much to learn about people; everyone has their own story to tell and because I personally missed out on both my peers' and teachers' stories, I'm making up for lost time here at college.

By reflecting on my time at CSUMB along with the values associated with multicultural education, I have decided to dig deeper in an effort to answer all my questions concerning my lack of

multiculturalism as a child. I plan on carrying out this goal by interviewing students and teachers at a particular elementary school and identifying their perspectives on multicultural education in terms of whether or not they find it relevant to their lives and in the classroom.

Literature Review:

The United States is one of the most diverse countries with its population coming from a variety of backgrounds. With such diversity, the concept of multiculturalism has been integrated within education in order to teach children from different walks of life. However, multiculturalism and multicultural education are both frequently debated topics considering that their perceptions vary from person to person. While the notion of educating America's youth about its diverse makeup is often portrayed as beneficial to society, research on minorities teaching the minority who wind up being the majority is rather limited, if at all available.

What Is Multiculturalism/Multicultural Education?

To define multiculturalism, and multicultural education is a difficult task because these are terms that each person interprets differently. According to McDonough (2008), multiculturalism addresses plenty of controversial issues such as racism, discrimination, imperialism, colonialism, affirmative action, as well as individual and collective rights. Multicultural education has been defined as “a particular ethico-political attitude or ideological stance that one constructs in order to confront and engage the world critically and challenge power relations” (Camp & Oesterreich, 2010, p. 25). In order for children to not only understand how to engage the world critically and challenge power relations but also maintain meaningful relationships across diverse groups, Pica-Smith (2009) found that a need for prejudicial deconstruction is imperative. Reducing prejudices while emphasizing positive intergroup relations are intrinsic to multicultural education frameworks (Pica-Smith, 2009) as is sharing life experiences being that everyone has a different story that is unique to who they are (Camp & Oesterreich, 2010). These studies suggest that multiculturalism emphasizes the importance of both addressing and understanding the diverse around us by voicing our own experiences.

Multiculturalism collectively is a tool used to create social awareness as well as social justice. Camp & Oesterreich (2010) refer to social justice as a “revolution of everyday life” meaning that one has the ability to interpret and transform the world in an effort to question and change existing

inequities (p. 23). In addition, Gorski (2008) identifies social justice as an institutional matter that can only be secured through comprehensive school reform. On the contrary, multicultural education is sometimes interpreted as a hegemonic device meaning that it “secures a continued position of power and leadership for the dominant groups in society” (Garza & Crawford, 2005, p. 600). Thus, while social justice is a component of multiculturalism and multicultural education, there is the possibility that it can have an opposite effect in promoting just one dominant group.

Despite the endless amount of interpretations of what multiculturalism is, and multicultural education is, it is not just about teaching children about other cultures. Camp & Oesterreich's (2010) study found that it is about respecting and appreciating the “diverse funds of knowledge” each student brings when entering the classroom, bridging together the curriculum and the lives of students, identifying social inequities, as well as becoming actively involved in improving the quality of life for the oppressed population (p. 25). Therefore, multiculturalism and multicultural education are much deeper concepts that require a special amount of time and attention.

Multiculturalism/Multicultural Education in the Classroom

In theorizing whether or not educating America's children about different cultures, including their own, research has generally been in favor of implementing it within classrooms. According to Pica-Smith (2009), schools are seen as “sites of identity” where children are able to learn about themselves and others (p. 38). With many cultures, children are socialized at infancy into community beliefs that help facilitate a child's understanding of who they are in the world (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008). By incorporating multicultural education within the classroom, students are able to form positive intergroup relationships which then have positive academic effects for children of all backgrounds in ethnically and racially heterogeneous school settings (Pica-Smith, 2009). Brown & Souto-Manning (2008) also confirm that social identities are formed when children interact with their peers in school further supporting the relevance of incorporating multiculturalism within the classroom.

Given that classrooms are made up of such diverse children, to assume one type of approach to

teaching multiculturalism isn't realistic. "Education is not neutral" (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008, p. 38) in the sense that one size most certainly does not fit all. Thus, when teaching multiculturalism is imperative to appreciate that "each [student] is unique in their walking of this earth, each an entire universe, each somehow sacred; this recognition asks us to reject any action that treats other people like objects, anything that thingifies human beings. It demands that we embrace the humanity of every student" (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008, p. 38).

Multicultural Education in Baltimore, Maryland

As mention before, the risk in implementing multiculturalism is creating a monocultural environment. In a study conducted on African-American educators in a predominantly African-American elementary school, Lipman (1995) emphasized the level of academic excellence reached when children are surrounded by elements of their own culture. Within the school's hallways, African and African-American culture and history were apparent as well as African heritage and values within the classroom (Lipman, 1995). Also, teachers opened themselves up to their students, sharing their feelings and personal experiences (Lipman, 1995). By incorporating such an approach to education, Lipman writes that "teachers teach children, not subjects, taking responsibility for the development of their characters and demonstrating concern for their well-being" (Lipman, 1995, p. 16) which further emphasizes the previously mentioned notion that education is not neutral.

So, how do students achieve success in this particular education setting? Like multiculturalism and multicultural education, the notion of academic excellence is up for personal interpretation. However, in this particular study, academic excellence consisted of cultural and social competencies that readied "students to be effective members of their communities to contribute to productive social change" as established by parents, educators, and scholars of color (Lipman, 1995, p. 4). By achieving such a level of excellence, the curriculum within this particular study was African-American centered in addition to the school's environment acknowledging what Lipman (1995) refers to as "culturally relevant notions of academic success" (p. 21). Overall, students were able to recognize that they were

able to academically excel without having to give up their cultural identity; their culture had been integrated with what it meant to be successful.

On the contrary, what kind of message does this send to students? Although striving to correlate academic excellence with the predominant culture, the school environment in this particular study shows no evidence of learning about other cultures other than their own. By focusing on only one specific culture, despite the minority being the majority, students aren't taught how to understand nor interact with cultures different from their own. With that being said, this particular study appears monocultural in its focus, which some may argue goes completely against the notion of multiculturalism and multicultural education and in turn, and defeats the overall purpose of creating social awareness and social justice.

Multicultural Education in the Midwestern United States

In teaching multicultural education, there is the undeniable instance where one might be unable to culturally identify with their students. Hyland's (2010) study focused on a white teacher's commitment to become a culturally relevant teacher within a predominantly African-American school and community in the Midwestern U.S. In an attempt to better reach her students, the teacher went against the institution's culture whose faculty said that their students weren't capable and instead allowed her students to become involved "in the culturally relevant practice of critically examining knowledge in spite of the school culture" (Hyland, 2010, p. 103). Not only were the students valued and seen as individuals, but also they were able to critically look at issues within the world in addition to the community by examining issues brought to the classroom through community projects in which the teacher was involved (Hyland, 2010). Despite her colleagues negative perceptions on their predominantly African-American student population, this teacher disregarded the school's culture and held her students accountable while engaging them in project-based learning.

While this white teacher strove to implement her culturally relevant beliefs while incorporating not just the African-American perspective within the classroom but others, she expressed and exhibited

a variety of cultural biases and fear. For example, although the teacher had been involved in community based projects and workshops about multiculturalism, she admitted that she had never reached out to the students' families, or the African-American community apart from the organizations holding the projects. Hyland (2010) found that the diversity within the students' lives was hard for the teacher to reconcile due to her being influenced by dominant messages about a monolithic Black culture. Also, she feared that because she was white, her attempts to reach out would be seen as disingenuous while creating a sense of shame for her students should she open up a discussion of differences (Hyland, 2010). Although the study depicts a scenario in which a white teacher is rejecting the school's culture of discrediting the students' capabilities, she still is unable to be the culturally relevant teacher she desired to be due to her cultural background and biases which stemmed from fear. Thus, another risk in implementing multiculturalism is allowing one's cultural biases to take over and in turn, completely disregarding the purpose of multicultural education as a whole.

Lack of Multiculturalism/Multicultural Education in Classrooms

Multiculturalism and multicultural education within the classroom is something many schools and educators strive to implement. However, in some cases students, faculty and administrators “thought that the idea of multiculturalism and multicultural education was more appealing than the actual practice of it” (Wong & Fernandez, 2008, p. 10). Assaf, Garza, & Battle (2010) also found that underneath the positive discussion of diversity, there was a great sense of ambivalence about where diversity will lead the individual along with what exactly is their responsibility to it.

There is a sense of resistance against multiculturalism and multicultural education in some school environments. According to Wong & Fernandez (2008), there are two forms of resistance: passive, where one refuses to address or engage on multicultural education topics, and outright hostility on the other where one denounces certain multicultural education concepts. Perhaps the cause for resistance is the fear both teacher educators and educators harbor. As mentioned in a previous example of a white teacher teaching predominantly African-American students, she was afraid to reach out in

fear of offending the families of her students. Teacher educators have expressed uncertainty in terms of how to address diversity in their field-based courses and often struggle with preparing future teachers with the realities of the classroom (Assaf, Garza & Battle, 2010). Teacher educators fear that focusing on the challenges, especially with diversity issues, will discourage teacher candidates (Assaf, Garza & Battle, 2010). Instead, teacher educators focus on helping teachers understand that respecting diversity is meaningless if the respect does not inform action (Gorski, 2008). As a result, there is a high possibility that teachers enter the field without a full understanding of how to handle the challenges of diversity, allowing students to experience a lack of connectedness with both their teachers and peers.

In addition to teacher resistance to or lack of preparation to teach multiculturalism and multicultural education within the classrooms, another reason it isn't done is simply because it is not covered on the state exams therefore not a priority in the curriculum. According to Garza & Garza (2010), students in a predominantly Latino school were deemed successful if they had high test passing rates while little to no evidence of culturally relevant teaching was present. Bussert-Webb's (2009) study found that in schools serving mostly low-income English language learners, extensive preparation for high-stakes tests were highly enforced whereas non-tested subjects like multiculturalism were eliminated. Therefore, multicultural education is placed on the back burner while an emphasis on passing state exams is enforced.

The lack of cultural implementation within the classroom has many negative implications. For instance, to disregard a student's culture as a whole and only focus on things such as testing suggests assimilation and a monocultural environment. According to Garza & Crawford (2005), "children are not only evaluated by how well their cultural capital conforms to that of the dominant group, but are disciplined to adopt these status relations through various symbolic and over practices entrenched within the school culture" (p. 602). In a study conducted by Brown & Souto-Manning (2008), Latino children often internalize the views and perceptions of mainstream America, causing them to see themselves as inferior. Furthermore, if a teacher provides an unwelcoming environment for not only

English language learners, but also for those of different cultures, observing students begin to take on the same biases that such an atmosphere suggests (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008). Brown & Souto-Manning (2008) state that “these negative attitudes then are reproduced in children's play and interactions with Latino children” (p. 37) – or even with other children whose culture is perceived as the minority. Garza & Garza (2010) also add that within their study where multiculturalism was not identified, there was a lack of teachers who cared for their students given that multiculturalism allows for one to share and understand the culture of the students. Ultimately, children are receptive of the attitudes that surround them.

Conclusion

Through the literature, the importance and benefits of multiculturalism and multicultural education are illuminated along with the effects of not having such concepts incorporated for students of such a diverse country. However, there is concern of how to approach multiculturalism and multicultural education when minority teachers are teaching minority children, who in actuality, are the majority. Unfortunately, among the vast amount of literature pertaining to multiculturalism and multicultural education, there are significant gaps in terms of addressing this particular situation. How can these concepts be implemented within the classroom without contradicting the purpose of multiculturalism, and catering to a mono-cultural environment?

Community Partnership

In an effort to address the literature gap pertaining to minority teachers teaching multiculturalism and multicultural education to minority students who in turn, are the majority, I decided to work with Fremont Elementary in Salinas. This particular school's teachers, students, and administrators are predominantly Latino in a community where Latino culture is rich in its abundance. According to the principal's mission statement, Fremont Elementary serves as “a community committed to cultivating peace and the value of bilingualism; we will teach all of our students to be socially responsible and to attain excellence by engaging them in a world-class multicultural education.” With that being said, the school claims to both encourage and implement multicultural education which is ideal considering that I'm trying to figure out how it is done since the literature is nearly nonexistent.

Erin Sawyer, the Bilingual Resource teacher, is involved in multiple areas within the school. For example, she acts as the principal when needed, coordinates the after school program, and has taught 2nd grade in addition to her role as a Bilingual Research teacher. Due to Sawyer's extreme involvement, I decided to team up with her in addressing multiculturalism and multicultural education at Fremont Elementary, especially since she recognized the importance of it in regards to the students.

Together, Sawyer and I plan to compile a series of questions concerning multiculturalism and multicultural education. These surveys will be presented at a staff meeting after providing a brief explanation on the purpose, which is to collect and measure their perspectives on culture within the classroom. With the surveys, we hope to identify whether or not the teachers, who are predominantly Latino, find multiculturalism and multicultural education significant to both themselves, and their predominantly Latino students. This type of data is crucial given that literature specific to this particular situation is unavailable.

With the support of Sawyer, I will also be able to create a series of questions directed toward the students in order to understand their views concerning culture. Because she has much more experience

in communicating with younger children, her knowledge in this process is essential.

Ideally, our goals are to determine multiculturalism and multicultural education's relevance within the school. If it is, ultimately I am trying to identify *how* so – are multiple cultures being incorporated? Or, is it just the dominant culture assuming that both the teacher and student can very well connect through that, thus being mono-cultural and contradicting the school's mission statement? However, there is the possibility that multiculturalism and multicultural education aren't relevant in certain classrooms; my goal is to figure out *why* given the special circumstances of the school's makeup.

Provided our plan goes accordingly, we find that the data gathered will be beneficial for not only those in attendance at Fremont Elementary, but future teachers who may find themselves in similar environments. Our efforts just might be the push needed for multiculturalism and multicultural education to be revived in a school where it may have reached a halt. Essentially, I am striving to provide Latino students the opportunity to not only learn about their own cultures, but others despite being disconnected in their predominantly school and community. However, my course of action is relatively small being that it is starting off in the form of collective data but I am optimistic that this will open the doors for further studies to be done so that minority children are able to fully experience all the diverse backgrounds our nation has to offer.

Project Plan

Goals

The primary goal of this project is to collect data regarding the perceptions on multiculturalism and multicultural education from both teachers and students. From the research in this project, and the literature review, I found that there is a large gap in the information as far as how multicultural education was implemented in a school where the minority was the majority – in this case, how was multicultural education being taught, if at all, where both the teachers and students were predominantly Latino? Ultimately, my project is designed to gather the data in an effort to begin filling said gap.

Context

My project will take place at Fremont Elementary in East Salinas, CA. Within the eastern part of Salinas resides a predominantly Latino population; many of whose youth attends the specified school. Fremont is a K-6 institution that also has two Head Start programs, one Early Childhood Education program, and two Monterey County Special Education classes. It is imperative that my project reflects both a school and community in which the minority is the majority. Given the makeup of Salinas, the focus will be on the Latino population.

Participants

According to my community partner, there are about 30 teachers at Fremont Elementary – most of which are Latino. Each of the teachers will be involved in providing feedback to me on their thoughts concerning both multiculturalism and multicultural education. The students I will interview as a part of my project will consist of two-three randomly selected students from grades 4-6; preferably one boy and one girl. I chose these particular grades with the assumption that they would be able to better articulate themselves when talking about things like culture, traditions, race, etc.

Procedure

The first part of the project will take place within a regularly scheduled staff meeting. With my community partner, together we will present the survey (see Appendix A) that will evaluate the

teacher's perspective on multiculturalism and multicultural education. Attached to the survey will be the opportunity for teachers to leave their contact information should they be interested in meeting with me for a one-on-one interview. Depending on the feedback received, I will schedule interviews with semi-structured questions (see Appendix B) with said teachers in order to further examine the answers provided on the survey on a more in depth basis.

The second part of the project will consist of also interviewing two-three students from grades 4-6 to understand their perspectives on culture with semi-structured questions (see Appendix C). The interviews will take place both individually and outside of class in a distraction-free environment. Although I plan to have the interview conducted in a conversational manner, I will start off with a few standard open-ended questions.

Depending on the schedule and time constraints of the teachers and their students, this particular process can take up to two-three weeks. Ultimately, once these surveys and interviews are completed, I will have compiled enough data to analyze in terms of what teachers believed in terms of multiculturalism and multicultural education. In addition, what students define culture as and whether or not they believe it's incorporated within their classrooms.

Roles

Overall, my personal role in the project is rather involved. I will be creating the teacher's survey as well as scheduling the interviews with my participants. However, my community partner's role comes into play when meeting with the staff and creating interview questions for the students. Given her previous teaching experience, she will be able to assist me in wording the questions so that they are easier for the students to understand.

Deliverable

Once the project has been completed, as mentioned, I will have gathered data with the focus on multiculturalism and multicultural education in a predominantly Latino community where both the students and staff are also predominantly Latino. Once I have fully analyzed the data, I will write up a

research report that will serve as an informational resource for the Liberal Studies faculty at CSUMB, who will then assess the effectiveness of the report on in terms of whether or not it was useful for their own courses concerning multiculturalism. (See Appendix D for complete Research Report).

Assessment

The method that I will be utilizing to assess my attempt in filling a gap within multiculturalism and multicultural education literature will be a brief survey for the Liberal Studies faculty at CSUMB. The survey (see Appendix E) itself was attached to the research report (see Appendix D), which is a summary of the data that was compiled project. The purpose of the survey is for the Liberal Studies faculty to assess the effectiveness of the data; i.e., is it something worth taking back to their own classrooms?

Ultimately, the survey qualifies as the best way to assess my project considering that it's a small dose of data presented to hopefully begin filling what I found to be a large informational gap in multiculturalism and multicultural education literature. In presenting this data to my educators, the data may raise concerns on issues that may or may have not been addressed within particular multicultural courses in the Liberal Studies major. The survey is the best choice in quickly evaluating the overall effectiveness of the research report given the faculty's time constraints which may prevent them from having an in depth one-on-one discussion before deciding whether or not they may implement the issues (in result of the data) within their own courses, if they don't do so already.

Utilizing the idea of a survey is beneficial to my improvement in the project's future progress. For instance, the survey will allow me to see areas in which I may have fell short, or even excelled. In addition, the survey will suffice as an open forum for the Liberal Studies faculty to provide suggestions in order to achieve the specified aims of the project.

Results

Out of the 6 professors I presented my research report to, 4 were able to evaluate it with the survey tool provided. When looking over the survey results, I found that while my professors found the data to be thoroughly researched and analyzed, 50% suggested incorporating the literature review within the report. Due to the missing element, half disagreed that the research was successful in filling a portion of what I found to be a large literature gap in multiculturalism and multicultural education

given that it was difficult to determine since they were unable to compare the new found data with said literature. In addition, 75% agreed that I could have incorporated more data such as the teacher demographics.

On the topic of whether my research presented issues and themes Liberal Studies professors could bring into their own classrooms, 75% agreed whereas 25% disagreed due to the lack of relevance in the particular courses they instruct. Furthermore, 25% strongly agreed that the research raised concern for gaps often not covered in multicultural education for pre-service teachers while 50% agreed, and 25% disagreed. Rather than concern, the disagreeing party found that the data provided more insight into barriers and divergent perspectives that teachers ought to learn how to show.

When gathering the feedback provided by my professors, I realized the importance of both the student and teacher perspectives. The majority agreed that it made the data interesting. However, if I could redo the research report over again, I would definitely include the literature review. I not only understand, but sympathize with the difficulty some of my professors encountered in trying to evaluate whether or not I met my primary goal of filling a gap in multiculturalism and multicultural education literature. My only reason for not doing so was the length of the literature review in combination with the time constraint on the assessment process.

The overall Capstone experience was like nothing I have ever endured before. For starters, it allowed me to become not only educated about issues I was genuinely concerned about, but it enabled me to play a much more active role in answering my own questions and concerns. Having teamed up with my community partner, a Bilingual Resource Teacher at Fremont Elementary, I received plenty of feedback and support in my efforts to connect with the teachers and students. By speaking with teachers on a one-on-one basis allowed for me to get a much clearer insight of what it's like in the classroom when trying to incorporate the concept of multiculturalism. It is not easy as some make it seem. What was most empowering for me was having the opportunity to interact with the students especially since children rarely have filters. In most cases, for every question I had, they gave me an

answer, eager to talk about anything and everything. Often adults seldom see the world from the eyes of a child but in result of my Capstone project, I was able to experience both perspectives which was more than I could ever ask for.

In my speaking with those at Fremont Elementary, I learned that despite the abundance of Latino culture in the community, the school rarely experienced any of it, let alone other cultures. The students, especially those in the higher grades, were not only aware of existing cultures but were able to convey the importance in learning about them. In learning this, it was both inspiring and disheartening. Here, we had predominantly Latino students in a predominantly Latino school that was placed in the middle of a community that was almost identical to Mexico and they had yet to experience a world outside of it all despite their desire to do so. While many teachers agreed in the importance of learning about other cultures, a majority of the students claimed to never have experienced it within their own classrooms. With that, I realized that while each perspective may hold truth, there was a gap somewhere that prevented the students from retaining the multicultural education teachers said they implemented.

In order to explore that gap in the future, we must look the way in which multiculturalism is being presented. For instance, a way in which I can further expand this particular Capstone project would be to observe a class from each grade level over a period of time to determine that if multicultural education was being implemented, then examine how it was integrated into the curriculum. Also, I would make note of how the students from each grade level responded to the material. Those particular observations on top of teacher and student interviews would provide a much more concrete idea of how multiculturalism is being taught in regards to the minority population. Given the results, a curriculum or a book of lesson plans in how to implement multiculturalism would be provided to the teacher participants.

What was most challenging for me in the overall Capstone experience was my urgency to find answers to a variety of issues that weren't entirely connected. My project must have changed at least

twice before ultimately deciding that this was the direction I wanted to go in. Even so, it went from multiculturalism resistance to how exactly was multiculturalism to be taught in a school where the minority is the majority. With all the sudden changes came the challenge of how to address the participants that had agreed to work with me. In result, the biggest challenge of all was encouraging teacher participation on the survey even after the help of my community partner and an administrator. Still, I am uncertain as to why there was such hesitation.

Nevertheless, the challenges made the project that much more rewarding. I realized that in result of my curiosities, questions, and concerns, I had the capacity to open up a discussion for both educators, and future educators to take part in. With that, I recognized my passion for such topics pertaining to diversity, social justice, and multiculturalism. I credit a majority of that to CSUMB, as it has helped shape me into a woman I wouldn't have recognized in the Fall of 2009 when I first began my journey as a teacher.

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Appendix A. Teacher Participant Survey

Name (optional): _____ Grade: _____

Phone number (optional): _____ Best time to reach me: _____

**Multicultural Education within the Classroom
Teacher Participant Survey**

Instructions: Please check the best answer from the choices listed below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Culture is important to me as an individual.				
I identify myself with a particular culture.				
It is important for me to learn about cultures other than my own.				
It is important for my students to learn about cultures other than their own.				
Incorporating the students' culture in the classroom allows for them to academically succeed.				
When a student is able to culturally identify with someone or something in a lesson, their self-esteem increases.				
Culture is crucial to self-identity.				

<p>Multicultural education is a political movement & process that attempts to secure social justice for historically & presently undeserved & disenfranchised students.</p>				
<p>Multicultural education insists that comprehensive school reform can be achieved only through a critical analysis of systems of power and privilege.</p>				
<p>The purpose of multicultural education is to eliminate educational inequities.</p>				
<p>I find it difficult incorporating cultures I don't personally identify with.</p>				
<p>Culture within the classroom shouldn't be focused on as much because the students already experience it first hand at home.</p>				
<p>Multiculturalism is seen on the California Standards Tests.</p>				
<p>In my experience, I found that some students were</p>				

resistant to multicultural education.				
In my experience, I found that some of my colleagues were resistant to multicultural education.				
Multicultural education is good education for <i>all</i> students.				
It is important to celebrate diversity.				
Pre-service teachers should be taught how to incorporate culture within their future classrooms.				
Multicultural education was emphasized during my studying to be a teacher.				
Multiculturalism is a factor in achieving social justice.				
Multiculturalism is a topic that is difficult to talk about.				

Comments:

Appendix B. Semi-Structured Teacher Interview Questions

1. In my research, I found that while many educators are in favor of multiculturalism, there are some that are resistant to it. In your experience, why do you think that is?
2. What do you believe are the benefits or disadvantages of incorporating multiculturalism within the classroom?
3. How do you, if at all, incorporate multiculturalism when the school is predominantly one culture – in this case, Latino?

Appendix C. Semi-Structured Student Interview Questions

1. What grade are you in? How do you like it? Is it easy or hard?
2. Tell me about your family. Do you have any brothers or sisters? Pets?
3. Do you and your family speak any other languages other than English?
4. Do you know what tradition means? Explain it to me.
5. Do you and your family have any traditions?
6. Have you lived anywhere else other than Salinas? How about your parents?
7. Do you know what the word culture means? Can you try and explain to me what you think it is?
8. Do you see yourself as a certain culture?
9. Do you have any friends that have different cultures than you? If so, did you learn anything from them? Do you guys do things differently, like eat different foods, or celebrate different things?
10. Have you ever heard of racism? Do you know what it means? Try and describe it for me.
11. Do you learn about different cultures and people in class? If so, which kind?
12. Which culture is the most interesting so far? Or, which culture would you like to learn about in class?
13. Do you think it's important to learn about different cultures and people different than you? Why or why not?

Appendix D. Research Report Deliverable

Multiculturalism & Multicultural Education:

Where Do Minority Teachers Teaching Minorities Fit?

Within my first semester at California State University Monterey Bay, I couldn't help but notice the great deal of emphasis placed upon multiculturalism and diversity. It made me realize that throughout my entire academic career, I couldn't think of a school, let alone one class, that incorporated multiculturalism. This realization in connection with my dream of becoming a teacher really made me think; how am I expected to connect with students without having the slightest clue about their culture? How do I even begin to bridge together the cultural gaps between not only my future students and myself, but the students coming from different backgrounds?

In researching the topic of multiculturalism and multicultural education, while a majority of the literature emphasized its importance and benefits within the classroom, I found that there was a large gap in the information. Not only was there a lack of literature pertaining to teacher resistance, there was little to no data on how multiculturalism was implemented in a school where the minority was the majority. An occurring theme within education is that surely one size does not fit all. Given that, are we allowed to assume the same for multiculturalism?

Ultimately, I focused more on how multicultural education was being taught, if at all, where both the teachers and students were predominantly Latino as well as the overall community. Being that the literature on the topic was scarce, I had absolutely no reservations in regards to the results. All that was expected was an overall awareness of the issue at hand with the idea that it was something worthy of being addressed in speaking about multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Method

Using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, I analyzed 14 teacher responses to a survey of questions pertaining to multiculturalism and multicultural education along with 3 teacher

interviews, and 7 student interviews, focusing on the ways in which culture was implemented in a predominantly Latino school.

Data Collection

With my community partner, I attended a staff meeting where I presented the survey in an effort to evaluate the teachers' perspective on multiculturalism and multicultural education. The survey consisted of 21 questions with responses measured on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Out of about 30 teachers, 14 completed the survey in its entirety. With the responses provided, I compiled the results and converted them into percentages.

Attached with the survey was a sign up sheet for one-on-one interviews. Of the 14 teachers who responded to the survey, 3 agreed to sit down and speak with me. The interviews were based on the following questions:

4. In my research, I found that while many educators are in favor of multiculturalism, there are some that are resistant to it. In your experience, why do you think that is?
5. What do you feel are the benefits, or disadvantages of incorporating multiculturalism within the classroom?
6. How do you, if at all, implement multiculturalism in a school is predominantly one culture – in this case, Latino?

In analyzing the responses provided by the teachers, I examined the audio recordings by identifying keywords and themes. For example, in response to multiculturalism resistance, themes varied from lack of time and loyalty to the United States to simply not knowing how to teach it.

To provide a well-rounded perception of multiculturalism within the classroom, I interviewed a total of 7 students; two 4th graders, two 5th graders, and three 6th graders. Each student was chosen at random and like the teacher participants, will remain anonymous throughout the study. The student interviews consisted of about 14 questions in connection with language, tradition, culture, and racism. In evaluating their responses, I examined the audio recordings in search of keywords and themes.

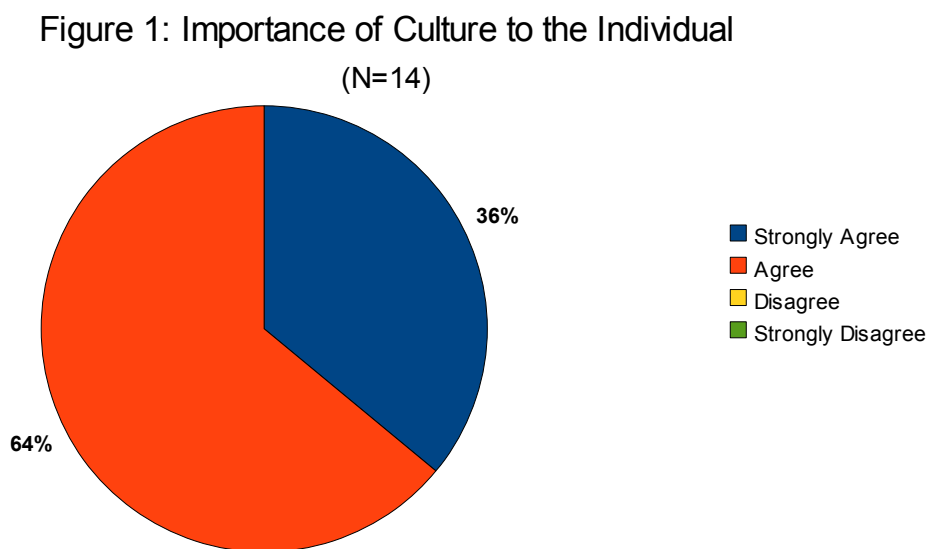
By identifying the most dominant themes, I was able to compare them with the not so common responses while interpreting the multicultural atmosphere within the school.

Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to gather data on how multiculturalism and multicultural education was being taught, if at all, where both the teachers and students are predominantly Latino. The data itself was to be used as a stepping stone to fill the large gap I found pertaining to multiculturalism in a school where the minority is the majority.

Teacher Surveys

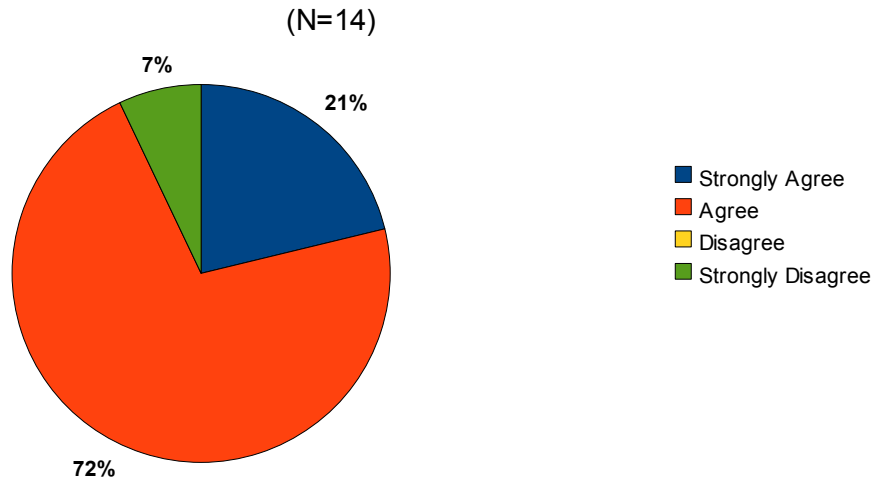
Notably, the majority appeared to be in favor of multiculturalism and multicultural education within the classroom. However, there were a few responses to particular questions which showed otherwise. Before indulging in said differences, in Figure 1, 64% of teachers agreed that culture was important to them as individuals whereas 36% strongly agreed. When asked if they identified with a particular culture, 29% strongly agreed, 42% agreed, and 29% disagreed.



While more than half of the participants strongly agreed that it was important to learn about cultures other than their own, students included, 72% agreed that students were more likely to achieve

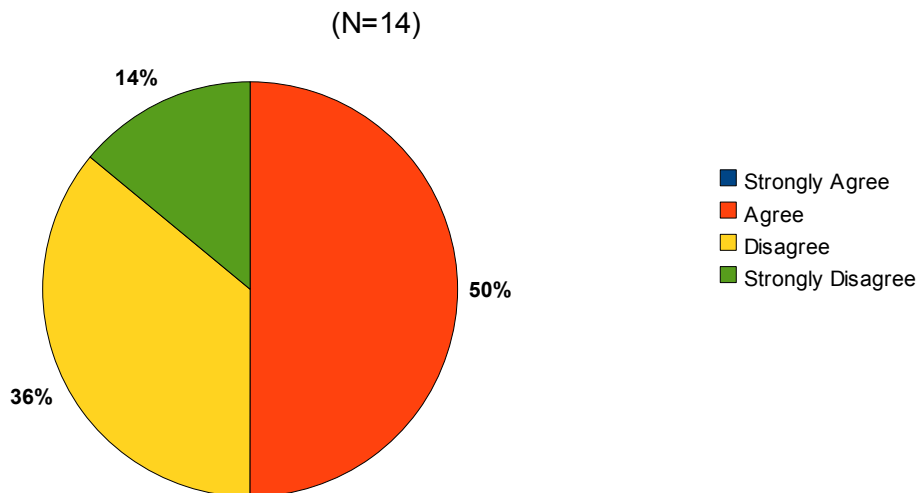
academic success if their own culture was incorporated within the classroom as seen in Figure 2. With that being said, 57% strongly agreed that when a student is able to culturally identify with someone or something in a lesson, their self-esteem increases.

Figure 2: Incorporating the Students' Culture Allows for Academic Success



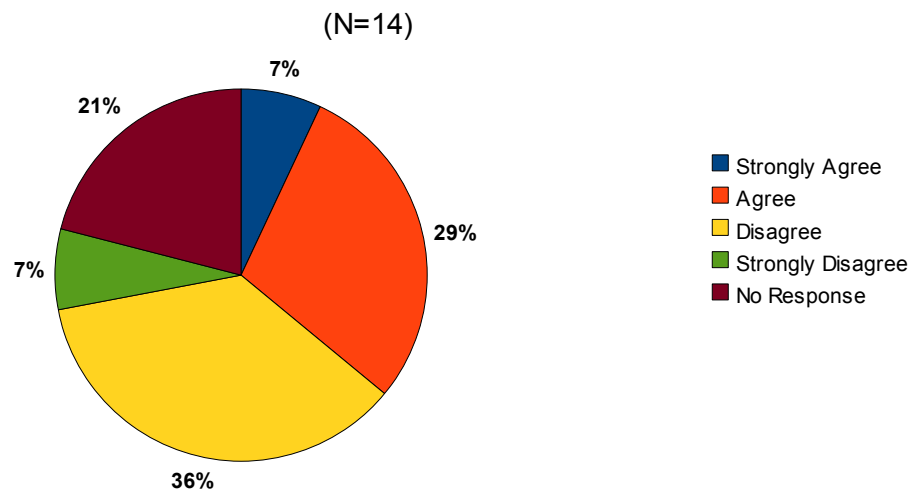
In whether culture was crucial to self-identity, 50% of the teachers strongly agreed that it was whereas 29% agreed, and 21% disagreed. When the idea of multicultural education's purpose was suggested as a way to eliminate educational inequities, 50% agreed, 36% disagreed, and 14% strongly disagreed (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Multicultural Education Eliminates Educational Inequities



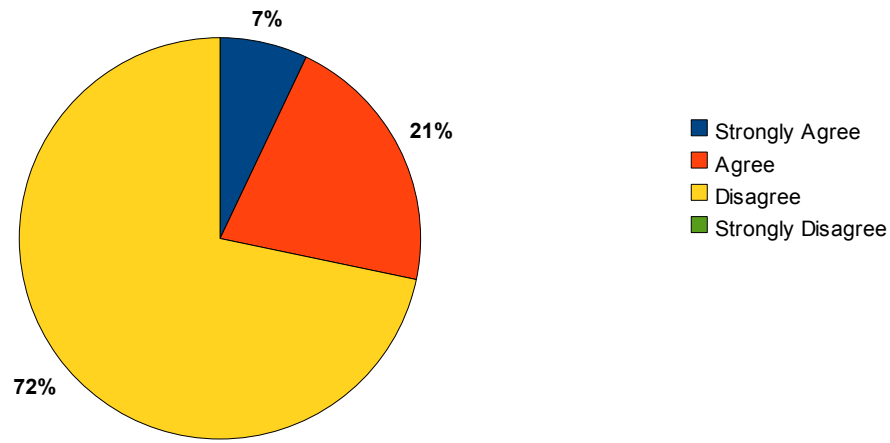
As discovered through research, often the reason why multiculturalism and multicultural education are absent from the classroom is either due to lack of time, discomfort in teaching about a culture one doesn't personally identify with, or simply because it isn't a topic being tested by the state. Among these particular participants, 42% agreed that it was difficult to incorporate cultures they didn't personally identify with whereas 29% both disagreed and strongly disagreed. On the topic of standardized tests, 7% strongly agreed that multiculturalism was included while 29% agreed, 36% disagreed, 7% strongly disagreed, and 21% had no response (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Multiculturalism is Seen on the California Standards Tests



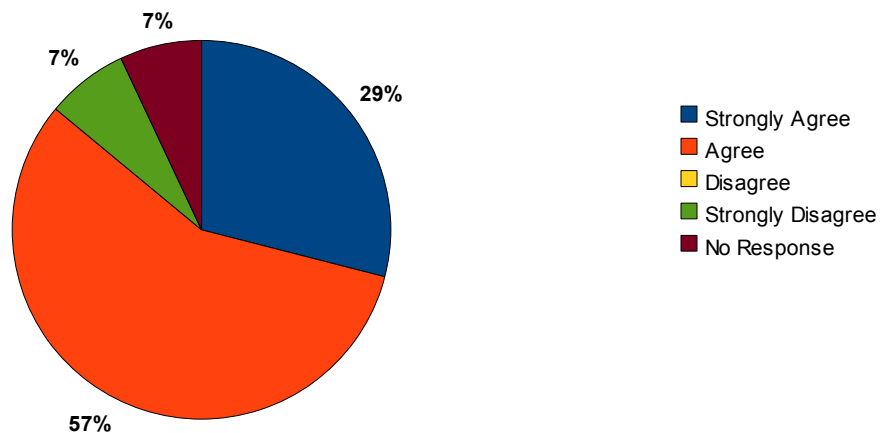
Another reason why multiculturalism and multicultural education are sometimes absent from the classroom is due to either teacher or student resistance, if not both. When the teachers of Fremont Elementary were asked whether or not they had witnessed resistance from their colleagues, 21% strongly agreed, 36% agreed, and 43% disagreed. As for student resistance, 7% strongly agreed that it had been evident at one point or another, whereas 21% agreed and 71% disagreed (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Students Resistant to Multicultural Education
(N=14)



Sequentially, more than half of the participants agreed that multicultural education was good education for all students as opposed to the 21% who strongly agreed, 7% strongly disagreed and 7% had no response. More than half also agreed that it was important to celebrate diversity whereas 29% strongly agreed, and 7% both strongly disagreed and had no response (Figure 6).

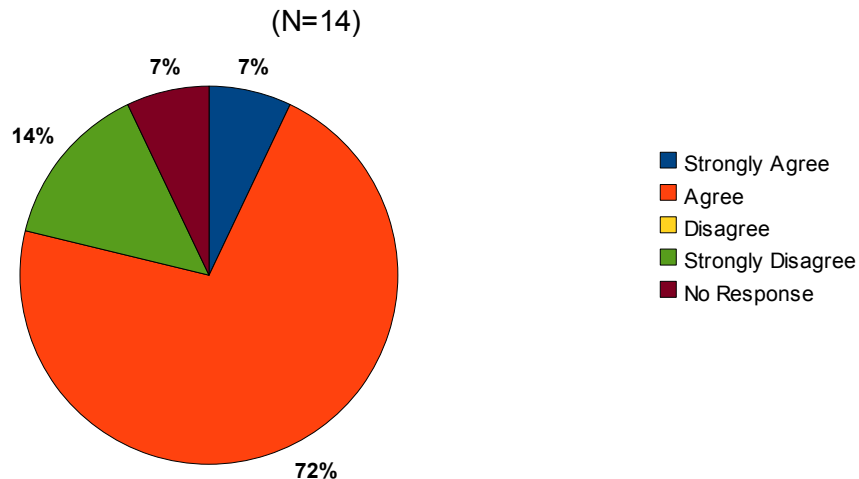
Figure 6: It Is Important to Celebrate Diversity
(N=14)



When the notion of multiculturalism being a factor in achieving social justice was suggested,

72% agreed, 7% both strongly agreed and strongly disagreed while 14% had no response (Figure 7). In connection with the research entailed in my literature review, it was said that multiculturalism and multicultural education was perceived as a difficult topic to discuss. In this case, 2% both agreed and strongly disagreed, 7% had no response, and 64% disagreed.

Figure 7: Multiculturalism is a Part of Achieving Social Justice



Teacher Interviews

Out of the 14 participants, 3 agreed to sit down and speak with me about multiculturalism and multicultural education. When asked why they thought some were resistant to incorporating culture within the classroom, responses included: lack of time, not knowing how to teach it, the need to be loyal to the United States, and other cultures not having any ties to the educator's own culture. "Basically anything other than their own culture is non-existent. If you are not the top white kind of thing, they don't want to know about anything else," said Teacher A, who has taught for over 20 years. Teacher B, having only taught for 2 years, added, "Maybe because they don't know themselves about it so maybe they're not comfortable teaching it, or exploring it. Maybe they feel like they don't have the time to."

On whether or not exposing children to multiculturalism and multicultural education had any benefits, the teachers each agreed that there were plenty. For example, Teacher C, who has also taught

for over 20 years, found that multiculturalism allowed for students to have role models in a situation where one might say, “There's a Hispanic teacher! I can relate to them and they can relate to me. It's like a security blanket.” Teacher A, who identified with cultures like German, French, Russian, Spanish, and Indian, voiced that a benefit was getting to know what was outside of the classroom, and in this case, a predominantly Latino community. She added, “Once you go out of the school, you're gonna go out and meet people of different nationalities and compete for jobs – you're gonna need to know everything, not just about Hispanics.” In addition, Teacher B found that multiculturalism exposed children to different ideas and broadened their minds, giving them more capacities for things whether it be personally, emotionally, or socially. “I think just exposing [students] to different things kind of opens the door for that,” she added.

On the contrary, Teacher B brought light to a downfall in bringing the concept of culture within the classroom. For instance, she described a particular situation where another educator had dedicated an entire year to learning about one culture which increased the risk of promoting monoculture thus defeating the purpose of multiculturalism.

Because each of the 3 teachers agreed that multiculturalism and multicultural education were important to incorporate within the classroom, I asked them how they personally brought it into their own. According to Teacher A, she incorporates topics like racism, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr. with her 1st and 2nd graders. In an effort to get them to understand the reality of racism, Teacher A has passed out index cards that read “No Recess” or “Free Homework Pass” to certain students. When the students begin to question why, or yell that it's unfair, that is when Teacher A says the door for conversation and learning experiences open up.

Teacher B connects multiculturalism within her kindergarten class by reading stories, doing arts & crafts projects, and looking up pictures online pertaining to specific holidays. For example, for St. Patrick's Day, she brought in homemade corn beef and cabbage to share with the students. Teacher B notes that often it's difficult to teach about many holidays because religion is often connected; as a

teacher, one must be mindful as such things because they are in a public setting.

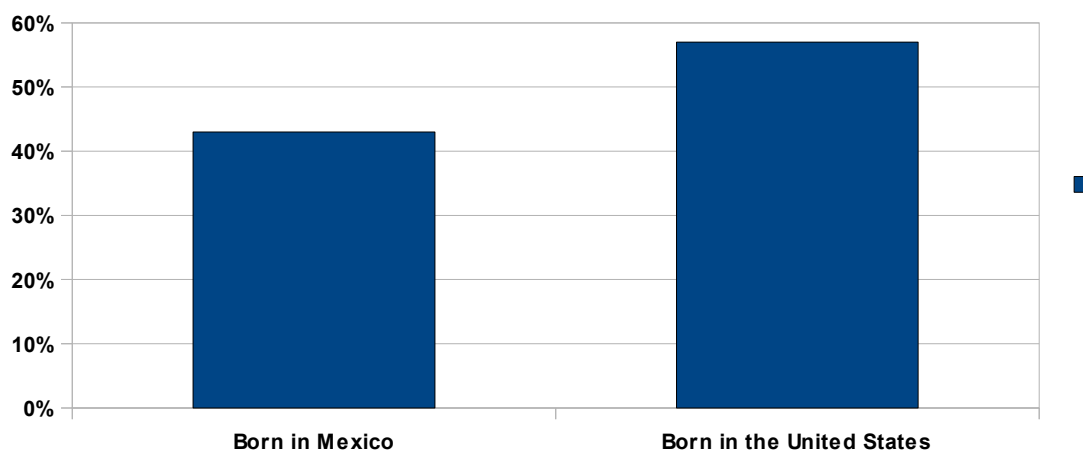
Teacher C, although highly in favor of multiculturalism, said he doesn't get to teach it as often. “We used to try and bring in other cultures but the curriculum is very strict – only reading, writing, math and forget about everything else,” he added. Within his teaching career, he recalls when he was able to include lessons around African-American history, Kwanza, Jewish holidays, Chinese New Year, but “now, not even Cinco de Mayo” is taught in the predominantly Latino school due to testing.

Conclusively, I found that the 3 teachers agreed in multiculturalism and multicultural education being beneficial to children. However, given certain circumstance such as time constraints and standardized tests, some are unable to implement it within their classrooms.

Student Interviews

Of the 7 students, 57% were born in the United States while 43% were born in Mexico (Figure 8). Although each spoke both English and Spanish, 1 student expressed his loss of the Spanish language in result of learning English. It was also found that at least one parent of each participant was either born or raised in Mexico. Of the 7 students, 43% said they had never been to their parents' country.

Figure 8: Students' Birth Place
(N=7)



Among the questions pertaining to family, culture, racism, and what they learn in their classrooms, I asked each student if they knew what the term tradition meant. In many instances, I

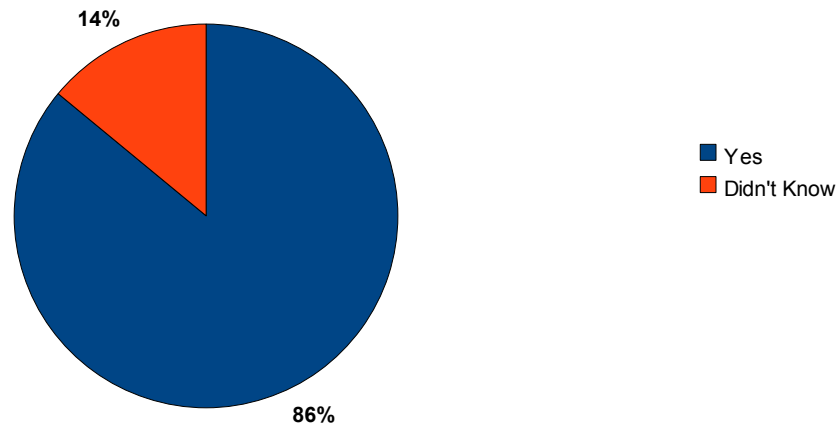
would have to say it in Spanish before they were able to respond. In result, 86% of the students were able to define it and provide examples of their family's own traditions. For instance, all but one student identified making tamales and *posole* for Christmas as a tradition.

On the basis of whether or not the students knew what culture meant, 43% were unaware of what the word meant. However, before encouraging them to take a guess, I pronounced the word in Spanish. Overall, culture was defined as: things someone has done, religion, things a person owns, generations, where someone was born, race, and things someone likes to do. When the topic of personal culture was introduced, a 4th grader referred to his culture as math while a 5th grader said her culture was shopping, and a 6th grader identified his as Filipino, Mexican, and American. When asked if they had friends of different cultures, 86% said yes. The cultures the students perceived as different were on the basis of one's favorite subject in school such as reading, religion, race, and whether one was Mexican or Mexican-American.

To determine whether or not the students had heard of the term racism, I asked each to try and explain it to me. However, 43% claimed to have never heard of the word before our interview. Once I explained what it was, 57% said they had either seen racism or experienced it themselves. When I asked the students if they thought it was important to learn about different cultures, or people whose races were different than their own, 86% said yes while 14% said they didn't know (Figure 9). One of the 4th graders said it was important because “we can see about their feelings or things that they do” A 6th grader emphasized the importance of learning about other cultures because “if you get a job or something and like, if someone from another culture comes up and like, you don't act surprised.” Overall, more than half of the 7 students I interviewed saw the importance in learning about other cultures.

Figure 9: Is It Important to Learn About Other Cultures?

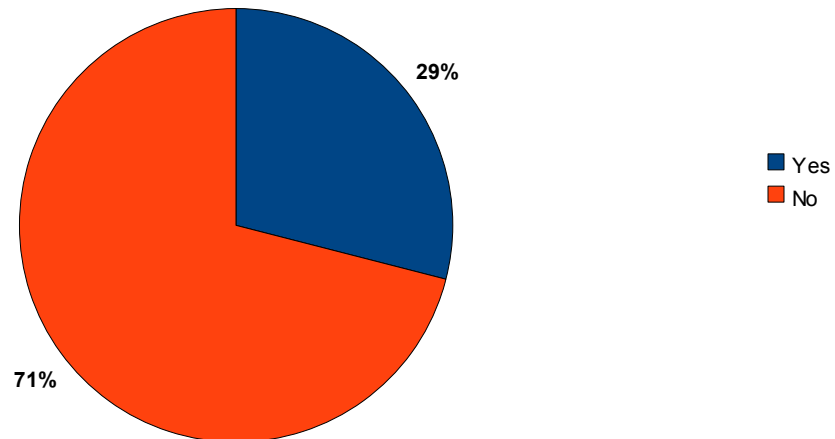
(N=7)



Given that the students seemed enthusiastic in understanding the importance of learning about other cultures, I was surprised to find that 71% claimed they hadn't learned about any while in their current classrooms (Figure 10). According to a 5th grader, his class doesn't “because we're doing the CSTs (California Standards Tests) practice.” Despite the lack of culture within these students' classes, the 71% expressed a great amount of desire in doing so. With that, every student provided cultures they were curious about such as: African-Americans, Europeans, Mexicans, and even those who use American Sign Language.

Figure 10: Do You Learn About Culture in Your Classroom?

(N=7)



Discussion

These findings emphasized the overall role of multiculturalism and multicultural education at Fremont Elementary, a predominantly Latino environment. While a majority of the teachers found it important to celebrate diversity in addition to multiculturalism being a factor in achieving social justice, more than half of 4th, 5th, and 6th graders claimed they didn't learn about cultures within their classrooms. Considering that most teachers felt they implemented multiculturalism, we must question their approach with the mentioned arts & crafts, stories, and photos in terms of effectiveness.

Also, another attribute within this study that must be considered is the kind of message the teacher who for instance, didn't believe celebrating diversity was important nor found multicultural education to be a good education for all students, sends in refusing to elaborate despite their finding that it wasn't a difficult topic to discuss. Perhaps this is an example of why teacher resistance is rarely discussed within the literature. Although teachers are able to admit it, specific reasons in why are seldom provided.

Conclusion and Moving Forward

Within Fremont Elementary, a school in which both the teachers and students are predominantly Latino, I found that the majority was in favor of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Despite living in what may be identified as a monoculture community, there was an overall agreement among teachers and students in regards to the importance of not only learning about other cultures, but also the benefits of doing so. Meanwhile, a majority of the students in the upper grades didn't feel as if though anything related to culture was being brought into the classroom. Ultimately, going back to the primary issue of how multiculturalism is taught in this particular environment, I found that if at all taught, it was covered only during certain times of the year often through arts & crafts, books, and looking up pictures online. Nevertheless, a majority of students were not retaining the material.

With the idea that education, as well as multicultural education, is not a one-size-fits-all type of concept, this research study must be examined further. Because it appears that students aren't retaining

the cultural lessons teaches claim they are bringing to the classroom, it is imperative to explore a variety of ways to teach multiculturalism so as to measure which are more effective, on what grounds, and for which grade level or learning style. In turn, this opens the door for *how*?

Appendix E. Liberal Studies Faculty Survey

Liberal Studies Faculty Survey

Instructions: Please mark the best answer from the choices below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The research report was thoroughly researched & analyzed				
The research report could have incorporated more data				
This research project presents issues & themes I can incorporate within my classroom				
The research report raised concern for gaps often not covered in multicultural education for pre-service teachers				
The research report was successful in filling a portion of the large literature gap in multiculturalism & multicultural education				

Comments: