



Volume 8, Issue 1
Spring 2022

Journal of Montessori Research

A Publication of the American Montessori Society
Supported by University of Kansas Libraries

Contents

From the Editor Murray	i
The Montessori Bibliography Online: A Resource for the Global Montessori Community Parham	1
Montessori, the White Cross, and Trauma-Informed Practice: Lessons for Contemporary Education Phillips, O'Toole, McGilloway, and Phillips	13
Book Review: <i>The Best Weapon for Peace: Maria Montessori, Education, and Children's Rights</i> by Erica Moretti Debs	25



May 2022

From the Editor

The spring 2022 issue of the *Journal of Montessori Research* brings a contemporary perspective to the very origins of Montessori education. The issue begins with an article that documents development of the Montessori Bibliography Online (MBO). This methodological essay by librarian and archivist Joel Parham describes how the bibliography builds on previously compiled indexes to create a comprehensive repository of more than 37,000 entries that includes a range of materials from radio addresses to web pages from 1896 to the present day.

This issue continues with *Montessori, the White Cross, and Trauma-Informed Practice: Lessons for Contemporary Education*, a documentary analysis of the healing aspects of early Montessori schools. Bernadette Phillips and colleagues relate these early schools to trauma-informed teaching today by examining how these principles can apply to practice in contemporary classrooms with the pervasive challenge of serving the needs of children surviving trauma in its many forms.

We conclude this issue with a new type of article for the publication, a scholarly book review. We are pleased to share Mira Debs's review of *The Best Weapon for Peace: Maria Montessori, Education, and Children's Rights* by Erica Moretti. The book is a biography of Maria Montessori focusing on her pacifism and role as a humanitarian, activist, and social reformer.

We hope you find the variety of articles in this issue both useful and inspirational in your work.

Cordially,



Angela K. Murray, PhD
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The Montessori Bibliography Online: A Resource for the Global Montessori Community

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Keywords: Montessori method of education, Maria Montessori, databases, student-centered learning, bibliography, electronic information resources, peace education, nongraded schools

Abstract: The Montessori Bibliography Online (MBO) makes information about Montessori education and the Montessori movement more accessible through an online interface that includes links to digitized source materials. Historically, Montessori bibliographies and indexes have been published in physical form and include references to other sources, but a direct link is absent. This database builds on previously compiled indexes to consolidate citations into a comprehensive repository with an intuitive user interface and a robust search capability. Additionally, the MBO provides hyperlinks to digitized source material. Although this type of tool is not unprecedented in the larger research and educational landscape, it is novel within the domain of Montessori education. This methodological essay discusses the steps I took to compile and develop the MBO. Beginning with a review of the literature and legal matters, the discussion describes the methods and processes employed. It concludes by outlining future directions for the MBO. The MBO is accessible at <https://montessoribib.ku.edu>.

Indexes and bibliographies that are domain-specific (e.g., education, business, law) are particularly valuable for scholars and researchers. These tools provide access to existing knowledge so that new knowledge can be created and shared to advance the arts and sciences. Likewise, an index or bibliography that focuses on Montessori education is particularly valuable for the global Montessori community. With the advent of the Internet, the door to explore the creation of an online Montessori education bibliography opened, and, specifically, one that provides links to online versions of the source material referenced within the bibliography.

Across the decades, individuals and organizations in the global Montessori community have recognized the value and necessity of bibliographies and indexes that focus solely on Montessori education (Boehnlein, 1985, 1995; Böhm, 1999; Cleveland Montessori Association, 1962; Donahue, 1962; Packard, 1973; Pendleton, 2002; Rambusch, 1975; Stevens, 1913; Tornar, 2001). The Montessori Bibliography Online (MBO) differs from previous efforts in that it uses digital technology to connect citations directly to the digitized source material when available. It also seeks to build on these past efforts by collating and cataloging current and historic citations

of content related to Montessori education, Maria Montessori, and other related aspects of Montessori education (e.g., student-centered learning, peace education, multiage classes, nongraded schools).

The following sections include a literature review, a legal review, a discussion of methods and processes, and some concluding remarks. The literature review dives into the details concerning the many Montessori education indexes and bibliographies that have been compiled throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. The Legal Review section discusses copyright and intellectual property laws relevant to this resource. After this is a discussion of the methods and processes involved in creating and compiling the MBO. Finally, this essay ends with some concluding remarks regarding the future directions of the MBO. The MBO is accessible at <https://montessoribib.ku.edu>.

Literature Review

While it would have been ideal to consult as many of the preexisting bibliographies and indexes as possible, the feasibility of doing so was limited by available resources. Likewise, it would have been ideal to consult the bibliographic references connected to all previous scholarship related to Montessori education; however, it was impractical to tackle in this initial phase. Therefore, my efforts focused on tracking down the most compre-

hensive bibliographies; Table 1 provides a review of their contents.

After I acquired these sources and reviewed their contents, it was evident three sources were particularly extensive.

1. *Montessori: Bibliografia Internazionale / International Bibliography, 1896–2000*, which was published by the Opera Nazionale Montessori (ONM; Tornar, 2001)
2. *The North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMTA) Montessori Bibliography* (Boehnlein, 1985, 1995; Pendleton, 2002)
3. *Maria-Montessori-Bibliographie, 1896–1996* (Böhm, 1999).

Many of the sources listed in Table 1 include select citations based on certain criteria. For instance, some include only content contemporary to their publication or a cumulative compilation up to the date of publication (e.g., Böhm, 1999; Donahue, 1962; Stevens, 1913; Tornar, 2001). Other sources include citations that are domain-specific (Orem, 1969a, 1969b; Packard, 1973), and others are supplements to, or editions of, sources (Boehnlein, 1985, 1995; Pendleton, 2002; Salassa, 2004, 2005).

Upon further investigation into two of the extensive sources—NAMTA and ONM—I discovered that digital forms of both sources already existed. The ONM volume was published with a CD-ROM that included documen-

Table 1
Quantity of Citations in Select Sources

Source	Quantity
<i>Opera Nazionale Montessori</i> (Tornar, 2001)	~ 17,000
North American Montessori Teachers' Association (Boehnlein, 1995, 1985; Pendleton, 2002)	~ 15,000
Böhm (1999)	~ 12,500
Packard (1973)	~ 350
Donahue (1962)	481
Rambusch (1975)	~ 256
Salassa (2004, 2005)	102
Stevens (1913)	53
Cleveland Montessori Association (1962)	42
Orem (1969a, 1969b)	17

Note. Because of the different formats of the bibliographies (e.g., endnotes, works cited, references, etc.) across these sources, approximations were necessary in some instances. Also, many citations are duplicated across one or more of these sources; the quantities are not mutually exclusive.

tation indicating it contained a database with all of the data included in the print bibliography. Similarly, the NAMTA volume had been converted to a database that was available through NAMTA's website. Meanwhile, the other sources outlined in Table 1 were available as print documents or digitized versions of print documents; the data had not been collected and assembled in a digital database.

The ONM database contained on the CD-ROM had been assembled around the turn of the 21st century (between 1999 and 2000). Because the database used an obscure software that has since lapsed in use (i.e., CDS/ISIS), the data are now generally inaccessible and essentially trapped. This was a setback, but I identified a solution, which is outlined in the Methods and Processes section.

The online version of the *NAMTA Montessori Bibliography* enabled a methodical review of its contents and a comparison with the print versions of the same source. The online interface enabled users to search within the database, serving as an index or catalog of the NAMTA Archives' collection of publications. This version of the *NAMTA Montessori Bibliography* was a tool for interested parties to search for and then request material from NAMTA for a nominal fee. This tool became useful when it came to compiling and cross-referencing citations from different sources, which is discussed in more detail in the Methods and Processes section.

I conducted a review of the ONM and NAMTA bibliographies, in addition to the Böhm (1999) bibliography, which revealed they were not mutually exclusive or unique—there were overlaps across them. Similarly, I performed a thorough review of the other sources that revealed they contained citations that had not been included in these larger bibliographies. Therefore, I realized it would be necessary for my process to draw on all of these sources to compile the most extensive database of citations.

In addition to consulting the aforementioned sources, I conducted a cursory search across select digital libraries and research databases. A more in-depth description of the methods I employed is described in the Methods and Processes section. I selected digital collections that I could access, meaning they were publicly searchable and generally not behind a paywall. Specific examples include HathiTrust Digital Library, Internet Archive, WorldCat, Directory of Open Access Journals, and the online libraries of various academic publishers (e.g., SAGE, ScienceDirect, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, Wiley). I also searched within a limited selection of pay-to-access

databases that I was able to access through my local public library and my former university. Some examples of these databases include Newspapers.com, ProQuest databases (e.g., Dissertations and Theses, Historical Newspapers), as well as a number of EBSCO databases. The purpose of searching these resources was twofold: to determine (a) whether any of the source materials cited in the other bibliographies were available online and (b) whether these resources included materials that had not previously been included in the existing bibliographies. These efforts led to the discovery that digitized source materials for a portion of the citations included in the bibliographies were available online, either openly available or behind a paywall. This review confirmed there were other historic and contemporary sources that had not been previously included in the existing bibliographies. Similarly, searching other digital collections revealed various international sources that had not been included in the existing bibliographies and indexes.

Through this review of existing Montessori education bibliographies and a review of select digital collections, I determined there was a vast amount of citations that would need to be collected and assembled to create an extensive tool as envisioned.

Legal Review

Given the intent to assemble an extensive database with bibliographic citations related to Montessori education, I believed it was necessary to carefully consider intellectual property rights pertaining to citations and other related information. First, because this resource is being assembled and made available in the United States, U.S. laws are applicable to this scenario. The evaluation relied on *A Framework for Analyzing any U.S. Copyright Problem* (Smith & Macklin, 2014), which provides a clear and concise five-point checklist to evaluate copyright status.

I used the Smith and Macklin (2014) framework to assess the copyright status of the different data elements. Their framework supports the assertion that citation data are uncopyrightable data and therefore can be used. Abstracts are generally protected by intellectual property laws, either copyright or, in some cases, open licenses such as a Creative Commons license. Within the MBO, abstracts for sources protected by a Creative Commons license (or other open license) are reused in accordance with the license. Abstracts for sources that are protected by copyright, however, are included according to an assessment of fair use that is informed by the Smith and Macklin (2014) framework. My assessment evaluated the

purpose and character of use, the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount and substantiality of the portion used, and the effect of the use upon the market for the original as recommended by U.S. Copyright law (Limitations on exclusive rights: Fair use, 1978). From this evaluation, I have concluded the use of these data in the MBO is fair and appropriate, given the statutory guidelines.

Methods and Processes

Using the survey of existing Montessori education bibliographies and indexes and a review of the relevant laws and statutes, a pathway to the legal collection of citations for inclusion in the MBO database was identified. The collection of factual information, like citation information, is allowed, while the collection and use of original and creative data, like value-added descriptive keywords and summaries, needs to observe fair use. The following subsections—Technical Details, Citation Collection, Descriptive Cataloging, and Data Presentation—outline the methods and processes performed to arrange, collect, describe, and provide open access to the MBO.

Given that legal protections relevant to the ONM database have lapsed¹ and the factual information contained within is not protected by copyright, the data can be extracted, converted, and assembled into a new database. This is fortuitous for a couple reasons. First, the software used for assembling the bibliographic database—CDS/ISIS—is nearly obsolete, meaning the data contained within are generally inaccessible. Therefore, I hired a consultant to migrate the data to a usable format (details are outlined in the Citation Collection subsection). Second, as the ONM database is one of the most extensive bibliographies concerning Montessori education and Montessori, it enables these citations to be used as a foundation for the MBO.

Technical Details

Now that the legal boundaries were clear, the data collection process could move forward. However, before collecting the data, I needed to find a database software package with a generally intuitive user interface to

¹ This publication was published in 2001 in Italy. Therefore, European “database rights” apply to the database contained on the enclosed CD-ROM. These database rights “shall expire fifteen years from the first of January of the year following the date of completion” (Directive 96/9/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 1996 on the legal protection of databases, 1996). Thus, rights lapsed on January 1, 2017.

manage the data. Relying on my personal knowledge of reference management software, I turned to this type of software and examined different options by comparing their specifications. Fortunately, a comparison of these tools was readily available (“Comparison of Reference Management Software,” 2022). Currently, approximately 21 different products are on the market, and four dominate: EndNote, Mendeley, Ref Works, and Zotero. Having used EndNote and Zotero previously, my review was biased toward these two products. Ultimately, I selected Zotero because it is open source (as opposed to proprietary), free, and has a web-based interface along with a cross-platform desktop application. Also, Zotero has a plug-in (i.e., Zotero Connector) that allows easy collection of individual citations directly from web browsers (e.g., Chrome, Firefox, Safari), as well as other add-ons or plug-ins that enable additional useful functionality (e.g., Zutilo). Because Zotero is an open-source product, data are easily exported to other formats or even migrated to another platform if desired. Further, Zotero has built-in application programming interfaces (APIs) that allow the data to be exposed (e.g., accessed, queried, retrieved, and even edited) to web applications. Zotero uses the SQLite database format and, in the case of the MBO, the data are exposed through an API to a WordPress-based website that employs a variety of plug-ins to query and display the data in a meaningful way.

The next technical element was the challenge of getting access to the data in the ONM CD-ROM included in a CDS/ISIS database. To overcome the hurdle of accessing the database, I hired a contractor who specializes in these conversions to migrate the data into a new database. After 6 months of troubleshooting and fine tuning, data from the ONM database were successfully migrated into the Zotero database by way of the BibTex format.² These data laid the foundation for collecting more citations and then cross-referencing entries with other bibliographies, as described below.

Citation Collection

To collect more citations related to Montessori education and Montessori, I realized it would be necessary to acquire and consult as many bibliographies and other relevant sources as possible. It also became necessary to define the criteria for inclusion in the MBO. Citations for

² The contractor migrated the data in a number of different formats but the BibTex format was used because of Zotero’s ability to easily import this data format.

sources meeting one or more of these three criteria have been included in the MBO.

1. Content created by or about Maria Montessori, Mario M. Montessori, Montessori-related organizations (e.g., Association Montessori Internationale, American Montessori Society), or other figures within the global Montessori movement
2. Content about the Montessori Method of education, Montessori schools, or the global Montessori movement
3. Content about topics that are closely related to principles of Montessori education (e.g., peace education, cosmic education, multiage classes, student-centered learning)

Using these criteria as a guiding light, the initial collection phase relied on consulting the sources outlined in Table 1 that clearly related to Maria Montessori and Montessori education. The citations within these publications, including the *NAMTA Montessori Bibliography*, were cross-referenced with the entries in the MBO database, which resulted in the enhancement of existing entries and the addition of new entries to the database.

A second phase, which happened somewhat concurrently, involved searching through various digital collections (see Table 2) to locate digitized source material, verify existing citations in the database, and add new entries to the database. My methodology for this operation entailed searching across all of the resources identified in Table 2 using the following words or phrases: “Montessori,” “Maria Montessori,” “Montessori education,” or “Montessori method of education.” The search results were further filtered by relevancy: How many times did the search word or phrase appear in the text? Is it listed as a keyword? Does it appear in the abstract as a primary or secondary focus of the source? Does it appear in the title of the source? Moreover, topics that are Montessori-adjacent (see Criterion 3, above) were retrieved using a similar method. As this process matured, other terms, names, and phrases became evident, and the search method adapted to incorporate them.

The phrase “Montessori method of education” was particularly valuable when searching WorldCat because it is an authorized term from the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), a controlled vocabulary used by many libraries around the world. Notably, the common denominator across the search terms and phrases was the word “Montessori” and, over time, it became clear that a search for just the word “Montessori” was most successful, so that became the dominant search query.

Many of the citations for items published in the early 20th century are now publicly available online because of their public domain status (i.e., works with lapsed or expired copyright). Most of these public domain sources—books, journals, government documents, etc.—are primarily available via HathiTrust Digital Library, Google Books, or Internet Archive. Therefore, the search for digitized versions of the relevant source material was conducted across these collections.

Another aspect of this second phase was the search for relevant materials published after 1999 as the ONM data included citations up to or around 2000. The collection of these citations was enabled by the Zotero Connector plug-in, which facilitated a semiautomated import of individual citations into the database. As this process moved forward, the scope of this endeavor expanded and ultimately became a search for relevant content going as far back as 1896. To reiterate, this process provided me with the valuable opportunity to cross-reference citation information to enhance existing entries with more-complete data, verify existing citations to ensure their accuracy, and add links to digitized source material when available.

After this second phase had begun and a workflow had been established, a third phase commenced during which I reviewed the content available from NAMTA. In the past year or two, NAMTA migrated the data from its bibliography into a database with an e-commerce front-end interface (i.e., Shopify) that had provided users the ability to search for and order photocopies of articles from publications within their collection. The NAMTA collection is impressive for both its breadth and depth of coverage: many of the publications in this collection are not readily available elsewhere. The search function of the NAMTA shop was consulted to cross-reference the entries within the MBO database and to add any citations that were not already included.³

After completing this third phase, I was able to begin a fourth phase that entailed cross-referencing Böhm (1999) with the data in the MBO, a manual, ongoing process. Meanwhile, the second phase does not have a clear end either, as it involves the constant collection of contemporary and historic citations from varied sources; it continues in an effort to make the MBO as extensive as possible.

³ According to personal correspondence with NAMTA, requests for items in the NAMTA Montessori Archive have been halted, and the Archive was “decommissioned” on March 31, 2022.

Table 2*Selected List of Databases and Indexes Consulted*

Resource name	URL
Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)	https://eric.ed.gov
WorldCat	https://www.worldcat.org
Academic publishers	
SAGE	https://journals.sagepub.com
ScienceDirect	https://www.sciencedirect.com
SpringerNature	https://link.springer.com
Taylor & Francis	https://www.tandfonline.com
Wiley	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com
HathiTrust Digital Library	https://www.hathitrust.org
Internet Archive	https://archive.org
JSTOR	https://www.jstor.org
ProjectMUSE	https://muse.jhu.edu
Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)	https://doaj.org
Google	
Google Scholar	https://scholar.google.com
Google Books	https://books.google.com
ProQuest databases	https://www.proquest.com
EBSCO databases	https://www.ebsco.com
Historical newspaper collections (selected)	
Google News Archive	https://news.google.com/newspapers
Chronicling America (Library of Congress)	https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
California Digital Newspaper Collection	https://cdnc.ucr.edu
Center for Research Libraries	https://www.crl.edu/electronic-resources
Newspapers.com	https://www.newspapers.com
The British Newspaper Archive	https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk
NewspaperArchive	https://newspaperarchive.com
Archival collections (selected)	
Online Archive of California	https://oac.cdlib.org
ArchivesWest	https://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org
University of Connecticut Library Archives & Special Collections	https://lib.uconn.edu/location/asc/
Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD)	http://www.ndltd.org
National Libraries and Archives (selected)	
Library of Congress (USA)	https://www.loc.gov
National Archives and Records Administration (USA)	https://www.archives.gov
Bibliothèque nationale de France	https://www.bnf.fr
Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (Germany)	https://www.dnb.de
The British Library	https://www.bl.uk
Biblioteka Narodowa (Poland)	https://www.bn.org.pl
Biblioteca Nacional de Chile	https://www.bibliotecanacional.gob.cl
National Library of Australia	https://trove.nla.gov.au

It is worth noting that some citations were collected by way of a general inquiry distributed in a few Montessori-related Facebook groups. One person responded and indicated they had previously compiled a collection of citations—also in Zotero—that were related to Montessori education and multiage classrooms (also referred to as nongraded schools). They happily shared these data and, because they were also collected in a Zotero database, import of the data was straightforward.

Descriptive Cataloging

As for the descriptive cataloging of the entries, that is, assigning descriptive keywords, I knew it was imperative to establish conventions and standards regarding terminology and structure. To maintain a level of consistency and standardization with the terms, I adopted standardized vocabularies established and used within information-management fields (e.g., libraries, archives, museums). Use of these standardized vocabularies enables improved information access and retrieval.

Table 3 outlines the four different vocabularies used within the MBO. Conceptual terms are sourced from LCSH and Haines (2011). LCSH is the source of general terms, while Haines is the source for terms specific to Montessori education and Montessori philosophy. With regard to geographic names, the United Nations Geoscheme (UN Geoscheme) is used. This taxonomy includes names of continents, subcontinent regions, and countries. Additionally, when available, names of individuals, organizations, and other proper names are sourced from Wikidata.

As is generally typical in the information-management field, standardized vocabularies are often modified or amended according to their specific application. This may be done because the vocabulary or vocabularies do not include the necessary term or phrase

to accurately describe the material being cataloged. Therefore, the addition or modification of terms or phrases may be necessary. The intent is that this practice will ultimately improve information access and retrieval, resulting in more-accurate and more-relevant search results for users.

In the case of the MBO, I amended the UN Geoscheme to better reflect the use of common geographic terms. For example, “Middle East” is not included in the UN Geoscheme; however, it is a commonly used geographic term, so it has been included in the MBO. Other examples include alternate country names (e.g., Holland and the Netherlands, Cote d’Ivoire and Ivory Coast) and common subcontinent names (e.g., Great Britain, Scandinavia, Maghreb, Australasia).

Having identified the different vocabularies to use, I proceeded to the next step of assigning keywords to each database entry. This process has generally entailed manual data entry, that is, manually adding individual keywords to each entry. It has been somewhat streamlined by assigning keywords in bulk to a group of records.⁴ However, bulk processing or cataloging is not particularly feasible because the assignment of keywords is an intellectual process requiring the evaluation of each entry to determine relevant terms. This process requires the cataloger—that is, me—to make subjective judgments based on the metadata and therefore is a slow process compared to the other aspects that have been outlined here. This is the nature of descriptive cataloging.

Although descriptive cataloging is based on subjective decisions, specific methods or standards make the practice more objective. In the MBO, entries are assigned keywords based on three basic criteria: name(s) of the

⁴ This process has been aided by using a Zotero plug-in called Zutilo.

Table 3

Vocabularies and Taxonomies Used by the Montessori Bibliography Online and Their Purpose

Name	Purpose
Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) https://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects.html	General concepts
<i>A Montessori Dictionary</i> (Haines, 2011)	Montessori-specific concepts
United Nations Geoscheme (UN Geoscheme) https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49	Geographic names (countries, regions, continents)
Wikidata https://www.wikidata.org	Names of individuals and organizations

creator(s), concepts discussed or examined, and relevant geographic locations. Ultimately, at least one concept term will be required for each entry; names and locations are optional as they may not be applicable.

Concept terms are generally determined through an analysis of the title, an abstract, the actual content of the source material, or a combination of these. Likewise, names and locations are assigned according to a similar evaluation. Terms and names also follow a comparable process, but the formulation of the term is more complex. Concepts and names can be subdivided according to the specificity of the topic covered. For instance, within the MBO, entries that are written by Maria Montessori are assigned the keywords “Maria Montessori - Writings.” In this example, the authorized name “Maria Montessori” includes the general subdivision “Writings.” Similarly, entries that relate to training for Montessori educators are assigned the keywords “Montessori method of education - Teacher training.” In this example, then, the authorized term “Montessori method of education” includes the general subdivision “Teacher training.” This method allows more-specific keywords to be assigned, enabling a more accurate description of the entry, and in turn, leads to more-accurate search results.

One particular nuance of note is the assignment of geographic locations. When an entry is about or related to a particular geographic context, like a specific country, then the entry is assigned the following terms: country name (and alternate country name if applicable), subcontinent name (and alternate subcontinent name if applicable), and continent name. For example, an entry that discusses something in the United States is assigned the following geographic keywords: “United States of America,” “North America,” and “Americas.” The keywords for an entry that relates to England is assigned “England,” “Great Britain,” “United Kingdom,” “Northern Europe,” and “Europe.” Similarly, keywords related to Australia use “Australia,” “Australasia,” “Australia and New Zealand,” and “Oceania.”

This method is a simple way of creating a pseudohierarchy that reflects the taxonomic structure generally used to express the physical relationship between different geographic areas. Through this method, when a user searches for “Europe,” all entries related to Europe are retrieved, including entries related only to specific countries in Europe. Likewise, when a user searches for “Brazil,” all entries related to Brazil are retrieved. Assigning all relevant geographic terms to entries improves searchability and results in more-relevant search results. Users should be

aware that the geographic taxonomy excludes city names and other subcountry names.

Data Presentation

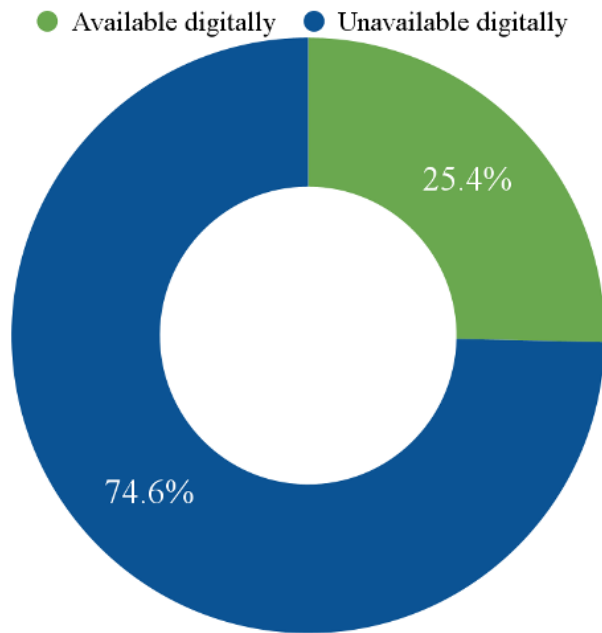
After successfully creating a database for the MBO, the next step I faced was the presentation of the data in a meaningful way on a website via a web application. Initially, the MBO was made available as a working prototype in late 2020 on the Global Montessori Network website.⁵ The resulting interface allowed users to perform a basic keyword search across select fields in the database and then see the search results in a structured list. This process proved the basic functionality of the database, but the prototype version was still rough around the edges and, among other things, the search functionality was rudimentary. Regardless, the creation of a working prototype provided the opportunity to share it with others and garner feedback. Ultimately, sharing the prototype with people resulted in an interest from some scholars and organizations, which led to the development of a project proposal outlining the desired specifications. The proposal was presented to the University of Kansas Center for Montessori Research, which solicited a budget and quote for the overall cost of the project from the interdepartmental software-development team at Agile Technology Solutions.⁶ Through the generous support of a private donor, the project was fully funded and, with all of the formalities laid out, the web development proceeded.

Through the hard work of the web-development team, the MBO now has a dramatically improved interface with enhanced functionality. The site, hosted by the University of Kansas, now allows users to conduct basic and complex search queries. The search tool accepts select Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR, NOT) that enable advanced searches (i.e., search queries with greater complexity). Furthermore, MBO users now can custom sort and filter search results according to specific criteria like language or publication date, among others. Search results are presented to the user in a paginated list form that includes select data values and, when available, a link to

⁵ <https://theglobalmontessorinetwork.org>

⁶ Agile Technology Solutions is “a center within the Achievement and Assessment Institute at the University of Kansas, helps public agencies develop high-volume, highly scalable and multidevice-compatible Software as a Service (SaaS) web applications to meet public needs.” (<https://ats.ku.edu/about-agile-technology-solutions>).

Figure 1
Availability of Entries in the Montessori Bibliography Online



Note. Available = a digital version of the source material is available online; Unavailable = a digital source of the material has not been located online.

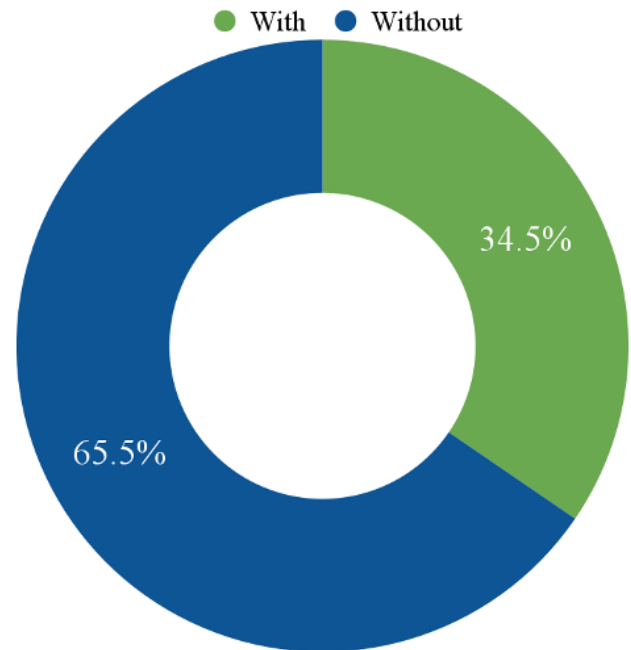
an online version of the source. Currently there is no clear delineation between links that are freely accessible and those that are behind a paywall; I intend to address this shortcoming in the future. Similarly, to address inevitable broken links, I intend for future development to incorporate a tool to ensure links are still valid. Meanwhile, the compilation of sources continues.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The MBO is a freely available online resource that enables search, retrieval, and discovery of information related to Montessori education. It can be accessed at <https://montessoribib.ku.edu> and serves as a portal to information concerning Montessori education, Maria Montessori, and the international Montessori movement. The resource is international in scope, including citations to source materials in languages as varied as Afrikaans, Arabic, English, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.⁷ The content covers Montessori activities across the globe. Source ma-

⁷ Google Translate has been used in some cases to include parallel English-language translations of titles and abstracts. Although translations created this way have their shortcomings, the main purpose is to improve searchability across linguistically diverse content.

Figure 2
Entries With and Without Keywords



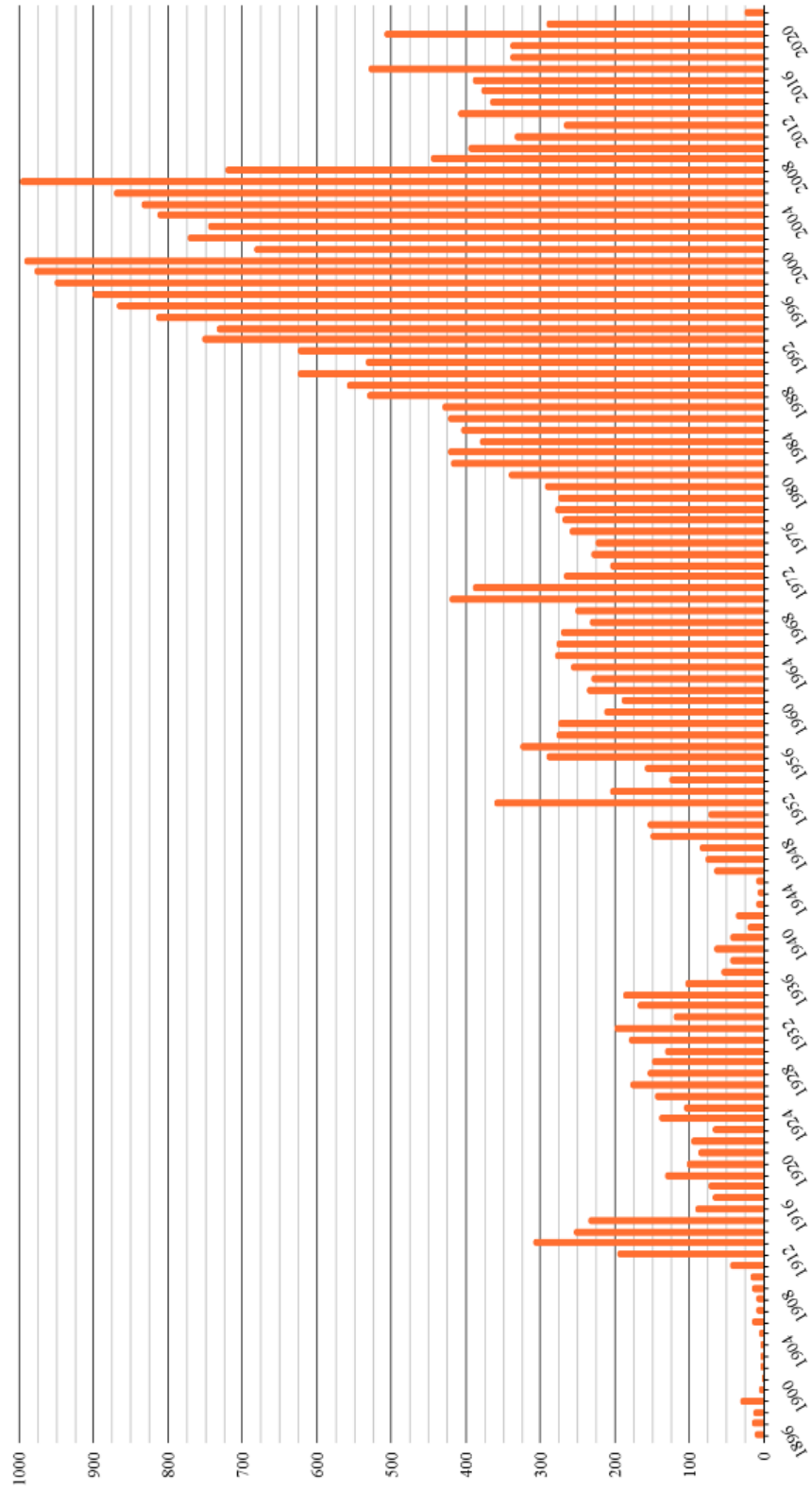
Note. The cataloging of content in the Montessori Bibliography Online is an ongoing process. This is the current status, but the goal is to add more content while continuing to add keywords to new and existing entries.

terial types include books; theses and dissertations; journal, newspaper, and magazine articles; book sections (e.g., chapters); reports; interviews; manuscripts, documents, and archival collections; films, video recordings, audio recordings, and radio addresses; encyclopedia articles and dictionary entries; conference papers, presentations, and proceedings; blog posts and web pages; and patents. The content spans from 1896 to the present day.

The MBO continues to grow and mature daily through ongoing cataloging of the entries and the compilation of new sources. Currently, the database contains more than 37,000 unique entries. Figure 1 demonstrates the availability of contents currently included in the MBO.⁸ Figure 2 illustrates the extent to which entries have been assigned keywords. Figure 3 provides a graphical representation of the distribution of content by publication year (1896–2022). Table 4 provides an inventory of the languages of content included in the MBO by percentage, while Table 5 is a tabulation of the different types of content included in the MBO.

⁸ In observance of intellectual property rights, the MBO does not host any digital versions of source materials referenced in the database. However, links to online versions of the source materials are included when available.

Figure 3
Distribution of Entries in the Montessori Bibliography Online by Year of Publication, 1896–2022



Note. 275 entries have unknown dates; nine entries have bulk dates.

Table 4*Language of Content Included in the Montessori Bibliography Online by Percentage*

Language	%
Dutch	3.06
English	67.76
French	1.35
German	7.01
Italian	15.67
Spanish	1.34
Other (Afrikaans, Arabic, Bosnian, Catalan, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Galician, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Malay, Marathi, Norwegian, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Swedish, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and unidentified)	3.82

Note. Some entries in the Montessori Bibliography Online are available in multilingual formats; thus each of these formats was treated as a separate version for this calculation. Other = a cumulative of languages that represent < 1.0% each.

Table 5*Format of Content Included in the Montessori Bibliography Online by Percentage*

Format	%
Book	9.12
Book section	6.68
Journal or magazine article	78.83
Newspaper article	1.67
Thesis or dissertation	2.19
Other (Audio recording, blog post, conference paper, dictionary entry, document, encyclopedia article, film, interview, manuscript / archival collection, patent, presentation, report, video recording, and web page)	1.52

Note. Other = a cumulative of format types that represent < 1.0% each.

The continued development of this resource currently relies primarily on me, but the hope is that this resource will be embraced by the global Montessori community, and further development can rely on cooperation and collaboration to effectively catalog entries in the database. Additionally, the contributions of citations from individuals and organizations are particularly helpful for the continued development; a form for submitting this information is available on the website.

I hope this effort will contribute to an increased awareness of Montessori education and influence organizations to improve access to archives and libraries containing Montessori-related publications. Only through collaboration and cooperation will this resource be able

to continue to grow and be useful for the Montessori community and beyond.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations who contributed to the development of the MBO. Without their funding, assistance, support, or prior work, the MBO could not have been realized. In no particular order, the author thanks the following: Michael R. Flynn, Rachel Parham, University of Kansas Center for Montessori Research, Opera Nazionale Montessori and Clara Tornar, North American Montessori Teachers' Association, Winfried

Böhm, Splendor Systemy Informacyjnej (Splendor Information Systems), Lead Walnut, Dylan Sognalian, Sharon Caldwell, Angela K. Murray, Mira C. Debs, Angeline S. Lillard, the Agile Technology Solutions team at the University of Kansas, Mark McKenna, Josh Bolick, the Prepared Adult Initiative, and the Global Montessori Network. The author also thanks the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback.

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Montessori, the White Cross, and Trauma-Informed Practice: Lessons for Contemporary Education

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Keywords: Montessori, the White Cross, trauma-informed, childhood adversity/trauma, education

Abstract: Childhood adversity and trauma are pervasive and have powerful, far-reaching consequences for health and well-being. Recent years have seen increased recognition of the need for trauma-informed practice, which aims to promote understanding, healing, and the prevention of retraumatization. Historical data show that the early Montessori schools were known internationally as healing schools, wherein children affected by adversity or trauma were apparently healed on a considerable scale. This study presents the findings from a documentary analysis of three primary sources, namely, Maria Montessori’s own original accounts, eyewitness accounts, and media reports pertaining to this healing aspect of the early Montessori schools. The findings demonstrate that, first, from the beginning of her career, Montessori worked with children who had experienced significant exposure to adversity or trauma, second, that her Montessori Method was shown to effect healing or recovery in these children, and third, that her long involvement with trauma-affected children directly led to her later attempts to set up an organization to be called the White Cross, which was to incorporate, among other things, a trauma-informed course for teacher–nurses. In this innovative approach to Montessori studies, we argue that Montessori was ahead of her time, that her work is even more relevant today in the context of adversity and trauma research, and that her methods, principles, and approaches may be harnessed and used in ways that promote trauma-informed practice in contemporary education settings.

Children have many kinds of sensitiveness, but they are all alike in their sensitiveness to trauma.
(Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 1967, p. 131)

Maria Montessori (1870–1952) was a woman ahead of her time. In 1896 she was one of the first women in Italy to obtain a double honors degree in medicine and surgery; she was remarkable in that her doctoral thesis

was based on a psychiatric topic even though psychiatry was a relatively new branch of medicine at that time (Kramer, 1976). After receiving her medical degree, Montessori furthered her research in psychiatry such that,

as early as 1897, she was recognized as a knowledgeable clinical psychiatrist (Povell, 2010) and an expert in childhood mental illness (Guttek & Guttek, 2017). As Babini stated, she went on to carve out “a remarkable career: from psychiatrist to educationalist” (Babini, 2000, p. 45). In 1896, she began her career with children who suffered the double burden of being both developmentally challenged and victims of adversity and trauma (in the form of emotional and educational neglect), and she continued for the next 20 years to be involved with children who had suffered significant exposure to adversity and traumatic experiences (e.g., the children of San Lorenzo who grew up in one of the poorest slum districts in Rome; the children of Messina and Reggio Calabria who survived a devastating earthquake that left most of them orphaned and homeless; and the French and Belgian children who were exposed to the horrors of war, which left many severely traumatized; Phillips & Phillips, 2016). All of these children were exposed to what we would now call adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; Felitti et al., 1998).

Adverse childhood experience originally described exposure before the age of 18 to stressors such as abuse, neglect, domestic violence, parental separation, household substance misuse, and family mental health issues (Felitti et al., 1998). In more recent years, however, the importance of other adversities, such as homelessness, poverty, racism, and other inequalities, has been recognized by leading organizations such as the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2020) at Harvard University. These types of experience overlap with what is considered *childhood trauma*, which refers to exposure to either single or multiple overwhelmingly stressful experiences that can leave children psychologically and biologically damaged (Burke Harris, 2019; Herman, 2015; Perry et al., 1995; Perry & Winfrey, 2021; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014; van der Kolk, 2014). A vast and compelling body of research demonstrates that traumatic experiences have a detrimental impact on brain development and cognitive, social, and emotional functioning, thereby affecting a child’s ability to learn, form relationships, and function appropriately at school (Cole et al., 2005; Craig, 2016; Perry & Szalavitz, 2017; Treisman, 2017; Wolpow et al., 2016). This effect has led to increasing recognition of the need for schools and other human-service settings to become trauma informed and trauma responsive by implementing *trauma-informed practice* (TIP; Alexander, 2019; Jennings, 2019; Maynard et al., 2019; Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016; Thomas et

al., 2019). TIP is an approach that aims to understand the impact of trauma on an individual’s life and respond in a manner that offers safety, both physical and emotional, to that individual, as well as prevent retraumatization. It also seeks to empower people to reestablish control over their lives (SAMHSA, 2014). TIP acknowledges the prevalence of trauma, as well as the biological, social, and psychological consequences of trauma on an individual’s affect and behavior (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2016). The key principles of trauma-informed practice are accepted as safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and respect for diversity (Fallot & Harris, 2009).

In this paper we argue that the concept of trauma-informed care in the early childhood years is not necessarily a new one. For example, it is not widely known, by either teachers or the general public, that Montessori had a strong “interest in psychological trauma in children” (Scocchera, 2002/2013, p. 49) and a long involvement with children who were exposed to adversity or trauma. We argue that her involvement with four specific groups of children—first, the “persecuted,” “neglected” and “rejected” children from the Manicomio di Roma (the psychiatric hospital of Rome, usually referred to historically and by Montessori as the asylum”; Montessori, 2008, p. 263); second, the “tearful, frightened children” of San Lorenzo (Montessori, 1936, p. 123); third, the “numbed, silent, absent-minded” children of Messina–Reggio (Montessori, 1936, p. 152); and fourth, the “psychologically or mentally mutilated” French and Belgian children (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 39)—arguably represented significant efforts on her part to support children suffering from the effects of adversity and trauma (Kramer, 1976; Mayfield, 2006; Montessori, 1917/2013; Moretti, 2021). This involvement with trauma-affected children, combined with her attempts in 1916 and 1917 to train teachers and nurses in “special methods of education” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 40) to facilitate healing from psychological trauma (as part of the work of an organization she intended to call the White Cross), further represented significant efforts on her part to support children suffering the ongoing effects of trauma (Kramer, 1976; Mayfield, 2006; Montessori, 1917/2013; Moretti, 2021; Trabalzini, 2013). These vivid and explicit descriptions by Montessori herself, of children damaged by psychological trauma that subsequently led to their inability to learn, were the inspiration for our argument that Montessori’s interest in and long involvement with psychological trauma

culminated in her plan to design and deliver a trauma-informed course to teachers and nurses to enable them to understand the effects of adversity and trauma on children and to give them the skills to help these children to heal and recover. It would appear, therefore, that Montessori's approach to education and care was very much shaped by her interest in childhood trauma, but her contribution in this respect has not yet been fully investigated.

This paper reports the first stage of a larger, three-stage study designed to investigate the extent to which Montessori's practices and principles may be harnessed to develop a new professional-development course designed to help teachers better understand and implement trauma-informed practice in early childhood education. The overarching aim of this three-stage study is to support children affected by trauma by introducing and scientifically testing (in stages 2 and 3 of the study) Montessori-attuned, trauma-informed practice. The specific objectives in this first stage are to explore the historical, documentary evidence to identify and critically describe Montessori's involvement with children who had suffered psychological trauma, her descriptions of the presentation of that trauma, and her approach to healing and recovery.

Method

The specific research question underpinning this study is "What is the historical evidence supporting the claims that Montessori offered a healing environment?" To answer this question, we conducted a qualitative documentary analysis (two authors are Montessori practitioners and researchers; one is an academic with particular expertise in school-based, trauma-informed practice; and one is a senior academic involved in mental health and the well-being of children and families), in line with the approach recommended by Bowen (2009). A total of 12 documents relating to Montessori's work between 1898 and 1917 (i.e., eyewitness accounts, media reports, and Montessori's own accounts) and specifically to the four specific groups of children referred to earlier were procured and scrutinized (see Table 1). These sources yielded a large amount of data, consisting of excerpts, quotations, passages, and entire books that were selected for analysis. Braun and Clarke's analytical model (2006) was used. Specifically, the historical material was examined and categorized into themes, and then

the theoretical concepts (as outlined in the theoretical framework below) shaped the final identified themes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach adopted by the SAMHSA (2014). Contemporary research and theory in trauma studies demonstrates the impact of exposure to adversity and traumatic events on the mind and the body (Felitti et al., 1998; van der Kolk, 2014). After exposure to chronic adversity or traumatic events, children often become either hyperaroused (i.e., reactive, aggressive, hypervigilant), hypoaroused (i.e., numb, detached, dissociated), or a mixture of both, and these states can become habitual (Perry et al., 1995). These states have a negative effect on the child's ability to learn, develop relationships, and function appropriately in schools (Cole et al., 2005). There is a need, therefore, for teachers to be aware of how exposure to adversity and trauma affects both the behavior and emotional responses of the child, and of how to prevent retraumatization and promote recovery (Craig, 2016).

Results

Three major themes were identified from the analysis: (a) Montessori's long involvement with childhood adversity and trauma, (b) how the Montessori Method facilitated healing from the effects of adversity and trauma, and (c) Montessori's proposal for an intensive, trauma-informed course for teachers and nurses as part of the White Cross organization. We review each theme.

Montessori's Long Involvement With Childhood Adversity and Trauma

The first theme identified from the analysis relates to Montessori's long involvement with childhood adversity and trauma. It was evident that the four groups of children described earlier, whom Montessori encountered during a 19-year period (from 1898 to 1917), had been exposed to significant adversity and trauma before they came under the beneficial influence of Montessori's Method. Each group is described below.

The Children From the Roman Psychiatric Hospitals (1898): A Background of Deprivation and Trauma

In 1897, a year after graduating as a medical doctor, Montessori became a voluntary assistant at

Table 1*Chronological List of Data Sources*

Author and date	Title of document	Type and length of document
M. Montessori (1936)	<i>The Secret of Childhood</i>	Book (239 pages)
M. Montessori (1917)	<i>The White Cross</i>	Pamphlet (5 pages)
M. Cromwell (1916)	<i>The Montessori Method: Adapted to the Little French and Belgian Refugees</i>	Pamphlet (3 pages)
M. Montessori (1915)	<i>Articles from the San Francisco Call and Post</i>	Newspaper articles (82 pages)
C. Bailey (1915)	<i>Montessori Children</i>	Book (117 pages)
J. White (1914)	<i>Montessori Schools as Seen in the Early Summer of 1913</i>	Book (185 pages)
R. Marguiles (1913)	<i>Dr. Montessori and Her Method</i>	Journal article (7 pages)
D. C. Fisher (1912)	<i>A Montessori Mother</i>	Book (240 pages)
M. Montessori (1912)	<i>The Montessori Method</i>	Book (277 pages)
A. George (1912)	<i>Dr. Maria Montessori: The Achievement and Personality of an Italian Woman Whose Discovery Is Revolutionizing Educational Methods</i>	Magazine article (6 pages)
E. Y. Stevens (1912)	<i>The Montessori Method and the American Kindergarten</i>	Magazine article (6 pages)
J. Tozier (1911)	<i>An Educational Wonder-Worker: The Methods of Maria Montessori</i>	Magazine article (17 pages)

the psychiatric clinic affiliated with the University of Rome. Here, she worked alongside the eminent child specialist Clodomiro Bonfigli, who was conducting research on mental health disorders in children (Gutek & Gutek, 2017) and had a particular interest in the social determinants of mental illness (Povell, 2010). As Trabalzini pointed out, “she thus joined the psychiatric clinic’s work group that saw the cooperation of illustrious scientists” (Trabalzini, 2011, p. 17). As part of her work, the young Montessori was required to go into the “asylums” (Montessori, 1964, p. 31) to identify suitable candidates to take back to the clinic for study. It was in this capacity that she first became involved with children who, because they were unable to function at school or in their homes, were placed in these institutions that offered them no opportunities for learning or development.

In a series of newspaper articles published in 1915, Montessori reflected on the deprivation these children had suffered in these institutions and highlighted the facts that the children belonged to the poorest classes,

were “persecuted and neglected even by their parents,” and were excluded from education (Montessori, 2008, p. 263). According to her biographer, the children were “herded together like prisoners in a prison like room” (Standing, 1957, p. 28). Their days alternated between eating, sleeping, and staring into space. Their caretaker told Montessori with disgust how “after their meals, they would throw themselves on the floor to grab for dirty crumbs of bread” (Kramer, 1976, p. 58). Montessori observed that the children had no toys or materials of any kind and that the room was completely bare (Standing, 1957). She immediately recognized that these were not greedy children looking for more bread but were human beings, starved of emotional and intellectual stimulation and who therefore were using the breadcrumbs as playthings or learning materials (Kramer, 1976). In today’s terms, we would say these children were being exposed to severe neglect (Felitti et al., 1998).

In her efforts to understand the cognitive, social, and emotional problems evident in these children,

Montessori's research led her to the work of two almost forgotten French physicians, Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard (1774–1838) and Édouard Séguin (1812–1880). The work of both doctors was to have a profound impact on Montessori's approach to teaching developmentally challenged children, and later, children in general. Itard had dedicated years of his career to attempts to remediate a child referred to as *the Wild Boy of Aveyron*, a mute, feral child found running wild in the forests of France. Although this boy is usually referred to as a mentally challenged child, there is evidence that he was also a severely traumatized child. It is arguable that Itard's methods, which so intrigued Montessori and had a profound influence on her, had as much relevance to the treatment of traumatized children as they had to the treatment of mentally challenged children. It is significant that the American journalist Josephine Tozier (who had spent months in Rome in 1910 talking with Montessori about her work with children and her sources of inspiration) wrote the first in a series of articles on Montessori's work that were key in launching the Montessori movement in America. Tozier began by telling the story of the Wild Boy of Aveyron and stated in her very first paragraph that this story "formed the starting-point of a process of thought and experiment" in Montessori's mind. Tozier wrote:

In a forest of the Department of Aveyron, France, some hunters, in 1798, caught a wild boy, apparently eleven or twelve years of age. His body was covered with scars, caused by briars, thorns, and the teeth of animals; but one scar on his throat seemed to show that whoever left him in the forest had first tried to murder him. (Tozier, 1911, p. 3)

Itard's writings, which meticulously record his attempts to remediate this undeniably traumatized child (who had suffered unimaginable physical and emotional abuse and neglect), as well as the later work and research carried out by Itard's disciple and successor Séguin, had a huge impact on Montessori. Based on her talks with Montessori, Tozier wrote that the work of these two doctors "fell in with [Montessori's] own line of thought, giving precision and certainty to ideas already germinating in her mind" (Tozier, 1911, p. 4) and led directly to Montessori's work in the Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica [Orthophrenic School] in Rome (Tozier, 1911, p. 4), of which Montessori was a codirector. It is arguable that through her own

observations and the recorded observations of these two doctors, Montessori was beginning to link the impact of adversity and traumatic experience with cognitive, social, and emotional functioning, or what she called (when referring to the children she worked with in 1897) "moral and mental incapacity" (Montessori, 2008, pp. 263–264). In this respect, she was more than 100 years ahead of contemporary literature on the topic (Cole et al., 2005; Felitti et al., 1998; Perry & Szalavitz, 2017; Treisman, 2017).

The Children of San Lorenzo (1907): A Background of Poverty and Neglect

Several years later, in the early 1900s, Montessori began what was to become her acclaimed work in San Lorenzo in Rome, an extremely impoverished district in which an Italian building society sought to bring social improvements by providing tenement accommodation that would include a day-care facility for "all the little ones between the ages of three and seven" who were unable to attend the public schools (Montessori, 1964, p. 43). Foschi (2008) stated that Montessori, who had become well known "as a pedagogical expert" (p. 243), was invited "to direct the educational activities" of these facilities (p. 244). On Sunday, January 6, 1907, the first Children's House, as the facilities were called, was officially opened in a refurbished tenement in the slums of San Lorenzo. In *The Secret of Childhood*, (1936), Montessori included a quotation that she referred to as "something I wrote long ago, which I have discovered in a heap of old papers, which may be of documentary interest" (p. 120). The quotation paints a vivid picture of the children's tearful entry to the Casa dei Bambini and the poverty and neglect to which they had been exposed:

They were tearful, frightened children, so shy that it was impossible to get them to speak; their faces were expressionless, with bewildered eyes as though they had never seen anything in their lives. They were indeed poor, abandoned children, who had grown up in dark, tumbledown, slum dwellings, with nothing to stimulate their minds, and without care. Everyone could see they suffered from malnutrition; it was not necessary to be a doctor to recognize that they were in urgent need of food, open air life, and sunlight. (Montessori, 1936, p. 123)

These children had experienced chronic poverty and neglect, or what we would today refer to as ACEs (Felitti et al., 1998), and Montessori immediately recognized

that their emotional and social anxieties were inextricably linked to this experience.

The Children of Messina and Reggio Calabria (1908): A Sudden Exposure to Adversity and Trauma

Not long afterward, on December 28, 1908, at approximately 5:20 a.m., a violent earthquake hit Messina and Reggio Calabria with devastating force. The quake was followed within minutes by a powerful tsunami that caused 40-foot tidal waves to crash down on the coastal cities, reducing this area to little more than a heap of rubble (Pino et al., 2008). Thousands were trapped under the debris, suffering horrific and mostly fatal injuries. The death toll was estimated to be in the region of 80,000 to 100,000 (Bressan, 2012; Pino et al., 2008). There were some survivors, many of them children who “were left traumatized, homeless, and orphaned” (Mayfield, 2006, p. 5). Some were found days after the earthquake, wandering around in the ruins, shocked and traumatized. The earthquake left many children orphaned, and there was an urgent need to protect the survivors from further trauma. Through the press, the Italian government called on all those who could help these children to step forward (Moretti, 2014).

In *The Secret of Childhood*, Montessori (1936) reported that 60 children were accommodated in a specially formed Montessori school, which Anne George (1912) reported was located in the Franciscan convent on Via Giusti, under the patronage of Queen Margherita of Italy. Subsequently, in 1910, the nuns received training in the Montessori Method (Kramer, 1976). Montessori described the traumatized state of the children:

Here were orphans who had survived one of the greatest catastrophes, the Messina earthquake (1908), sixty small children discovered among the ruins. No one knew either their names or their social status.... This terrible shock had reduced them to near uniformity, they were numbed, silent, absent-minded. It was hard to make them eat, hard to get them to sleep. At night they could be heard screaming and crying. (Montessori, 1936, p. 152)

In this passage, Montessori shows her understanding that this terrible shock had traumatized the children, causing them to display what we would now refer to as posttraumatic stress.

The Children of France and Belgium (1916): A Protracted Exposure to Adversity and Trauma

Almost 10 years later, in the summer of 1916, when Europe was in the throes of the First World War, Montessori made a short visit to France to inspect the Montessori schools there (Montessori, 1917/2013). She found that all of the Montessori schools had been forced to close, as teachers dedicated themselves to helping the Red Cross (Montessori, 1917/2013). However, she found that there was one notable exception—an American teacher named Mary Cromwell, who had been trained in the Montessori Method of education and had personally organized and funded Montessori classes for French and Belgian refugee children (Montessori, 1917/2013). Cromwell witnessed firsthand the traumatizing impact of war on children. In a pamphlet she published in 1916 to raise funds to support her work with these war-torn children, she graphically described the various psychological presentations of the children. Some children were numb and unresponsive: “A sort of stupor invaded them and rendered them, for a long time, incapable of interest in anything” (Cromwell, 1916). Other children were in a constant state of alertness:

[The children’s] perpetual plans were to pile up the material, even the heaviest objects, as if haunted by the desire to reconstruct; or their acts reflected the scenes they had lived through in their invaded villages. With their small chairs and tables, they improvised cellars in which to hide most of the day, and the boys showed great enthusiasm in carrying, as guns, the long bars intended to commence arithmetic, these agitated days were repeated for weeks. (Cromwell, 1916)

Montessori vividly described the kind of psychological disturbance evident in the children:

There is found, in these refugee children, a special form of mental disturbance, which constitutes a real mental wound—a lesion that is as serious as, if not more serious, than wounds in the physical body.... These children came to her (Miss Cromwell) in a state of stupor, incapable of understanding, frightened at the approach of anyone, afraid by day as well as by night. (Montessori, 2017/2013, p. 37)

Montessori believed that these children were suffering from deep-rooted psychological difficulties: “these unfortunate little ones...are psychologically or

mentally mutilated” and were suffering from “wounds of the nervous system” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 39). These French and Belgian children had suffered what we would now call acute trauma as a result of this unexpected, man-made disaster (i.e., war) to which they had been exposed.

In sum, these four groups of children, the “persecuted,” “neglected,” and “rejected” children from the Roman psychiatric hospital (Montessori, 2008, p. 263); the “tearful, frightened children” of San Lorenzo (Montessori, 1936, p. 123); the “numbed, silent, absent-minded” children of Messina and Reggio Calabria (Montessori, 1936, p. 151); and the “psychologically or mentally mutilated” French and Belgian children (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 39) shared one characteristic: all had been victims of ACEs or trauma, which Montessori recognized required a specific kind of healing and intervention.

How the Montessori Method Facilitated Healing From the Effects of Adversity and Trauma

The second theme identified from the analysis relates to how the Montessori Method facilitated healing. The evidence suggests that the Montessori Method facilitated healing and recovery by (a) calming and regulating the children, (b) reorganizing the disorganized brain, (c) preventing mental strain through the use of muscle memory, and (d) promoting the currently recognized key principles of TIP: safety, collaboration, choice, and empowerment. The next paragraphs elaborate on these points.

Activities That Calmed and Regulated the Children

Many eyewitnesses visiting the Montessori schools between 1907 and 1917, in which the last three of the four groups of trauma-impacted children described above were accommodated, noted that the children spent considerable time each day engaged in Practical Life, Sensorial, and cultural exercises that appeared to calm them. The Practical Life exercises involved either gross motor activities (e.g., sweeping courtyards, digging and weeding gardens, transporting soil back and forth in wheelbarrows, feeding and grooming animals) or fine motor activities (e.g., fastening and unfastening button, buckle, and lacing frames; folding and unfolding cloths; scrubbing tabletops; laying out mats and cutlery on tables for dining), as well as other practical and overtly meaningful exercises that required repetitive, rhythmic movements. These movements are what Montessori

termed *synthetic movement*, referring to movement that is not random but that requires that “movements of the hands are guided by the mind” (Montessori, 1936, p. 149) and that they carry out a specific purpose, with the body and the brain working in unison so that mental and motor activities are inseparable. She argued that movement without thought was chaotic, and thought without movement induced fatigue (Montessori, 1964). Standing (1957) referred to Montessori’s interpretation of synthetic movement as “movement ordered and directed by the mind to an intelligible purpose” (p. 214). The Practical Life exercises described above all require the child to use synthetic movements, and it is these synthetic movements that appear to promote repetition of the activity, which in turn brings regulation, calm, and tranquility (Bailey, 1915; Cromwell, 1916/2006; Fisher, 1912; George, 1912; Montessori, 1936).

Another feature of the Practical Life exercises relates to what we now call mindfulness. *Mindfulness* has been described as “a quality of focused attention on the present moment accompanied by a non-judgemental stance” (Lillard, 2011, p. 2). George and Fisher described this quality of focused attention in two particular Practical Life exercises that were initially developed to test the children’s hearing and develop their equilibrium, respectively. For example, the first of these—the daily Silence Game—involved the children silently tiptoeing to the teacher when their name was whispered; George (1912) commented on the calming effect of this activity: “The little bodies relax themselves softly, the breath comes evenly, and each child with his whole being settles himself to enjoy the silence. . . . The clock ticks; soft sounds come in from the cloister. . . as the silence grows” (p. 29). Fisher (1912) remarked on the children’s “trance-like immobility” (p. 45) during the game and the “expression of utter peace” (p. 45) on the children’s faces, stating that they “emerge from it sweeter, more obedient, calmed and gentler” (p. 47). In the second activity, Walking on the Line, the children focus their mind on balancing as they carefully walk on a large oval chalk line on the floor, sometimes holding a bell they try not to ring. According to one reporter (Tozier, 1911), the concentration and integration of mind and body required by the Silence Game “calmed all excessive excitability and restored placidity and tranquility. Sometimes [the children] ask for it twice in the day” (p. 15). These exercises seemed to represent mindful activities, producing a state of calm and appearing instrumental in promoting the children’s recovery. This emergence of a state of calm

after the practice of these two activities is consistent with contemporary research on trauma and highlights the important role of mindfulness for trauma survivors in facilitating the process of recognizing the ebb and flow of emotions and physical sensations, thereby illustrating the importance of emotional regulation (Alexander, 2019; Jennings, 2019).

A further feature of the Practical Life activities that helped regulate the children was the fact that many of these activities, which the children were free to engage in spontaneously, frequently took place outdoors, which “at once promoted their development and their happiness,” according to one eyewitness (White, 1914, p. 18). In addition, the children frequently ate their meals outdoors. Contemporary research suggests that outdoor activities can have therapeutic benefits for those who have been exposed to adversity or trauma because they help to normalize heart rate and blood pressure, which are often elevated by traumatic experiences (Sorrels, 2015). Other researchers have stated that the calming sounds of nature can reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol in the body, which in turn can help reduce the stress response (Mulholland & O’Toole, 2021).

The Sensorial activities involved the use of scientifically graded and sequenced objects that induced patterned, repetitive, rhythmic acts as the child sorts, matches, compares, contrasts, classifies, and categorizes objects. The children were free to repeat these activities as many times as they felt the need to. For example, the Cylinder Block exercise, which involves inserting cylinders of varying sequential dimensions into a block of wood, seemed to induce repetition. Montessori herself described how, at the beginning of her experimental work in San Lorenzo, she witnessed a child in deep concentration repeating this exercise 42 times (Montessori, 1936). When the child had finally finished, she smiled and looked very contented. Montessori (1936) remarked that the child’s concentration “was accompanied by a rhythmic movement of the hands, evoked by an accurately made scientific graduated object” (p. 127). She asked the teachers not to prevent but to facilitate this repetition by not interrupting the child (Montessori, 1964). Likewise, eyewitnesses who visited the early Montessori schools commented on how the children frequently repeated the Sensorial activities over and over again (Fisher, 1912; Tozier, 1911), and when they finally stopped, they displayed a notable calmness and tranquility.

Children also frequently engaged in cultural activities, such as dance, music, movement, art, and sculpting, which involved repetitive, rhythmic movements. Eyewitnesses noted that these kinds of cultural activities calmed and regulated the children by the use of rhythm. Bailey (1915), in particular, described some of these activities in which the children “keep time to rhythmic music,” (p. 26) such as marching to a piano tune, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, “over and over again” (p. 22). She referred to other exercises “in which the little ones sing in time to the rhythmic movement of their feet” (p. 25) and said that these were all “rhythmic activities carried out upon a line” (p. 24). Artwork, such as clay modeling and drawing, were also observed by eyewitnesses to calm the children through the use of repetitive, rhythmic actions (Cromwell, 1916/2006).

Notably in this context, contemporary research from the field of neuroscience has demonstrated how neural dysregulation occurs in the aftermath of trauma, often leaving children feeling anxious, impulsive, and emotionally unstable (Perry, 2009). Research also shows how such dysregulation can be brought back into equilibrium by engagement in activities that are rhythmic and repetitive and that ultimately reduce anxiety and other “trauma-related symptoms” (Perry, 2009, p. 243). Therefore, it is arguable that frequent engagement in these repetitive, rhythmic activities likely played a major role in the healing or recovery of these children.

Activities That Organized the Disorganized Brain

Media reports also alluded to the tranquility the Sensorial activities brought to the children, and eyewitnesses pondered the extent to which this tranquility was caused by the Sensorial materials’ ability to encourage clarity of thinking and eliminate confusion (Tozier, 1911). For instance, one eyewitness who had observed children engaged in these Sensorial exercises wrote, “Nervousness gives way to tranquility. The happy tranquility to which the children come after a few weeks of independent work with the sense-training exercises is perhaps the most noticeable feature” (George, 1912, p. 26). Cromwell also conveyed to Montessori her opinion that working with these materials provided “a veritable cure” of all the children’s ills (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 37). Other observers suggested that the Montessori Sensorial materials were hugely beneficial to the children because they were meticulously designed to enable them

to focus their attention on a single task and element such as color, shape, or weight, thereby eliminating unnecessary distraction and fostering a sense of clarity and calm upon task completion (Fisher, 1912).

As noted above, contemporary research shows that neural dysregulation can often occur after exposure to trauma, leaving the child feeling chaotic and subject to constant confusion because of the intrusion of sudden and unsolicited fragmentary memories that mix up past and present experiences (Sorrels, 2015). Overall, it seemed that the Montessori Sensorial activities helped to reorganize the disorganized brain (caused by trauma) through their emphasis on the meticulous sorting, comparing, contrasting, and categorizing of objects (Phillips & Phillips, 2016). This engagement in repetitive activity with scientifically designed materials, which incorporated gradations and sequencing into their construction, arguably played an important role in the children's recovery; all of these activities are now known to have a regulatory function and to facilitate healing via what neuroscientist Bruce Perry called "patterned, repetitive, neural input to the brainstem" (Perry, 2009, p. 243).

The Prevention of Mental Strain by the Use of Muscle Memory

Eyewitnesses noted that the Montessori Method, by its use of *muscle memory* (i.e., a type of memory that involves committing a specific motor task into memory through repetition), avoided exposing the children to mental strain. Specifically, media reports (e.g., Tozier, 1911) alluded to how the children in Montessori's early schools learned to feel sounds and numerals as the teacher guided their fingers over Sandpaper Letters and Numbers so that they could develop a muscle memory of their shapes. Likewise, a range of objects was used to teach mathematical principles, including, for example, long rods that required the children to stretch out their arms to hold the longest rod. The basic premise underlying these approaches was that they helped the child embody both language and mathematical concepts through the use of muscle memory, which was thought to reduce mental strain (Tozier, 1911) and in turn help with recovery. Stevens (1912) claimed that Montessori, "with a physician's knowledge of a human being and a teacher's insight into child life... shows us how to protect the nervous system from strain" (p. 81). Another observer wrote, "The most conspicuous of Maria Montessori's triumphs is that of teaching quite young

children, without putting the smallest strain on their faculties, first to write and then to read," (Tozier, 1911, p. 6); she added that Montessori "goes personally into the classes to show her teachers how to handle the children so that their nerves may be kept calm and their brains left un-taxed" (Tozier, 1911, p. 132). Some eyewitnesses were aware of Montessori's understanding of the neurological implications of her methods. One of them (Stevens, 1912) wrote that Montessori "realises the plasticity of the nervous system and the importance of building into its tissues by developing muscle memory, sensory associations, habitual reactions" (p. 81). Stevens appeared to be using the word *plasticity* as we would today, to denote the quality of being easily shaped or molded. In summary, it seemed that these kinds of activities, based on muscle memory and the embodiment of concepts, helped protect the brain from becoming overtaxed. Contemporary authors have noted that children who have suffered adversity and trauma usually live in a constant state of alertness because they are continually scanning the environment to try to protect themselves and possibly others from danger (Treisman, 2017). This state can leave the brain overtaxed and stressed, so any expectation or requirement to absorb academic content may place an intolerable strain upon children; absorbing academic content via muscle memory clearly avoided strain, as evidenced by the fact that the children voluntarily kept repeating the exercises (Fisher, 1912; Tozier, 1911).

The Promotion of the Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice

A further factor identified as important to Montessori's apparent success in providing a healing environment was her promotion of what we now know to be key principles of TIP: safety, collaboration, empowerment, and choice (Fallot & Harris, 2009).

Safety. Supporting children to feel safe is an essential principle of TIP (Fallot & Harris, 2009). Our analysis revealed that physical and emotional safety were ensured in Montessori's schools by several practices: the promotion of positive relational interactions, the absence of rewards and punishments, the use of self-correcting materials, and the facility for individual activity. Let us elaborate.

The promotion of positive, relational interactions in the schools helped reduce fear in the children and promoted a feeling of safety. Referring to the children from the Roman psychiatric hospitals or "asylums," Montessori wrote:

When these children from the streets and from the asylums entered my school they were greeted with hearty manifestations of welcome and with genuine cordiality. For the first time they were made to feel that they were wanted and desired. (Montessori, 2008, p. 264).

Early eyewitnesses described the children's relationships with their teachers as warm, affectionate, and respectful (Bailey, 1915; Cromwell, 1916/2006; Fisher, 1912; George, 1912; Montessori, 2008; Tozier, 1911). One eyewitness (Bailey, 1915) described how the directress, when responding to a little boy's state of withdrawal (the child in question had lost both his parents in the Messina and Reggio Calabria earthquake), would stop beside the boy's chair and "hold his hand, kindly for a minute in hers, or just bend over him, smiling straight down into his face" (p. 38). She would then repeat the words, "No one will hurt this little man of ours. He loves us and we love him" (p. 38). She comforted the child repeatedly with loving words "until one day her patience reaped the prize of Bruno's [the boy's] answering smile and she felt his two hungry little arms clasping her" (p. 38). Montessori instructed her teachers to always be mindful of a child's possible exposure to traumatic events. She told them to consider the child:

Has the child had any frights, or other kinds of shock?... If the child is difficult or capricious, we seek for possible causes of this in the life he has led hitherto.... If we know what upsets have occurred at each period of the child's life, we can estimate their gravity and probable response to treatment. (Montessori, 1967, p. 196)

Montessori was effectively instructing her teachers to ask themselves not "What is wrong with this child?" but rather to consider the question "What has happened to this child?" just as recommended in recent trauma literature (Perry & Winfrey, 2021); in this respect, too, she was considerably ahead of her time. Many eyewitnesses, as well as Montessori herself, observed the absence of aggressive behavior or bullying among the children (Fisher, 1912; George, 1912; Montessori, 1964; White, 1914), as well as the children's genuine concern for and helpfulness toward each other, which featured prominently in many reports (Bailey, 1915; Fisher 1912; George, 1912; Montessori, 1964; Tozier, 1911; White, 1914). For example, White wrote that "very little reproving was done. Disputes went on in the playground, but for the most part no one interfered, and it ended....

The atmosphere was one of tranquility, love and trust" (White, 1914, p. 52). Current research points toward the centrality of attuned, responsive relationships in the healing process (Cherry, 2021; Maté, 2019; Treisman, 2017), which suggests that the promotion of positive relational interactions as part of the overall Montessori approach played a key role in promoting the recovery of these children.

The absence of rewards and punishments would have enhanced the children's feeling of safety. Media reports announced, "Rewards and punishments are rigorously banished from the Houses of Childhood" (Tozier, 1911, p. 10). Eyewitnesses noted that this removal of rewards and punishments helped reduce the children's anxiety and made them feel safe (especially those who had been exposed to physical abuse), thereby preventing retraumatization (Bailey, 1915; Tozier, 1911). Moreover, regarding rewards, recent research suggests that rewards can be harmful in that they may lead to feelings of being manipulated or controlled, and children who have been exposed to trauma have often been manipulated and controlled, frequently by the very people who were supposed to care for them (Treisman, 2017). Thus, rewards run the risk of retraumatization, which, according to much contemporary research, is to be avoided at all costs (Alexander, 2019; Jennings, 2019). This finding suggests that Montessori's removal of rewards and punishments may have had considerable merit and contributed positively to the children's sense of safety and their overall healing.

The provision of "self-corrective" materials (Fisher, 1912, p. 73)—that is, materials that indicate error, allowing the user to repeat the activity until the error is corrected—most likely provided the children with a feeling of safety because children who have experienced abuse have found that asking for help frequently leads to humiliating criticism or ridicule (Sorrels, 2015). Furthermore, self-correcting exercises can arguably help build resilience because of their requirement that users repeatedly correct their own mistakes. This necessity to correct one's mistakes may lead to a kind of mild adaptive stress, or what neuroscientist Bruce Perry called "controllable, predictable stress," which ultimately "helps build resilience" (Perry & Winfrey, 2021, p. 194). The continuous building of resilience, coupled with the experience of successful mastery of activities, leads to the development of autonomy and self-esteem, both of which are vital to trauma recovery.

The provision of opportunities for individual activity ensured a sense of physical safety. Many eyewitnesses indicated that, although group activities such as singing or dancing took place daily, individual activity was frequently chosen by the children themselves, often for protracted periods of time (Fisher, 1912; White, 1914). The children designated their own personal space by spreading a mat on the floor, on which others were required not to walk. This practice enhanced their feeling of safety. Children who have experienced adversity or trauma often feel a strong need for solitude to process their emotions without the added stress of having to engage with others (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). In this respect, individual activity provided the children with a safe space in which to process their emotions.

Collaboration. Research also shows that collaborative activity can be healing for children who have experienced trauma because it removes the feeling of being “disconnected or separate from others,” often felt by children who have experienced adversity or trauma (Craig, 2016, p. 82). Many eyewitnesses commented on the amount of spontaneous collaboration among the children, the positive effects of the mixture of age groups, and the amount of peer-to-peer teaching that took place. For instance, George (1912) wrote, “I have never ceased to be impressed by the fact that this method made it possible for children of different ages to work together. . . . The big ones helped the little ones, and the little ones watched the big ones” (p. 26). These collaborative activities appeared to promote a strong sense of connectedness to others and, in that respect, had a therapeutic effect.

Empowerment. Eyewitnesses commented frequently on the remarkable level of confidence and empowerment evident in the children (Fisher, 1912; George, 1912; Tozier, 1911; White, 1914). This sense of confidence and empowerment came about through their growing independence, which was achieved through mastery of the exercises, especially the Practical Life skills. Achieving independence is very important for children who have been traumatized because it enables them to have some level of control over their lives, thereby leading to a sense of empowerment. This result can have therapeutic benefits for trauma-affected children because one of the aspects of traumatic experience is the sense of helplessness and powerlessness that often accompanies it (Treisman, 2017).

Choice. Many eyewitnesses observed the children’s freedom to choose their own activities and to spend as

much time as they wished engaged with them (Fisher, 1912; White, 1914). Freedom of choice is especially important for children who have been exposed to adversity or trauma because they have often previously experienced coercive control (Treisman, 2017); thus, providing choice can have an empowering and healing effect on them.

In summary, the application of these approaches resulted in indisputable psychological healing in the four groups of children described earlier, eventually contributing to the recognition by “child-specialists” (Montessori, 1936, p. 193) of Montessori schools as “Health Homes (*Case della Salute*)” (Montessori, 1966, p. 181). Moreover, when Montessori addressed the British Psychological Society in 1919, “the keynote of the meeting was the question whether the work that she is doing will eventually make the work of the ‘nerve-specialist’ superfluous” (Radice, 1920, p. 139). In addition, Hugh Crichton-Miller—the famous Scottish psychiatrist and founder of the Tavistock Clinic in London, a mental health facility, who translated Montessori’s address—was reported as saying, “When the Montessori system is established in all schools, almshouses will have to be set up for the psychoanalysts” (Radice, 1920, p. 139). It is significant that Crichton-Miller’s work centered on developing psychological treatments for shell-shocked soldiers during and after World War I.

The four groups of children exposed to the Montessori Method demonstrated psychological healing in several ways. First, the children from the “asylums,” (Montessori, 1964, p. 31), who had been excluded from schools precisely because they could not learn, subsequently learned to read and write so well that Montessori presented them for the State Examinations; they passed, much to the shock of her colleagues, who considered her achievement to be “miraculous” (Montessori, 1964, p. 38). Second, the children from San Lorenzo, who were fearful, silent, without expression, and totally lacking in social skills on the opening day of the school, were reported to have become confident, talkative, full of expression, and extremely sociable in a short period of time (Fisher, 1912; Montessori, 1964; Tozier, 1911). They also were reported to have developed both practical and precocious academic skills. Most of them started writing at the age of 4 and reading shortly afterward (Tozier, 1911). Their overall development was so remarkable that professionals from the fields of journalism, medicine, social science, education, politics,

and religion traveled to see them with their own eyes (Fisher, 1912). Third, the children who survived the Messina and Reggio Calabria earthquake—who were “numbed, silent, absent-minded,” (Montessori, 1936, p. 152), unable to eat or sleep, and suffering night terrors—reportedly became calm and happy and began to excel in both practical and academic activities such as reading and writing. Again, educators from all around the world came to see them. One such eyewitness (Marguiles, 1913) wrote:

It is difficult to describe what now happened in America, and I believe that it is unique in the history of education. A veritable frenzy took possession of educators. Educational magazines, scientific magazines, newspapers in the North, South, East, and West brought full-page illustrated articles on the work of Montessori and her Case dei Bambini” (p. 497).

She then remarked that, in correspondence she had with Professor Howard Warren of Princeton University, he made a statement regarding Montessori’s Method:

My own field is psychology, and I am quite prepared to meet any attacks from that quarter. My interest in Montessori’s method arises from the fact that it is good psychology. (Marguiles, 1913, p. 502)

Fourth, the French and Belgian refugees, who were initially in a state of stupor, incapable of understanding, and “frightened at the approach of anyone” (Montessori, 2013/2017, p. 37), were also reported to have become calm, happy, and engaged in various occupations, such as the care of plants and birds, drawing and modeling with clay, exercises with the Sensorial materials, and exercises with Sandpaper Letters and the Movable Alphabet (Cromwell, 1916/2006). Cromwell also reported that the children covered the blackboards with simple words and shortly afterward were able to write letters to their fathers in the trenches. She added that they subsequently engaged in the advanced activities of the Montessori curriculum for older children, with great success.

Montessori’s Proposal for Trauma-Informed Courses for Teachers and Nurses

The third and final theme identified from the analysis relates to Montessori’s proposal to establish trauma-informed training courses for teachers and nurses to enable them to better meet the psychological needs of

traumatized children, particularly by war and natural disasters. These courses would form part of the work of an organization she hoped to establish and call the White Cross. She envisioned this as a sister organization to the Red Cross but with the specific aim of addressing the psychological needs of children who, as victims of such adversities as wars and natural disasters, were displaying the signs and symptoms of trauma. A 1916 newspaper article (“The White Cross: Montessori’s Scheme”) reported that Montessori, “whose method has a wonderful calming influence on nervous children,” (para. 1) was making plans to deliver “a theoretical and practical course in the Montessori method as especially applied to children under war conditions,” (para. 2) as part of a larger program to be delivered “with the assistance of medical specialists in nervous diseases” (para. 2). The article implied that this was to be a large-scale project that would “send out working groups to France, Belgium, Serbia, Romania, Russia, and other European countries” (para. 3). A similar article published in 1917 (“The White Cross: Care of Child Victims”) reported that the aim of the White Cross was to “restore the injured child-mind to normal activity and joy” (para. 2). Later, in 1917, while in San Diego delivering a formal address, Montessori suggested that her proposal for a trauma-informed course as part of the work of the White Cross reflected the culmination of years of active work and reflection on “the treatment of the nervous” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 39). She said, “My long study and work as a physician and then as an educator have led me to carefully consider the care of the nervous system” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 39). Mayfield (2006) also highlighted Montessori’s understanding of the importance of the child’s psychological as well as physical health:

Montessori realized that, while providing for the physical and medical needs of children was essential during disasters, their psychological and emotional needs should also be addressed. Her recognition of the traumas of victims of the Messina earthquake, plus her observations of schools for war refugee children in France, and the devastation of World War I contributed to her call for an international organization to address these children’s needs. (p. 5)

Mayfield (quoting Babini & Lama, 2000, p. 288) further pointed out that, as early as 1915, Montessori “expressed her wish to found an organization” to be called “una croce bianca dei bambini” [a white cross for children] (Mayfield, 2006, p. 5).

Montessori emphasized that an essential element of the White Cross organization would be the preparation and delivery by an interdisciplinary team of an intensive, free-of-charge course to prepare what she called *teacher-nurses* to rehabilitate and restore mental health to these troubled children. These White Cross workers would be a combination of nurses and teachers who would “specialize in nervous diseases and psychic or mental ills” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 40). She suggested that these workers “should be trained by nerve specialists, who should put to the use of these individuals all that science has discovered in order that they may care for and cure these nervously suffering children” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 40). Montessori (1917/2013) also emphasized that these teacher-nurses should learn “special methods of education,” (p. 40), by which she meant the Montessori Method, which she said Mary Cromwell had described as “a veritable cure” (p. 37) of the war-torn children’s ailments.

Montessori spoke authoritatively about the role of education as a response to children suffering with mental health difficulties, stating emphatically that “the treatment of nervous diseases cannot be by medicine and may properly be called education” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 39). She highlighted the urgent need for the coming together of experts in medicine and science to inform this intensive program for teacher-nurses. She also proposed a detailed study to fully investigate trauma and traumatic responses in these children. It appeared to her that “an organization of people preparing to go to the assistance of these children should first make a study of the child—a wide study based upon observations of the various psychological phenomena exhibited in these war children” (Montessori, 1917/2013, p. 40). However, while Montessori was tireless in her efforts to gain support for the establishment of the White Cross, her proposal was ultimately unsuccessful.

Discussion

Currently, there is a strong interest in finding ways to incorporate trauma-informed practice into education (Alexander, 2019; Cossentino, 2016; Craig, 2016; Jennings, 2019). Our findings reported here show that the Montessori Method, as practiced in the early schools, was by its very nature both trauma informed and trauma responsive. After years of research and working intensively with vulnerable children, Montessori found a way of helping many children recover, to a greater or

lesser extent, from adversity and trauma so that they could enjoy life, thrive, and excel. Essentially, she created an environment in which children who had been harmed by adversity or trauma could benefit therapeutically. This was achieved by the children’s daily engagement in a range of daily practical, sensorial, academic, and mindfulness-based activities that involved music, movement, dance, art, and horticultural pursuits. The children were free to engage in these activities at their own pace, and all of these activities appeared to have a healing impact on their neurological, social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. This healing impact appeared to lead directly to positive learning and academic performance, as well as other aspects of overall well-being, such as improved self-esteem and independence. A central element of the Montessori Method appeared to be the freedom the children were given to select their own materials and activities and to engage with them for as long as desired. Essentially, the children controlled their own therapy and dosage. This practice is surely unique in the history of education. Another key distinguishing factor underpinning Montessori’s approach to trauma was that healing or the promotion of recovery was not seen as an add-on but instead was woven into the very fabric of the school—the materials, the approaches, the teachers, and the entire school environment. Again, considerable evidence today suggests that such whole-school approaches offer the most effective means to tackle mental health and well-being and to incorporate trauma-informed approaches within schools and other educational settings (Cole et al., 2005; Craig, 2016; Walpow et al., 2016).

All evidence suggests that Montessori’s pedagogical approach was deeply influenced by her involvement with trauma-affected children, to the point that in later life, she began to see mental health and well-being as fundamental to education (Montessori, 1917/2013). This understanding of the vital importance of mental health is very much in line with contemporary thinking and research that focuses not only on the need to support the mental health and well-being of children in schools, but also on identifying ways to incorporate TIP into education to specifically address the impact of ACEs on children’s social, emotional, and cognitive functioning (Alexander, 2019; Craig, 2016; Jennings, 2019).

Throughout her life, Montessori was relentless in advocating for schools that promote and support psychological well-being in children so that they might be better able to find joy and happiness, whatever their

circumstances. The question now is “How can we build on this?” This question will be the focus of stage two of our study, where we will incorporate the findings from this documentary analysis of archival accounts of Montessori’s early schools with the contemporary knowledge base of trauma and trauma-informed practice to design an ongoing professional-development program, initially directed at practicing teachers, both Montessori trained and non-Montessori trained. The program will be designed to facilitate an understanding of how the mind and body are affected by trauma and the different coping strategies used by children. This program will draw on the key aspects of the Montessori Method that proved effective in facilitating psychological healing in children as revealed in our historical analysis, and it will also be grounded in the key principles of TIP (i.e., safety, collaboration, empowerment, choice, trust, respect for diversity [Fallot & Harris, 2009]). This program will be delivered and tested (in service) in a number of Montessori and non-Montessori preschools, with the aim of continuing and building upon Montessori’s important early work.

Acknowledgment

The research conducted in this publication was funded by the Irish Research Council under grant number IRC GOIPG/2020/1500.

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Book Review

The Best Weapon for Peace: Maria Montessori, Education, and Children's Rights

(George L. Mosse Series in Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History)

by Erica Moretti

University of Wisconsin Press, 2021, 296 pp., 6 x 9 inches, 34 b/w illus., US\$79.95 (casebound), ISBN 9780299333102

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Keywords: *Montessori, peace education, children's rights*

In recent years, European scholars including Valeria Babini, Luisa Lama, Letterio Todaro, and Christine Quarfood have been leading an academic reassessment in book-length monographs of Maria Montessori's life and intellectual legacy. Valeria Babini and Luisa Lama's (2000) biography, *Una donna nuova: Il femminismo scientifico di Maria Montessori* [A New Woman: The Scientific Feminism of Maria Montessori], places Montessori in the context of Italian intellectual movements, especially feminism. Letterio Todaro's 2020 study, *L'Alba di una nuova era* [The Dawn of a New Era] examines Montessori's work in the context of the global Theosophical movement. Christine Quarfood's (2017) study of Montessori's life, *Montessoris pedagogiska imperium: Kulturkritik och politik i mellankrigstidens Montessorirörelse* [Montessori's Educational Empire: Cultural Criticism and Politics in the Interwar Period], forthcoming in an English translation, examines the

intellectual history of Montessori's pedagogy and sheds new light on her decade-long collaboration with Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini.

Fortunately for scholars who don't read Italian or Swedish, Erica Moretti's intellectual biography of Maria Montessori, *The Best Weapon for Peace: Maria Montessori, Education, and Children's Rights*, helps bridge the gap. Moretti, a professor of Italian at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, writes in conversation with fellow European researchers and builds on their work to present this English-language examination of Montessori's pacifism that places her as a central figure in 20th-century global humanitarianism, disaster relief, peace activism, and social reform.

In Moretti's retelling, we see Montessori deploying peace in action, engaging with Italian global leaders including Pope Benedict XV, Mahatma Gandhi, Rukmini Devi Arundale (Indian Theosophist and founder of

Indian classical dance), and Benito Mussolini, and existing in contradictory states of pacifist visionary and pragmatic and adaptive compromiser. Along the way, Moretti develops a portrait of Montessori continuously working to support children and families in the most vulnerable conditions—Italian peasants, earthquake orphans in southern Italy, and traumatized children after World War I—as she lobbied the Pope to establish the White Cross and envisioned a ministry for children’s rights in each country.

Moretti’s book consists of six chapters that develop how Montessori understood pacifism and worked to implement it as a series of “concentric circles of influence” (p. 13): the first circle is the development of a child’s state of internal peace, involving both the body’s ability to move gracefully and the mental state of acting with empathy for those around them. The second circle is the impact of the child in the family, and the third and final circle is a state of social peace.

Building on the work of Italian historians Luisa Lama and Paola Trabalzi, Chapter 1 places Montessori’s intellectual development of the 1890s in the Italian context of public health (then called social medicine and moral hygiene), feminism, and nation-building. These efforts help counter the representation of Montessori as a singular genius; rather, she developed her ideas in wide-ranging conversation with many of her peers in Italy and elsewhere. Although her work with disabled children before creating the first *Casa dei Bambini* is well documented in other Montessori biographies, Moretti adds new context by sharing details of Montessori’s work with rural Italians living outside Rome. While her work addressing urban poverty is well established, this information provides an important rural setting in which Montessori applied and developed her theories. In Chapter 1, Moretti also shows how the aesthetics of the Montessori classroom—a tranquil environment that stimulates a feeling of peace—was part of broader urban-redevelopment efforts. Italian urban planners who were Montessori’s contemporaries believed, as she did, that the poorest of society could be transformed through redesigning spaces for living and learning.

Chapter 2 brings us Montessori in the middle of the First World War as she considered how her educational method could provide peaceful rehabilitation to support children experiencing the traumas of war. At a time when society was just beginning to develop language to talk about soldiers who were traumatized on the battlefield, Montessori understood that children who

had experienced the horrors of war would need what we would now call *trauma-informed education* to support them. Several Montessori schools in Paris and the northern Italian region of Lombardy put the principles into practice, using materials created in workshops staffed by wounded veterans. The solution Montessori proposed, the White Cross, never got off the ground, despite her frequent appeals to the Pope for support. Even so, this idea represented Montessori’s international framework for supporting children in conflict situations, a vision being implemented today by Montessori educators. Moretti also explains why Italian policy makers chose an alternative early childhood model developed by sisters Rosa and Carolina Agazzi, instead of the Montessori Method, as they sought to create a compliant and military-ready next generation.

In Chapter 3, Moretti explains the development of Montessori’s theoretical foundation of pacifism and how it radically differed from the theories of her pacifist contemporaries. Fellow pacifist activists of the time were focused on public demonstrations, conferences, or teaching an explicit curriculum of peace to children. Montessori had a different vision. In a series of London lectures in 1917, she elaborated on the way in which peace was a state that needed to be cultivated from within, espousing that political peace could be created only by developing a new generation of children as agents of peace.

In Chapter 4 Moretti grapples with how Montessori, despite her focus on peace-making, could enter into a period of collaboration with the Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini from 1922 until 1934, accepting urgently needed financial support for her model from the fascist regime to support herself and her family. Moretti explains the compromises made during this time. For example, Montessori downplayed her interest in pacifism, sending representatives to global pacifist conversations about the rights of children throughout the 1920s but not directly participating. As she moved away from global activism, she returned to Italian nation-building efforts through education and medicine, work that had characterized her early career as she sought to expand and institutionalize her curriculum around Italy.

In contrast to other scholars who argue that Montessori was apolitical or unaware of the extent of fascist violence, Moretti argues that Montessori was a “keen political observer” (p. 126) who saw an opportunity to capitalize on Mussolini’s desire for greater international legitimacy for the Italian Fascist

regime by tying himself to her method. With Mussolini's financial support, in 1924 Montessori changed the name of the Italian Montessori organization—Società Amici del Metodo (Society of Friends of the Method)—to its current name, Opera Nazionale Montessori. By 1926, Montessori served as the honorary president, with Mussolini appointed as the organization's actual president. The regime helped open schools and a training center in Rome and supported several Montessori journals. Fascist education took a deliberate turn away from Montessori, starting with the leadership of Achille Starace, who sought to increasingly fascistize the Italian school system. In the 1930s, Montessori rediscovered her voice in favor of pacifism (developed further in Chapter 5), while fascists began to speak of “Montessorianism without Montessori,” (p. 140). As a result, the link between the regime and Montessori no longer became tenable. Montessori left Italy, ultimately settling in the Netherlands, where her organization, Association Montessori Internationale, eventually established headquarters.

Finally, Chapter 6 examines how Montessori's conception of what Moretti calls the outermost circle of pacifism, the idea of cosmic education, developed through her almost decade-long sojourn in India from 1939 to 1946 and 1947 to 1949. Here, Moretti provides a thoughtful addition to the limited published scholarship about Montessori education in India (Debs, in press; Leucci 2018; Tschurenev, 2020). In particular, she discusses how Theosophist Rukmini Devi Arundale, a classical dancer who popularized the *bharatanatyam* dance tradition and supported the revitalization of Indian art traditions, was a significant influence on Montessori's evolving conceptions of art and cosmic education.

Moretti's thematic study moves chronologically, but readers must possess a solid grounding in Montessori's biography to follow the many moving parts. I continuously marveled at Moretti's ability to connect such a large number of social, political, and educational ideas to Montessori's conception of peace-making in education, even if I sometimes I struggled to keep track

of how all of the threads fit together. Researchers and Montessori educators will find this work illuminating for the way it provides social context into Montessori's ideas and pedagogical methods. Importantly, it further expands the circles of Montessori's intellectual endeavor by connecting it to scholarship of 20th-century European history, Italian studies, and peace studies.

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