

TEACHING CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION ONLINE AND FACE-TO-FACE: A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract: *With the dramatic rise of diversity in American schools, the need to prepare teachers to work with this population, and the increasing popularity of online instruction, teacher educators and researchers need to pay greater attention to the effects of online instruction. This study examines and compares the impact of a critical multicultural education (CME) course on students' learning through two modes of instruction—online and face-to-face. The course was designed in accordance with the key principles of multicultural education and taught in the same semester in a Midwestern university in the US. Thirty-six students participated in the study: 19 students were enrolled in the face-to-face class and 17 in the online module. Analysis drawn from a multiple-case study design indicated no significant difference in students' transformative learning as a result of participating in a face-to-face or online class.*

Keywords: multicultural education, teacher education, transformative learning, online instruction

Introduction

With the dramatic rise of diversity in American schools, universities and colleges across the country have created multicultural teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers to work effectively with students from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Grant & Sleeter, 1998; Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001). Most of these programs, however, tend to focus on “softer forms of multiculturalism” (Reiter & Davis, 2011), which does very little to challenge students' understanding of culture and race (Banks, 2004). The courses are usually designed to train teachers with pragmatic skills and personal awareness instead of preparing them in accordance with the key principles of multicultural education, such as critical consciousness and a commitment to educational equity and social justice (Gorski, 2009). As a result, preservice teachers' attitudes toward diversity tend to remain unchanged (Reiter & Davis, 2011).

Courses that emphasize a more “critical multicultural approach” (Gorski, 2009) to

teacher education often demonstrate positive results on raising students' awareness about race, culture, and discrimination (Sleeter, 2001). Most studies in this area, however, examine traditional courses, where students are physically present in class (Ambe, 2006; Bruna, 2007; McNeal, 2005). Some studies investigate blended/hybrid courses with online components, such as online threaded discussion (Barntmeier, Aragon, & Folkestad, 2011), and a few investigate purely online courses (Akintunde, 2006; Brown, 2010). Comparative studies between online mode of instruction and face-to-face (FTF), however, are not very common in the field of multicultural education. The study presented herein aims to investigate this unexplored area. More specifically, this study examines and compares the impact of a critical multicultural education (CME) course on students' learning through two modes of instruction—online and face-to-face. The

CME course was offered spring 2013 in a Midwestern university in the US. I was the instructor of both classes.

Theoretical Framework

Gorski's (2009) typology of multicultural teacher education (MTE) programs and Mezirow's (1991, 2000) theory of transformative learning informed the theoretical orientation of the CME course as well as the data analysis.

Gorski (2009) defines five approaches to diversity teacher training, each of which falls into one of the three categories: conservative, liberal, and critical MTE. The CME course integrated elements from both liberal and critical MTE. The liberal MTE programs use either a *teaching with cultural sensitivity and tolerance* approach or a *teaching with multicultural competence* approach. The *teaching with cultural sensitivity and tolerance* approach aims to prepare teachers to be tolerant to difference and sensitive to diversity, particularly through an examination of personal biases and prejudices. This approach places great emphasis on self-reflection, respecting human diversity, and celebrating differences. The *teaching with multicultural competence* approach aims to equip teachers with knowledge and practical skills to implement multicultural curricula and pedagogical strategies, enabling them to meet the diverse learning needs of students. The emphasis is on preparing teachers to successfully implement culturally responsive teaching, which is to use the background, knowledge, and experiences of students to inform their lessons and methodology. The critical approach to MTE is defined into two strands: *teaching in sociopolitical context* and *teaching as resistance and counter-hegemonic practice*. The *teaching in sociopolitical context* approach engages teachers in a critical examination of the systemic influences of power, oppression, dominance, and inequity on schooling and

society. The focus of this approach is to critically examine dimensions of systemic oppression (racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so on) and investigate how these dimensions contribute structurally to an unjust and inequitable educational system. The *teaching as resistance and counter-hegemonic practice* approach prepares teachers to be agents of social change and to engage in counter-hegemonic teaching practices and social activism. In this approach, teachers are encouraged to resist, and to prepare their students to resist, systemic oppression by critically examining teaching materials, deconstructing normalcy, and addressing issues of social justice through their curricula and beyond. Both approaches within the critical MTE typology draw on critical theories, postcolonial theories, and social justice education to incite teachers in a critical examination of systemic oppression. According to scholars in the field, the critical MTE is "the only variation of MTE which has potential to attempt any meaningful sociopolitical change that could promote equity in education (Reiter & Davis, 2011, p. 44).

The course examined in this study integrated the four approaches described above. The objective of this course was to scaffold students through each stage in order to prepare them to be agents of social change and engage in counter-hegemonic teaching practices. As Gorski (2009) argued, "the values and skills promoted in each of these approaches are important to a holistic MTE" (p. 316). Effective teachers need pragmatic and pedagogical strategies to be multiculturally competent (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Sleeter, 2005). They need to be aware of their own biases and prejudices (Boyle-Baise, 2005), and they need to learn to critically examine the systems of oppression and inequity in society and schooling before they can become agents in social change and engage in social justice.

In addition to Gorski's (2009) typology of MTE programs, this study also draws on Mezirow's (1991, 2000) theory of transformative learning. According to Mezirow (2012), "Learning occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind" (p. 84). Frames of reference are structures of assumptions and expectations that frame our points of view and influence our thinking, beliefs, and actions. Frames of reference may be within or outside of our awareness.

Our values and sense of self are anchored in our frames of reference. They provide us with a sense of stability, coherence, community, and identity. Consequently they are often emotionally charged and strongly defended....Who we are and what we value are closely associated. (Mezirow, p. 84)

For transformative learning to occur, we need to engage in critical self-reflection of our taken-for-granted frames of reference. It is often a threatening emotional experience because we have to become aware of our assumptions and their supported ideologies. It has both individual and social dimensions and implications because it demands that we become aware of how we developed our knowledge and the values that lead us to our perspectives. In transformative learning "we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspective, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective" (Mezirow, 2012, p. 76). Transformative learning may occur through objective or subjective reframing. *Objective reframing* involves critical reflection of an object of study, on what is communicated to us. *Subjective reframing* involves critical self-reflection of one's own assumptions and it is often the most

threatening, "as old perspectives become challenged and transformed" (p. 87).

Another approach to transformative learning, which is of particular interest to this study, is "critical transformative learning" (Brookfield, 2012; Lange, 2004). Critical transformative learning seeks to "foster an individual's consciousness of himself or herself as situated within larger political and economic forces" (Lange, 2004, p. 122). It requires one to realize that personal identity is not a self-contained individual choice but is "shaped by collectively generated and maintained roles, assumptions, images, and expectations associated with one's race, class, or gender" (Brookfield, 2012, p. 139). From a critical theory standpoint, transformative learning is equivalent to recognizing and challenging power dynamics and dominant ideology. The intent of critical transformative learning is not just personal transformation but societal transformation (Lange, 2004).

The approach to MTE adopted in the CME course aimed to promote both transformative and critical transformative learning. Participants were challenged to reflect on their own biases and assumptions (*subjective reframing/transformational learning*), re-evaluate their cultural identity (*subjective reframing/critical transformational learning*), examine their own white privilege (*subjective reframing/critical transformational learning*), explore and examine the practices of multicultural education (*objective reframing/transformational learning*), analyze the sociopolitical context of schooling and society (*objective reframing/critical transformational learning*), evaluate the instructional and curricular hegemonic practices in education (*objective reframing/critical transformational learning*), and think of ways of engaging in counter-hegemonic

teaching and social justice (*critical transformative learning*).

Course Content and Pedagogy

Course content for both online and FTF classes was organized around topics, such as multicultural education theory, culture and education, race and identity, gender and homophobia, inequality in education, teacher expectation, engaging families, multicultural education practices. Both classes progressed synchronically; students were assigned the same set of readings and videos according to the topic of the week and required to submit the same assignments. The only difference in content between the two classes was in the delivery of the final group project. Students from the FTF class presented their group project in class at the end of the semester; whereas, the online students submitted a final paper describing the project.

Pedagogy for each class differed considerably. Although both classes were centered on group discussions, they differed in its structure and quality. The online students participated in small-group discussions through online threaded discussions. I strategically assigned them to different groups every week based on my observation of their frames of reference (Mezirow, 2012) and disposition to multicultural issues. My goal was to challenge students' frames of reference, so I mixed students who displayed greater resistance to multicultural education with those who were more open and committed to multicultural issues. I only participated in the discussion at the end of the week to clarify points of doubt or confusion. Occasionally I challenged them in their assumptions and perceptions. The FTF class met once week for a three-hour period. Students participated in small- and large-group discussions, drama activities, drawing, collage, and individual self-reflection activities.

My Role as Instructor

As the course instructor, I was in control of shaping the course content as well as the teaching and learning environment (Taylor, Tisdell, & Hanley, 2000). My theoretical orientation and epistemological beliefs informed my curricular choices and my teaching. Like critical theorists, I believe reality is known through the study of social structures, power, dominance and control (Foucault, 1980; Freire, 2000). However, like transformative theorists (Mezirow, 2012; Taylor & Cranton, 2012), I believe social change is dependent on personal transformation. Hence, I was very strategic with the selection of course materials and the order and manner in which to present them. I also placed reflection at the center of all activities proposed. For the online class, reflection was embedded in the questions proposed for discussion.

My background and experiences also played a role in how I shaped the learning environment in my classes, particularly in the FTF class. As an "alien" resident in the US, I am very sensitive to how I conduct discussions about the inequities in the American schooling system and society. Although I have lived and worked in the US for over a decade, and experienced the struggles faced by minority groups as a Brazilian citizen, I still feel like an outsider with reduced authority to denounce inequities in a country that I am not a citizen. I, therefore, tend to take a more subdued role and act as a facilitator in my classes. Nonetheless, despite my subdued role, I still believed that my teaching strategies and direct contact with students would play an important role in students' transformative learning. This was the first time I taught an online class and I must admit I was bias against it. I truly thought that the online students would not reach the same level of transformation as the FTF students because of the nature of distance education.

Method

Design and Data

This study used a multiple-case study design. A case study approach was used to allow in-depth analysis of students' responses to the CME course (Yin, 2009). The design involved two case studies—the online and FTF class, and a cross-case analysis. The research questions guiding this study were the following:

1. Has the CME course had any impact on students' transformative learning?
2. What changes in transformative learning did students experience as a result of participating in a CME course?
3. Was there any difference in transformative learning experienced by students as a result of participating in the online or FTF class?

Data collected for this study included students' questionnaire, assignments (response papers and final group project), self-reflection paper, discussion forum (for online students only), and instructor observation notes. All students were asked in the first day of class to respond to a questionnaire about their cultural background and their experience with diversity and multicultural education (see Appendix B). At the end of the course, students were asked to write a self-reflection paper on changes they experienced as a result of participating in the course. Both courses started and ended on the same week. The FTF class included 14 weekly classes, each of three hours of duration over one semester. The online group participated in 13 weekly online forum discussions.

Participants

Thirty-six students participated in the study: 19 students were enrolled in the FTF class and 17 in the online module. The FTF class included four teachers, 12

preservice student teachers, and three students seeking a degree outside teaching. The online module included five teachers, 10 preservice student teachers, and two students seeking a degree other than teaching. The FTF group had one Native American and one deaf student, and the online group had an Arab-Muslim student. The remainder students were all European Americans.

Both groups shared similar academic experience with regards to diversity but differed in their personal experience with it. A similar number of students in both classes had taken 2+ courses in multiculturalism prior to this class. However, a greater number of FTF students (nine FTF against five online students) reported having had significant experience with diversity prior to this class. With respect to students' disposition to multicultural education, ten FTF students exhibited favorable disposition to multicultural education propositions in the beginning of the course; whereas, only four online students exhibited similar disposition.

Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively on several levels. To answer questions 1 and 2, I examined students' responses individually. I looked at students' disposition at the beginning of the course (Brown, 2004), their academic and personal experience with diversity, their focus of reflection throughout the course, intention of engagement in social action and culturally responsive teaching, and the changes they experienced as a result of participating in the course. To answer question 3, I aggregated students' individual responses from each group and performed a comparative analysis between the two groups.

Data were coded inductively, however, they were informed by Gorski's (2009)

typology for evaluating approaches to MTE programs and Mezirow's (1991, 2000) theory of transformative learning. A set of categories based on these two theoretical approaches was initially established for coding. As new patterns emerged, new categories were created (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Once I finished coding the data from the FTF class, I revised the categories, collapsed them into appropriate themes, and revised the entire coding for accuracy. For the online group, I aggregated the data into the categories already established (Creswell, 2013). Only one additional category was added. The online forum discussion was coded separately since the FTF class had no equivalent data. Finally, I determined frequencies and percentages of students' responses to look for trends in individual and group learning. All data was coded and analyzed with NVivo, a computer software program appropriate for qualitative data analysis. Coding included over 18,000 references across the two groups.

Findings

Analysis of the data resulted in 18 categories collapsed into four main themes: (a) disposition to multicultural education propositions; (b) learning related to cultural identity, bias, assumptions, discrimination, and prejudices—*teaching with cultural sensitivity*; (c) learning related to the implementation of culturally responsive teaching—*teaching with multicultural competence*; (d) learning related to power, dominance, inequity, injustice, and oppression in schools and society—*teaching for social justice*. A detailed chart with the categories and themes can be found in Appendix A.

Has the CME course had any impact on students' transformative learning?

Data analysis suggested that the CME course contributed to students'

transformative learning. Thirty-three out of 36 students indicated that they had experienced perspective transformation as a result of participating in the course. As discussed earlier, transformative learning occurs when we engage in critical reflection and self-reflection and re-evaluate (transform) our assumptions and frames of references (perspectives) "to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective" (Mezirow, 2012, p. 76). Changes in frames of reference varied across individual students. Most students (24) reported several changes in their frames of reference at the end of the course; whereas, a smaller number (9) reported fewer changes (more details on the changes in frames of reference is provided below). The three students who reported no changes in their frames of reference at the end of the semester demonstrated strong resistance and disagreement to most multicultural propositions from beginning until the end of the course.

What changes in transformative learning did students experience as a result of participating in a CME course?

Changes in frames of reference across students were mostly related to culturally sensitive and social justice issues. Forty percent of the statements reported in the final self-reflection paper addressed changes related to cultural identity, biases, assumptions, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination (*teaching with cultural sensitivity*), and 40% reflected changes in knowledge and assumptions with regards to issues of power, dominance, white privilege, inequity, injustice, and oppression in schools and society (*teaching for social justice*). Twenty percent of the statements reflected changes in understanding related to multicultural education theory and practice (*teaching with multicultural competence*). The excerpts below illustrate some of the

changes in frames of reference reported in the self-reflection paper:

This term has opened my eyes in several ways. First, I am more aware of the biased culture that I was raised in and the benefits I receive from it just because of my race. I have also learned new ways to combat such prejudices and avoid being disconnected from my students' cultures (teaching with cultural sensitivity).

I had been exposed to race issues in schools before through other classes, but this class really made me see how serious and wide spread the issues are. I knew that segregation was happening in some districts because of housing and city plans, but I did not realize how much disparity there was between the different schools. I also did not realize how wide spread this problem is in the U.S. Being aware of the problem is one of the first steps to being able to help do something about it. I appreciate that this class helped make me more aware (teaching for social justice).

This course has provided me with a deeper understanding of my beliefs, privilege, and my culture. I was encouraged to be inquisitive about the ways that I think and conduct myself. I often attribute my personality and ways of being and thinking to the way I was raised. Although it is easy to place a cause and effect relationship on my present person and my childhood, I have been challenged to evaluate my beliefs beyond the influence of my childhood (teaching with cultural sensitivity).

In addition to changes in frames of reference, 30 students demonstrated engagement or intention of engagement in practices related to social justice. Engagement in social justice can take

many forms and be enacted at several levels (Johnson, Oppenheim, & Suh, 2009). It may vary from a simple disposition to act differently according to one's new perceptions of power and oppression to actively engage in social activism in the public arena. Most of the students in the course were preservice teachers unfamiliar with issues of social justice presented in the course. Thus, their level of engagement or intention of engagement in practices related to social justice was commensurate with their experiences and level of comfort. Some students demonstrated more concern with issues of power, inequity, and oppression, and counter-hegemonic teaching, whereas others seemed to pay greater attention to issues related to prejudice and discrimination in schools and society. The quotes below illustrate some forms of engagement in practices related to social justice:

Inclusion is so important in America and, yet so many cultures and people are excluded because of the culture that I identify with. I now actively think about white privilege and try to address my actions differently.

I have already found that in my lessons, I am doing whatever I can to present multiple points of view. This is what these students need the most and what I am going to focus on as a teacher. Most likely, I will be teaching on a Native American reservation. This alone presents some unique challenges as a Non-Native individual. However, I am now better equipped to see things from multiple viewpoints. This is important, because in order to be a multicultural teacher, you have to be a multicultural person. Then, you have to model it accordingly.

I used to assume that teachers taught differently because of individual differences and not necessarily

because of cultural or class differences. Through this class I realized that some of the styles and phrases I used were because of my race and class. This helped me realize that I need to change those so that students from other classes and/or races have access to what I was wanting. I have a full time aide in my room and she is African American. After we read about giving direct instructions verse vague suggestions, I started listening to how she interacted with the students. I found that she did use more specific language than I did. I have started using more specific language and I have seen a difference in the behaviors of my students.

With regards to students' focus of discussion and reflection throughout the course—one of the key factors in students' transformative learning (Mezirow, 2012), data suggest that students were mostly interested in topics concerning social justice and culturally sensitive issues. Among the 33 students who reported changes in their frames of reference, 17 focused their reflection and discussion mostly on the sociopolitical context of school and society, white privilege, and hegemonic teaching; six concentrated on culturally sensitive issues (cultural identity, biases, assumptions, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination); and six focused on both strands of topics. Below is an excerpt from an online threaded discussion that illustrates students' focus of discussion and reflection:

I could sit here and argue that my teachers did not discuss harassment or LGBTQ issues enough in class or provide positive examples of the culture and in truth, those things probably are partly to blame. But in reality, it was fear that kept me from doing those things that I knew was right. Fear of losing the power of "normal."

Coming to grips with these feelings helps me to understand why my students and why the students in the video might stand by and not say or do anything when bullying takes place. It doesn't validate it by any means but it does help begin a conversation about it and how to erase that fear. All teachers, no matter new or experienced, must work together to provide safe environments for all students, no matter their own personal beliefs (examines the sociopolitical context of school and society and reflects on social justice).

Finally, data analysis suggests that prior academic and personal experience with diversity may be a factor in students' transformative learning concerning multicultural and social justice issues. Of the 24 students who reported several changes in their frames of reference, 11 had limited academic and personal experience with diversity and 8 had either limited academic experience or limited personal experience with diversity. Conversely, three of the students who displayed fewer changes in frames of reference reported extensive academic and personal experience with diversity.

Was there any difference in transformative learning experienced by students as a result of participating in the online or FTF class?

Data analysis indicates no significant difference in transformative learning between students who participated in the online class and those who took the FTF class. Similar number of students in both classes, 13 FTF students (68%) and 11 online students (64%) reported several changes in their frames of reference at the end of the course. Among the students who reported fewer or no changes in frames of reference, six were in the FTF class and six were in the online class.

Changes in frames of reference across the two groups were very similar and mostly related to culturally sensitive and social justice issues. Data from the final self-reflection paper show that 39% of the statements reported by the FTF students and 43% reported by the online group reflected changes in knowledge and assumptions with regards to issues of power, dominance, white privilege, inequity, injustice, and oppression in schools and society. Similarly, 39 % of the statements from the FTF students and 41% from the online group addressed changes related to cultural identity, biases, assumptions, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination. Only 22% of the statements from the FTF students and 16% from the online group reflected changes in understanding related to multicultural education theory and practice.

Students' engagement or intention of engagement in practices related to social justice shows slight variation between the two groups. Although the same number of students in both classes, 15 FTF students (79%) and 15 online students (88%), demonstrated signs of engagement in this area, there was variation in the topics chosen for the practice of social justice. Eleven FTF students (58%) reported having engaged or intention to engage in social action related to issues of power, inequity, and oppression, and/or counter-hegemonic teaching in comparison to eight online students (47%). Conversely, seven online students (41%) stated having engaged or intention to engage in action that addresses prejudice, bias, stereotyping, and discrimination in schools and society in comparison to four FTF students (21%).

In regards to students' focus of discussion and reflection, data analysis also indicates slight variation between the two groups. Although most students from both classes, 16 FTF students (84%) and 15 online students (88%), concentrated their

reflection and discussion on topics concerning culturally sensitive and social justice issues, the focus of interest varied across the groups. Thirteen FTF students (68%) focused their reflection and discussion mostly on the sociopolitical context of school and society, white privilege, and hegemonic teaching in comparison to nine online students (53%). Conversely, five online students (29%) concentrated their reflection and discussion mostly on culturally sensitive issues related to cultural identity, biases, assumptions, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination in comparison to two FTF students (11%). One FTF and one online student concentrated their reflection and discussion on both strands of topics. The remainder students, three FTF and two online, focused their discussion on either multicultural competence or a combination of multicultural competence and culturally sensitive issues.

Data collected from students' final project indicate a reverse trend in students' transformative learning across the two groups. The topics selected by the online class for the final project were mostly related to social justice issues and counter-hegemonic teaching while the topics selected by the FTF class were mainly related to culturally relevant teaching. Forty-nine percent of the statements in the online group projects referred to social justice issues and counter-hegemonic teaching while only 22% of the statements in the FTF group projects addressed similar topics. Conversely, 59% of the statements in the FTF group projects reflected culturally relevant teaching while only 23% of the statements in the online projects were coded in this category. Finally, 28% of the statements in the online projects referred to culturally sensitive issues in comparison to 19% of the statements coded in the FTF projects.

Finally, data suggest that the online group could express more openly and freely their

resistance to multicultural education arguments and propositions than their FTF counterparts. Fourteen online students (82%) expressed resistance to multicultural education arguments and propositions while 10 FTF students (53%) expressed similar resistance. Both groups expressed resistance to multicultural education arguments and propositions and to accepting white privilege and/or racism. Only the online group expressed resistance to multicultural education by “blaming parents for problems in education.”

Discussion

Overall, the findings across the two groups were very similar. Despite the differences in the delivery format and each group’s composition—the FTF group had more personal experience with diversity and appeared more favorable to multicultural education propositions in the beginning of the course than the online group—students from both groups experienced similar transformational learning as a result of participating in this course. Although the three students who reported no changes in frames of reference belonged to the online group, I question whether there would be any difference if those students were in the FTF class. These students displayed the same disposition from beginning until the end of the course. They started the course with their fixed beliefs, resisted most multicultural propositions presented in the course, and ended the semester with, apparently, the same beliefs.

Both groups reported changes in frames of reference in equivalent categories. Frames of reference are structures of assumptions and expectations that frame our points of view and influence our thinking, beliefs, and actions (Mezirow, 2012). The majority of changes in frames of references reported by both groups were related to issues of power, dominance, white privilege, inequity, injustice, oppression, cultural identity, biases, assumptions, prejudices,

stereotypes, and discrimination. Less than a quarter of the statements reported by the two groups addressed changes related to multicultural competence. These findings reflect the content of the course materials, where greater emphasis was placed on culturally sensitive and social justice issues.

Students’ focus of discussion and reflection across both classes was also similar. Reflection is an important indicator of transformational learning. In fact for transformative learning to occur, one needs to engage in reflection. As Mezirow (2012) argues, the transformative learning process emerges through critical reflection on what is communicated to us, and critical self-reflection of our taken-for-granted frames of reference. Students across both groups focused their discussion and reflection mostly on culturally sensitive and social justice issues. The FTF class concentrated more on topics related to social justice while the online group focused their attention mostly on culturally sensitive issues. However, for the final project, the online class demonstrated greater attention to issues of social justice while the FTF group focused mostly on culturally relevant teaching. The FTF final project was a surprise, considering the attention to social justice displayed by this group throughout the semester.

With regards to engagement in social justice and counter-hegemonic teaching, the two groups again displayed an analogous pattern. Preparing teachers to be agents for social justice is key in critical multicultural education (Gorsky, 2009). Both groups demonstrated signs of engagement in the practices of social justice, although once again, the FTF class showed greater concern with matters related to inequity, oppression, and hegemonic practices in school and society, whereas the online group split their attention between these issues and

problems related to prejudice, bias, stereotyping, and discrimination.

The similar findings between the two groups came as a great surprise to me. As mentioned earlier, I had some bias against online teaching and believed that my presence in the classroom and my teaching strategies would have some weight on students' transformative learning. The unexpected findings of this study prompted me to reflect on what *might* have facilitated students' transformative learning across both classes. Although it is not possible to know precisely what have contributed to it (as this was not the purpose of this study), we can examine a few factors that might have facilitated the process.

Limited experience with diversity may have contributed to students' transformative learning since students are more prone to experience change in learning when exposed to information that is new to them. The choice of course materials and the emphasis placed on reflection and self-reflection in both classes may also have had significant impact in the transformational learning process. The quotes below illustrate this point:

When I began this course, I already considered myself a pretty multicultural person. Growing up in a multiracial family, on a Native American reservation, and with the guidance of a particularly open- and equality-minded mother has greatly contributed to my own tendency toward acceptance of diversity. In spite all of this, I am extremely impressed at the ways this course has broadened my awareness of multicultural issues. The emphasis on self-reflection is something I have really absorbed from this class, and I hope to make this a large part of my teaching process, and even my general living process.

Reading this week's articles and watching this week's video was a really great experience for me and altered my view of Native Americans and their role in education and how they learn differently. Growing up and working on a reservation I think it was/is really difficult to completely consider all the factors that play into the dynamics of family life and education on the reservation. We often thought that so much was given to the natives and that they are being repaid for something that happened a long time ago, however, these readings and the boarding school video really opened my eyes again to the struggles they endured and continue to endure.

A third factor that might have contributed to students' transformative learning was the emphasis on group discussion in this course. Students in both classes were required to discuss the course materials in small groups every week. For the online class, I strategically placed the students in the forum group discussions according to my observation of their frames of reference and disposition to multicultural education, so that students who were more open and committed to multicultural issues could challenge those with more resistance and less experience in multiculturalism.

My role as instructor might have also influenced students' transformative learning. As mentioned earlier, I took the role of facilitator in both classes. In the FTF class, I was very careful in how I framed my position about the topics; I also tried to create a non-threatening environment so that students would feel encouraged to express their thoughts and points of view. In the online class, my role was as more distant as I did not interfere in their weekly forum group discussion, waiting till the end of the week to post my comments. Nonetheless, despite my "non-intrusive" role, I was very active and deliberate in designing the course activities

and questions for both classes to prompt students to reflect on specific topics.

The last but not least factor that might have facilitated the transformational learning among online students is the less threatening environment. Online communication encourages students to express their views more freely because of the absence of physical contact with the instructor and their colleagues (Barntmeier et al., 2011). As stated earlier, the online group expressed much more openly their resistance to multicultural education than the FTF group. In addition to the absence of physical contact, online students have more time to reflect and respond to their colleagues' posts. If they feel challenged or threatened by a comment, they can

choose to ignore it or they can address it later after reflecting upon it.

Concluding Remarks

The findings of this study are encouraging, considering the increasing popularity of online instruction in recent years. Although the findings cannot be generalized because of the relative small number of participants, this study sheds light on the potential of teaching critical multicultural education online. With the dramatic rise of diversity in American schools, the need to prepare teachers to work with this population, and the increasing popularity of online instruction, teacher educators and researchers need to pay greater attention to the effects of online instruction.

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Appendix A

EMERGED CATEGORIES INFORMED BY GORSKI'S (2009) TYPOLOGY AND MARIZOW'S (2000) THEORY OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING		
DISPOSITION TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION PROPOSITIONS		Favorable frames of reference to MTE at the beginning of the course
		Concerns about implementing MTE
		Resistance to MTE arguments and propositions
		Resistance to accepting white privilege
APPROACH	COURSE OBJECTIVES	TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING
TEACHING WITH CULTURAL SENSITIVITY	Examination of culture, identity, personal biases, assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices.	Reflects cultural identity (race, SES, gender, ethnicity, religion).
		Identifies and reflects on biases, assumptions, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination (self and others)
		Examines ways to: 1) address biases, assumptions, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination in schools and society; 2) become more culturally sensitive.
		Engages or intends to engage in action that addresses biases, assumptions, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination in schools and society
		Reflects on own learning as it relates to identity, culture, biases, assumptions, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination.
TEACHING WITH MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE	Equip teachers w/ knowledge and practical skills to critically evaluate and implement MTE, as it relates to culturally responsive teaching.	Reflects and critically evaluate existing educational practices
		Reflects on culturally responsive teaching and/or examines possibilities for implementing it
		Implements or intends to implement culturally responsive teaching.
		Reflects on own learning as it relates to multicultural education/multicultural competence.
TEACHING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE	Provide teachers with tools to critically examine influences of power, dominance, inequity, and injustice on schooling and society. (<i>Teaching in sociopolitical context</i>). Prepare teachers to be agents in social change and engage in counter-hegemonic teaching and social justice. (<i>Teaching as resistance and counter-hegemonic practices</i>)	Recognizes, identifies, and reflects on the issues of power, dominance, inequity, injustice, and oppression in schools and society. Realizes that curriculum and pedagogy are shaped by dominant ideologies.
		Recognizes and reflects on white privilege and other forms of privilege.
		Reflects on critical multicultural education and/or examines possibilities for change in education and society
		Engages or intends to engage in counter-hegemonic teaching and/or social justice.
		Reflects on own learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power, dominance, inequity, injustice, and oppression in schools and society. • White privilege

Appendix B - Student Questionnaire/Lucila Rudge

Name: _____

1. Which degree program (undergraduate or graduate) are you enrolled and what is your certification area?
2. Are you currently teaching, or have you taught before?
3. Please share about your history and cultural background (ethnicity, family, region where you grew up, religion, values, etc.).
4. Have you taken any courses on multicultural education, diversity awareness, inclusion, or similar topics before? When?
5. Please share any experiences you have had with cultural diversity either in your personal or professional life.
6. Has the above experience had any impact in your knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity?