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Perceived Benefit of a Special Education Multicultural Class

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis study was to explore and examine the experiences and perceptions of special education preservice teachers (PSTs) preparing to work with students with mild to moderate or severe disabilities relative to completing a required special education multicultural class as part of their required course of study. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was incorporated to collect and analyze naturalistic interview data from 24 PSTs who were closest to the real-life contexts of this study. Each participant had completed the same multicultural class one year prior to being individually interviewed. At the time of the interviews, participants had completed a teaching practicum and were participating in their teaching internship or had completed a teaching internship. Findings indicated that as a group, PSTs perceived six overall benefits from the special education multicultural course. Perceived benefits included the benefit of an expanded understanding of culture; the benefit of assignments that led to greater understanding; the benefit of moving from a lens of stereotypes, fixed mindsets, and single stories towards more empathic understandings; the benefit of leveraging a safe classroom environment in order to consider personal biases; the benefit of shame rejection protocols providing emotional space for participants to work on recognizing privilege; and the benefits of learning from instructor's characteristics and pedagogical teaching strategies. Furthermore, findings from the data analysis indicated that students reported more easily applying broader concepts from the multicultural course to teaching contexts. On the other hand, findings from the data also indicated that students seemed to struggle more with applying specific teaching strategies to new teaching contexts.

Moving forward, those who teach this special education multicultural class may consider including more targeted role-plays and directed learning experiences that hone in on specific teaching strategies as applied to a variety of teaching contexts. PSTs need to practice and receive feedback on applying teaching strategies that are culturally sensitive. Additionally, strategies should stem from empathy-based personal self-reflection of one's cultural impact.

Keywords: special education, preservice teachers, multicultural class, interpretative phenomenological analysis, benefits, stereotypes, shame

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Multicultural education (ME) courses in the U.S. are designed to broaden pre-service teachers' (PSTs) perceptions about diverse cultures; influence PSTs to develop more inclusive and positive beliefs about all learners; and to assist PSTs to generalize pedagogy learned in multicultural education (ME) coursework to teaching contexts by designing and delivering culturally responsive (Gay, 2002) and relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) lessons that benefit all learners (Ndemanu, 2018). On the other hand, the absence of adequate multicultural education training for PSTs may be instrumental in preparing teachers who do not recognize or understand how to work with diverse students or their families. Special education teachers in particular, must have the opportunity to uncover and practice any areas in which they lack awareness, pedagogical knowledge or teaching strategies to education all learners who enter their classrooms (Howe & Lisi, 2020). Multicultural education is essential in supporting PSTs to create student-centered classrooms that support all learners.

Statement of Problem

Researchers suggest that PSTs' who participate in ME courses benefit from broadened understandings of diverse students. Arsal (2019) stated:

> Analyses indicated that preservice teachers who were exposed to the critical multicultural education program showed significantly greater progress in their multicultural attitudes compared with teachers in the control group. The results of this study indicate that the integrating critical multicultural education content into teacher education program has a positive effect on fostering preservice teachers' multicultural attitudes. (p. 106)

Researchers have also suggested beginning teachers who develop more positive multicultural attitudes in ME courses are more enthusiastic about teaching, are more

inclusive and more willing to adapt teaching to students who are more culturally diverse (Hachfeld et al., 2015). Often, however, teachers may not be prepared to teach these students who are more culturally diverse, including students with disabilities. Howe and Lisi (2020) suggests that the culturally proficient educator is versed in approximately 15–30 instructional strategies verses the 5–7 non-ME teachers rely on that are traditionally teacher-centered, didactic and content driven. To date, very limited research has focused on Multicultural Education courses geared towards teachers who will work with students with disabilities. This study aims to study the beliefs and attitudes of special education PSTs enrolled in a multicultural education course in relation to meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore and examine the experiences and perceptions of special education preservice teachers (PSTs) preparing to work with students with mild to moderate or severe disabilities relative to completing a required special education multicultural class as part of their required course of study. It should be noted that the researcher purposefully timed the study to be *more than a year* after the PST participants completed the ME course. At the time of the study, all the PST participants had also completed an intensive six-week student teaching practicum as well.

Research Questions

This thesis study explored and examined the following research questions:

1. For special education preservice teachers, what are the perceived benefits from taking a special education multicultural education course (if any)?, and

2. How do special education preservice teachers apply new learning from a multicultural education course to teaching fieldwork such as practicum and/or student teaching contexts (if at all)?

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Each culture has a unique story. It is accumulated with lifestyle, perceptions, and attitudes that were passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, it is essential for a teacher to have background knowledge about various cultures so they can better understand students. Multicultural understanding is a fundamental basis to educate all children, not only children from minority backgrounds (Tiedt & Tiedt, 1995). The United States is known as a melting pot that allows the co-existence of different cultures (DeRienzo, 1995). According to their report in November 2015, the United States Census Bureau (2015) estimated that at least 350 languages are spoken in the United States.

However, the historical controversies relative to multicultural issues and special education teacher preparation continues to evolve (Obiakor & Rotatori, 2014). Kea and Utley (1998) emphasized the importance of having a training program for special education teachers to include multicultural education perspectives in special education programs. This is because educational researchers find an ongoing trend of cultural mismatch between special education teachers and the students in K-12 schools in the United States are increasing in diversity. In 2000, one-third of the U.S. population was composed of non-European populations, including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans (Utley et al., 2000). After nine years, the National Center for Education Statistics reported in 2019 that the population of school-aged children who are White decreased by 11% from 2000 to 2017, while school-aged children from other racial/ethnic increased by 2–9%. The number of school-aged children of color, which includes those of mixed races, has surpassed 50% of students currently enrolled in schools, thus underscoring the need for multicultural education.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education combines theories, paradigms, pedagogies, and concepts from various fields of study. Multicultural education incorporates contents from these various disciplines of study (e.g., LGBTQ+ themes and perspectives; anthropological paradigms; women studies; and social, ethnic, history, psychological, and behavioral sciences) into the curriculum and pedagogical considerations in educational settings (Banks, 2013). One of the foremost goals of multicultural education is to help all learners develop essential skills to navigate effectively in a diverse society (Banks, 2013; Gorski, 2009). Historically, multicultural content has focused on upending discriminatory practices in the U.S. educational system and on preparing mono-cultural preservice teachers (PSTs), who are typically identified as White, to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students. The main focus of the preparation program was the inclusion of students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds (Sapon-Shevin & Zollers, 1999). The meaning of multicultural education always involves working with marginalized groups composed of people of color, people living in poverty, and people with limited access to educational, social, and political opportunities (Sleeter, 2018).

On the other hand, the researchers recently suggested the need to expand the currently limited definition of multicultural education. Because this limited definition that only includes race and ethnicity may prevent PSTs from expanding their learning about other components of multiculturalism, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and religion (McCall, 1995). Over 20 years ago, there was an attempt to broaden the definition of multicultural education, but the change was minimal. The main focus of research continued to reflect single cultural aspect studies. The research conducted in 2013 about the history of multicultural education also shows the limited boundary of the multicultural education that only includes race, class, and gender as major multicultural factors (Banks, 2013).

However, gender identity and sexual orientation have become important factors in working with adolescents (Salkind et al., 2019). Nevertheless, because of the limited definition range, teachers felt unprepared and reported fear about facing LGBTQ+ issues (Fredman et al., 2015). Therefore, it is essential to support teachers to be aware of the impact of any pedagogical implications they may propose in their classrooms. This will serve both teachers and students as a platform to develop a deeper understanding of the LGBTQ+ community (Caceres, 2016). Along with the expanding context of multicultural competency, which includes not only ethnicity and race, but also socioeconomic status, gender, age, culture, natural origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and language, growing a better understanding for multiculturalism and its educational influences will enhance the teacher preparation and student participation (Yarhouse et al., 2018). Currently, researchers focused on redefining multiculturalism with primary and secondary dimensions of culture emerging (Howe & Lisi, 2020).

Primary and Secondary Dimensions of Culture

Primary dimensions of culture include the aspects that are relatively difficult to change. People are born with most of the primary dimensions because they include race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, language, and gender. These elements are essential for preservice teachers to understand because they are often instrumental in forming a child's self-concept. Examples of the elements may include special Italian food and music. A young student with Italian heritage may work with her family members to prepare Italian food and music and present them in class.

Secondary dimensions of culture refer to the aspects of life that one can have more freedom to choose. These dimensions can be modified or reshaped more easily than primary dimensions. They include hobbies, school experiences, family educational histories, behaviors, parenting style, and participation in affinity groups. The interaction between

primary and secondary dimensions of teachers and students create daily pictures in school. Therefore, teacher education programs, including multicultural education courses, must allocate time for preservice teachers to uncover elements of individual primary and secondary cultural identities. These elements influence the teachers' selections of curriculum, teaching materials, and instructional strategies that will affect students throughout their teaching career. This reemphasizes the importance of a broader definition of multicultural education since it supports the improvement of teacher preparation programs as well as multiple forms of diversity in current K-12 schools.

Pre-Service Teacher Resistance to Multicultural Education

While some studies indicate that many PSTs who participate in ME classes are prone to positive dispositional changes, some studies provide different suggestions. For example, there may be some PSTs who are afraid of changes and prefer to remain closed to diversity issues (Gay & Howard, 2000). Ndemanu (2018) proposes that one barrier to PSTs fully embracing the tenets of ME may be anticipatory fear. This researcher also suggests there may be a correlation between fear and a PST teacher disposition to resist ME:

> Whether it is fear of . . . individuals who are culturally, linguistically, economically, racially, religiously different or anticipatory fear of the reactions of the people we know when we break the community "norms" by embracing people and things we have been socialized to fear. (p. 3)

In other words, PSTs may resist improving their understanding of multicultural education because of their worry about splintering family, cultural group, or peer relationships by breaking their socialized beliefs.

Multicultural Education and Special Education

Many researchers accept perceptions of professionals in the special education field, as well as those working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners that are

underinformed about multicultural education (Obiakor & Green, 2014). The concept of multicultural education grew out of the civil rights movement and has been around since the 1960s (Obiakor, 2007). However, it has only been within the last 10 years or so that researchers have recognized that the tenets of multicultural education embody well the educational complexities of special education (Obiakor & Green, 2014). Consequently, the spheres of multicultural education have now been enlarged to include the field of special education and is called Multicultural Special Education (Obiakor, 2007). Multicultural Special Education includes deliberate understandings that learners with special needs are particularly vulnerable for misidentification, misassessment, miscategorization, misplacement, and misinstruction.

Additionally, Multicultural Special Education specifically seeks to provide special education preservice teachers with effective pedagogical knowledge to link diverse students' backgrounds and experiences with teachers' traditional schematics in order to forge common understandings and promote successful academic outcomes (Bennett, 2003; Gollnick & Chinn, 2004). Researchers note it is critical that special education teachers respond to and help their learners connect personal and familial cultural knowledge to learning (Gay, 2002). When special education teachers encourage diverse students' use of cultural knowledge and individual learning styles, they open opportunities for students to adapt and build on existing skills (Irvine, 2003).

Framework for the Study

The course/study implemented the framework of empathy which is contrasting to a framework of power. Multicultural issues are often heated indicating a need to communicate through empathy instead of power. A framework of empathy focuses on empathic concern, perspective taking, shame resilience, and empowering individuals, not on systems. On the other hand, the framework of power derives from disruption, blame, being "woke," war or

fighting to win, and a systems approach. The framework of empathy seeks to connect and understand individuals while the framework often is dividing positive connections. The following paragraphs will provide greater depth into each framework.

The framework of empathy includes the four characteristics listed above: empathic concern, perspective taking, shame resilience, and empowering individuals not systems. The empathic concern is the capacity to share feelings and express warmth, compassion, and concern for others. This concern applies the notion to acknowledge the experience of another person. Empathetic concerns lead into perspective taking which is the tendency to understand another's point of view. Every individual has their own perspective, however pursuing the perspective of another to understand without a need to change their perspective follows the framework of empathy. In sharing feelings and seeking to understand, the framework resists shaming. Shame resilience is moving towards empathy (courage, connection, and compassion) and away from shame (fear, blame, and disconnection). Shaming disregards the acknowledgement of another's experience as validated but instead forces a notion of wrong or right, causing humiliation on the individual and disregarding the individual human experience. The last aspect of the framework of empathy further prevails over shame by empowering individuals, not systems.

The Fall 2018 multicultural course included deliberate teaching pedagogies and sequencing of material applying the framework of empathy. The strategies in the multicultural course were continual modeling, fear reduction (privilege, bias), first thought second thought (intra psychic), safety, and gentle awareness work. The pedagogy of continual modeling dispels the expectation of expectations that students must incorporate the learning without the teacher him/herself applying the same principles. The teacher sought to be empathetic in student concerns and addressing topics with different perspectives, all as they experienced the material together. The teacher additionally modeled shame resilience by

empowering students with gentle awareness that privilege and biases are not inherently stating the individual is evil. The empathy framework included a gentle awareness both in discussions and activities.

The modeling of gentle awareness of personal privilege and biases without shame, aimed to reduce fear of addressing multicultural topics. The byproduct of reducing fear is providing a safe environment to explore, without negative consequences, personal privilege and bias as well as those interconnected with multicultural topics. A skill that was modeled was "first thought, second thought" which is an intrapsychic model. "First thought, second thought" is when an individual recognizes their first thought through the lenses of their culture (including biases and privilege), that can reflect stereotyping or uninformed assumptions, then the individual acknowledges this lens and chooses what to do with the second thought.

The framework of power and disruption tends to mean that a person or people need to be abruptly changed/aware of their current view or actions. Disruption in this study will be described as a sharp force indicating a rendering of current existence, separating, and ending blissful unawareness. In multicultural education, the brash action to ensure the awareness of those who do not recognize their part in multicultural issues, often to imparts a feeling of guilt or shame. This indicated that one individual must then take upon themselves to directly disrupt another individual. The course instead applied a gentle disruption in which the individual self-reflections and builds awareness of their relation to multicultural issues. Gentle disruption may seem less effective but potentially has lasting effects on the individual evaluation of oneself on other issues besides the one of disruption, of which this study sought to investigate.

In the framework of power, blame focuses on the wrong and right in which someone usually needs to repay or act in a redemptive manner, often considered restitution.

The concept of being "woke" is used in many ways, the meaning used in this study comes from *We Are Woke: A Collaborative Critical Autoethnography of Three "Womxn" of Color Graduate Students in Higher Education* (Ashlee et al., 2017). In the article, one meaning of woke was stated as "cultivating a critical awareness of privilege and oppression and doing whatever is in my capacity to dismantle those forces" (p. 93). The article focuses on the community of *womxn* scholars of color standing together to combat systemic White supremacy by empowering their awareness and voice. The concept of being woke provides them the shield to identify the impact of systematic racism and sexism (critical awareness) as well as to fight back. In fighting back, they are striving to have their voice more heard. In this theory of wokeness, only a portion of the population is isolated to address the concerns of systems of oppression and shame for being oneself (separate from White supremacy culture). The wokeness is described in a manner that in some ways calls a whole group racist and misogynist or calls out those who refuse to acknowledge the racist in themselves (particularly White individuals). Consequently, labeling a whole group results in continual fighting between groups rather than working towards building a whole new community. The movement strives to build a community by "co-creating knowledge," with vulnerability and freedom to breathe personal expressions, however only identifies that this community came about with and for *womxn* scholars of color (Ashlee et al., 2017).

In this study we sought to broaden the scope of community and wokeness by applying the framework of empathy which strives for all to acquire "cognitive dissonance." Cognitive dissonance is similar to critical awareness in the sense, one recognizes privilege and oppression in the world, but then recognizes the impact of culture on oneself without shaming others or self for such influences. For example, all students would self-reflect on the perspectives from which they draw their own conclusion and actions, and whether those actions reflect racial tensions or other cultural issues without assigning their whole identity as

wrong or right, or bad or good. The perspective is generally that those in White privilege need to wake up to their privilege and biases, generally in a shameful manner that is abrupt or jarring (similar to being suddenly woken up).

The framework of power emulated in war, naturally occurs through a fight for power or authority. The war focus often derives the outcome as having a winner and loser. Multicultural issues seem to follow a pattern of war in that those of power must lose and those without must win over those in power. Additionally, in a framework of power, those in power strive to maintain the power and usurp authority. In the study, power was important especially in proceeding through the framework of empathy. Power in an empathy framework, is used to empower others not for one's self-centered personal gain. Furthermore, war with a winner and loser seeks to separate the sides instead of collaborating for inclusive success.

In a system approach the framework of power highlights those in power to enact actions for a whole under certain criteria, forgetting the individual. Criteria to address large numbers can be useful, such as screening for markers related to autism. Although markers may be similar, individuals with autism are not the same, meaning everyone must be considered on an individual level. This is particularly important when addressing multicultural special education since a high priority of special education is *individual*s with individual education programs (IEP). A music education application to multicultural education further emphasizes individuality with an "intercultural approach," described in these words, "These perspectives would not merely reproduce insider/outsider or same/different dichotomies, but would expand and reshape the borders of "normality" and "comfort zones" within the area of music teacher education" (Carson & Westvall, 2016, p. 37). Reflective of individuals with disabilities, Carson and Westvall (2016) seek to expand

what is normal or comfortable in our interactions and learning. The multicultural special education course in this study also applied the *intercultural approach*.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Using a qualitative inquiry approach, the researcher conducted an Interpretative

Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to understand how special education preservice teachers in

a teacher education major perceive the purpose of a multicultural course. See Appendix A for

the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter.

Qualitative Approach Rationale

Multiple qualitative inquiry designs were considered in order to understand the

phenomena in this study. Each design (e.g., narrative, phenomenology, ethnography,

grounded theory, and case study) offered different foci for organizing, collecting and

analyzing the data. Elements from these approaches were considered in order to address the

research question, however, to collect and analyze the data, this study used a qualitative

inquiry methodology known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith et al.,

2019). Most often, this type of method is used for work that is focused on individuals'

personalized meanings of a particular phenomenon. It was developed to study how

individuals make sense of lived experiences (Dewinter et al., 2017).

Consequently, in IPA projects, researchers most commonly collect data from

members of a homogenous group who share the same contextual experience (e.g., special

education preservice teachers who participate in a special education multicultural course;

Larkin et al., 2019). IPA combines ideographical (a focus on a deep understanding

participant experiences,) phenomenological (a focus on lived experiences), and hermeneutic

(interpretation by the researcher as a way to gain insight into the experience of the

participants) practices (Smith et al., 2019). In other words, IPA incorporates a double

hermeneutic, which is to say the researcher tries to make sense of the participants (e.g.,

special education preservice teachers) who are trying to make sense of what happened to

them (e.g., participating in a special education multicultural course; Smith, 2011). Researchers incorporating IPA are encouraged to conduct an in-depth analysis of data from each participant and then to look for patterns (both divergent and convergent) across participants.

Participants

Participants in this study were selected by purposeful sampling. Potential participants ($n = 28$) were students enrolled in a program-required, special education multicultural undergraduate course at Brigham Young University (BYU) during the 2018 Fall semester. Each of the 28 students were invited to participate, as part of the BYU's Dean of the McKay School of Education's initiative to gather students' perceptions about the college's multicultural instructional courses.

Of the 28 special education class members, 26 self-identified as female, two as male. All were considered traditional college students—full time undergraduate students between the ages of 18–22 years-of-age. Of the 28, one identified as South Pacific Islander; one as Asian, two As Latina, and 24 as White. Twenty-six signed consent forms to participate in one-one-one interviews. Ultimately, 24 students completed an individual interview. Because all data were de-identified from the interviews, ethnicity and gender were not linked to the participants' interview transcripts.

Interviews were conducted in order to understand the students' perceptions of the undergraduate, special education multicultural course. It should be noted that the interviews in the study took place one year after participants completed the ME course. At the time of the interviews, all of the PST participants had completed an intensive six-week student teaching practicum and a half-year teaching internship.

Data Collection

Data sources for this study included data from previously conducted individual PST interviews. The primary researcher used this extant interview data from a college dean-sponsored multicultural education initiative. The dean's initiative was focused on understanding elements of a special education multicultural course that students found most effective. Written consent from the participants was obtained and interviews were conducted one year following the completion of the multicultural course.

By email, three BYU undergraduate research team members set up interviews. Two of these three undergraduate students also transcribed the audio-taped interviews. These individuals were all women in their 20's.

The interviewers were all graduate students in BYU's Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education. One was a student in BYU's School Psychology Graduate Program and three were students in BYU's Special Education Program. All four interviewers were women ranging in age from 30 to 43. Prior to conducting interviews, the interviewers participated in a 10-hour training focused on conducting qualitative interviews. Additionally, prior to conducting the interviews, each interviewer was supervised in conducting practice qualitative interviews.

Interviewers followed a semi structured interview format. The interview protocol and questions are included in Appendix B. Each participant was interviewed individually by one interviewer. The length of interviews ranged from 30–90 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded digitally by the interviewer and transcribed verbatim by a member of the undergraduate student research team. Transcripts were immediately de-identified. Typed de-identified transcripts and digital audio recordings were uploaded to a password-protected online program, *Box*, for storage.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis (Interview and Observation Data)

The primary researcher used a qualitative analysis methodology called Sort and Sift, Think and Shift (Maietta, 2006; Maietta & Mihas, 2017). The data analysis plan encompassed several phases to identify the most salient themes that emerged from the data from the interviews. For an in-depth analysis, the researcher reviewed data from all interview transcripts. Data analysis progressed through three distinct phases of the Sort and Sift, Think and Shift approach which consisted of data inventory, diagramming, memoing as written reflection, episodic profiles, topic monitoring, mining, and bridging (Curry et al., 2006; Maietta, 2006). To allow the researcher to link emerging discovers and perceptions, the researcher moved iteratively back and forth between phases. Each core phase of the Sort and Sift, Think and Shift method occurred as follows:

Phase One. Each transcript was analyzed as an individual case in an iterative phase. In phase one the researcher read through each case and noted linguistic (use of language), conceptual (possible meanings), and descriptive (content) information directly on the transcripts. The researcher then located significant quotations in the data and generated an inventory of significant data pieces from each transcript. During this phase, the researcher used visual diagrams and memo writing to contemplate the connections within transcripts to key ideas in the analysis. The researcher then completed the above process for each participant. Next, the researcher created an initial report of findings to describe connections and develop initial data profiles for each participant, focusing on how each participant perceived the benefit or non benefit of completing a multicultural course for special education preservice teachers.

Phase Two. In phase two, the researcher grouped the initial comments from phase one analysis to cluster emergent themes based on related data episodes. The researcher then

conducted a cross-case analysis to monitor topics and look for convergent and divergent patterns, attributes and themes across participants' data episodes and profiles. During this phase the researcher took time to mine data from phase one memos and episode profiles. During this phase, the researcher sought to discover connections within and across participant data episodes and profiles. During this phase, the researcher also cross-examined the data to understand how patterns of actions, attitudes and emotions intermingled in the lived experiences of the participants.

   Phase Three. In this phase, the researcher worked to discern shared meaning across developing ideas found in the data. The researcher conducted an expert peer review (described more fully in the section titled, *Trustworthiness and Credibility*) and diagramming techniques from phases one and two to discover, understand and document discoveries. After adjustments were made after the expert peer review, final themes were integrated and synthesized into a final report.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

   Ethical study design practices of individual researchers often determine the trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative study. Further, researchers in the discipline of special education research advocate standards of rigor that ensures the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative study (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Consequently, specific attention was focused on research methods that enhanced the trustworthiness of this study. The researcher used the following research methods to increase the trustworthiness of this study: (a) triangulation, (b) member checking, (c) peer debriefing, (d) clarifying up front biases, (e) sensitive and fair representation of participants, and (f) transparency of researcher positionality. The researcher worked as a teacher assistant during the special education multicultural course, and therefore played the role of participant observer during the study. The professor, Dr. Elizabeth Cutrer-Parraga, who chaired this thesis also taught the

multicultural class. For this reason, the primary researcher and the thesis chair did not participate in the in-depth interviews. Instead, four trained female interviewers, who were members of the broader research team conducted the interviews. In addition, the primary researcher conducted an expert peer review of the findings from phase one and phase two analysis. Members of the expert peer review team included undergraduate students who had completed a special education multicultural course, veteran teachers who had mentored special education preservice teachers during practicum or student teaching, and researchers with expertise in the field of multicultural education. The peer review served to audit the analysis and provided a check to challenge the derived meanings. The outcome of the peer review was to add the discrepant cases to the research narrative in order to provide fair and sensitive representation of all of the participants. The discrepant cases will be discussed in the results section.

Researcher Positionality

The position of the researcher comes from a personal space, as the researcher identifies as bi-racial. As such, the researcher has been in the thick of multicultural conversations and experiences for a lifetime. Experiences have included being rejected by others because the researcher was not enough of one culture or too much of another. The researcher has also experienced others taking and reflecting several specific negative cultural stances toward here. Ironically, most times, these particular stances seemed in opposition to each other (e.g., "You are not really Asian – you are too White." Or "Why are you not excelling – you are Asian – you need to try harder.") These experiences led to confusion and struggle in the researcher discovering and asserting self-identity. Consequently, part of the researcher's positionality is the belief that the "other" has no right to label who someone else is or should be. Rather, the researcher believes that every person goes through an individual and personal process to discover and define what culture entails.

Further, the researcher completed a special education multicultural education course as a preservice teacher. The course carried an overall negative tone. There seemed to be no clear instruction for building knowledge about personal cultural impact (biases and privilege) other than: "You have them and that is bad." In addition, there were no clear instructions about the unique connections between multicultural education and special education.

The last component of the researcher positionality to understand is the researcher's experience with extended family. The researcher, who is bi-racial, married into a predominantly White family. Most of these extended family members chose teaching as a career. Each of these family members completed a ME course. These family members explained that through the ME course they came to understand they have biases and privilege. However, these family members also explained that because of skin color, they felt personally attacked and shamed. Each left the course with the message that there was nothing they could possibly do to be an effective teacher of diverse learners because they were White. In reviewing personal experiences as well as those of extended family members, the researcher concluded that neither set of experiences seemed to prepare special educators to work confidently with diverse learners. Therefore, the researcher entered the study hoping to understand better the benefit of a special education multicultural course and how to help preservice teachers apply learning from the course to real teaching contexts.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Research Question One

The first research question in this thesis study asked: What is the perceived benefit of a multicultural education course to special education preservice teachers (PSTs)? Findings from the data analysis indicated that as a group, PSTs perceived six overall benefits from the special education multicultural course. Perceived benefits included the benefit of an expanded understanding of culture, the benefit of assignments that led to greater understanding, the benefit of moving from a lens of stereotypes, fixed mindsets, and single stories towards more empathic understandings, the benefit of leveraging a safe classroom environment in order to consider personal biases, the benefit of shame rejection protocols providing emotional space for participants to work on recognizing privilege, and a description of beneficial instructor characteristics and pedagogical teaching strategies. Each of these findings of benefit, along with thick descriptions of evidential quotes will allow the participants' lived experiences to be heard in the following section.

Benefit of an Expanded Understanding of Culture

For most students, the meaning of culture was expanded. Indeed, most participants shared that their idea of culture was broadened during the class. One student expressed their experience in the following statement:

You wouldn't notice if you were looking at me, but I'm also Peruvian. I always thought that in order to understand a different culture, you had to know their language. So in order to really understand Peruvian culture, you'd have to understand Peruvian Spanish. I thought in order to really understand any type of culture, you had to really speak that language. This class helped me realize there are other ways to be culturally sensitive. Instead of traveling the world and learning a new language, you

can start by making sure that you are recognizing your biases and checking them.
[MC480126]

Participants discussed how culture is more complex that they originally thought. One student stated, "In the class we looked at a bunch of different things. I learned culture is not just what you eat and what you wear and where you're from, it's a wider spectrum of things" [MC480113]. Another student commented, "This class just opened up my thought processes and my mind to a lot of different things, like certain things that I just didn't even consider" [MC480114].

Similarly, the following participants' experiences acknowledge what was learned in the course about the complex and multidimensional nature of culture.

My perceptions of people are different now—even in my general life. I look at people differently now. Before, well I think institutional racism is real. Before, it's not like I was trying to discriminate against people or knowingly put other groups down and elevate myself—at least not directly. But that's kind of how I was raised. You know you see a Black man walking down the street and you cross the street. Or you see a person with disabilities and you think oh they're not capable. But I learned that is just a perception I didn't question because of how I was raised. Now my perceptions are changing. It's not like you know the worth of a person or the life of a person just by the color of their skin or by what you think is their ability level. This class really helped me to see that people are multidimensional. It's important to be open minded and respectful towards all people and not judge at first glance. [MC480103]

I came into the class thinking oh this would only apply to me if I teach in California, New York, Texas or a border state where there's high populations of students from other cultures. But during discussions in the class I got to thinking about my own high school. There were only two students of color. While they didn't make up the

majority of the class those students still count. And so my perspective changed—all

of our students matter and all of their education matters. Even if there's only one of

them—the one matters, their culture and their background matter, their funds of

knowledge matter. I think the class exceeded my expectations in a lot of ways

because I learned things that I didn't even expect to learn. [MC480103]

Unexpectedly, during the course, two members of the class from different cultural

backgrounds began dating (and later married). Their experiences highlight how they

authentically learned about the complex and multifaceted nature of culture during the course.

My husband and I starting dating during that class. We come from different cultural

backgrounds. My husband is Samoan. His family is Samoan and a lot of his friends

are Samoan. It was kind of weird for him to date someone that was White. And it was

kind of weird for me to date someone who was not White. I had never done that

before. The class was timely for us because it helped us to learn and almost give us

the vocabulary to talk about the issues we were facing as a mixed-race couple. Before,

that class, I feel like maybe we would have just been like, *Oh, it's not a good fit* and

just broken up and moved on and found someone else, you know? But because we

were in that class, I feel like it really gave us, like I said, the vocabulary and the

context to talk about this issue of mixing cultures and how it can affect a relationship.

It helped us so much just to be able to navigate those hard conversations instead of

just avoid them. [MC480116]

Benefit of Assignments That Led to Greater Understanding

In addition to learning that the multicultural was complex and multidimensional,

participants described specific assignments that seemed to help them learn these

complexities.

For one of our assignments we each made a pie and each section represented a different part of our cultural make up. This activity made me realize that everybody, each individual, is made up of so many different parts. It's not really fair to look at someone and just label them with one aspect of themselves. No one is one dimensional. There's so much more to us than any one thing. We're all very diverse. My idea of what culture is expanded more consciously…. and I started thinking about those things more. [MC480105]

Other students expressed their perceived experience in the following comments:

We had a project that kind of ran through the whole semester where we chose an underrepresented group to research that we knew NOTHING about—NO experience about whatsoever. I chose to study about the LGBTQ community. It transformed my whole thoughts and feelings about being a member of that community. It made me aware of my privilege of being straight and so many things that I don't have to worry about because the way that I love is how everyone around expects me to. That really changed my perspective. Then in the middle of the semester, the son of our close personal family friends came out to let people know he was gay. Had I not had her class and this particular assignment, I probably wouldn't have gotten to where I'm at now. It helped me to be way less judgmental and more accepting. [MC480106]

For the course, we had a lot of community experiences where we volunteered. So I went to [Non Profit to support youth younger than 18 who self-identify as LGBTQ+] in [Town Name]. That was just such a great experience to talk with other people and just learn what it means to be an ally for people in that community and, yeah, it was just awesome. And I think at a great time in my life to better understand as LGBTQ issues are becoming more prominent in our political culture right now. Now I feel more informed and more comfortable talking about it. I have a student right now who

is transgender, and I feel like if I hadn't had the experiences in that class, it might

have shaken me a little bit. But I don't even bat an eye because I learned so much

about it through those assignments. [MC480116]

I for sure remember our project towards the end of the semester. She [Instructor

Name] gave us a lot of leeway in deciding how we wanted to approach different

topics and things like that. I thought that was really cool, because we were preparing

to become special education teachers working with diverse learners who so many

different abilities and strengths and weaknesses. She [Instructor Name] would allow

us to take what we learned and channel our strengths to present it. That was extremely

effective. Because I remember for the project, I wrote a song and then performed it

for part of my project. And in other classes that doesn't—you don't really do that, you

know? And so, I just really loved that she would allow us to use our strengths to

demonstrate what we learned. [MC480122]

Benefit of Moving From a Lens of Stereotypes, Fixed Mindsets, and Single Stories Towards More Empathic Understandings

Most participants described having fixed stereotypes prior to the course. "Before, I

did have some cultural stereotypes. Whether that is good or bad, I definitely had that"

[MC480121]. However, participants also described how the course helped them to notice

assumptions that were being made that led to fixed mindset or stereotypical thinking:

Taking the course helped me to begin to learn how to try to understand people for

who they are and where they come from and to not make assumptions. That was a big

thing that we talked about a lot in the course was to not give into stereotypes, to not

make assumptions. It helped me to realize that just like I was making assumptions

about people different from me, I was also making assumptions about members of my

cohort. I was judging them. [MC480107]

Participants described how the course helped them to consider others as individuals, rather than a single story:

> The class still impacts my perspective on when I'm meeting new people or when I'm getting to know people. Instead of thinking *oh, this person is really different from me*, I now think, wait a second, you can't just be focusing on one difference in somebody. I step back and remember I don't know everything that makes them ***them***.
>
> [MC480105]

Participants also described learning to move away from a fixed stereotype to a more empathic lens. "The class taught me to be a more empathetic person" [M480126]. Participants shared how they learned to be more understanding and develop more empathy to four distinct ecologies. These ecologies included family and community members, others in a work environment, peers in their University program cohort and when teaching students.

> **Family and Community Members.** One participant commented,
>
> This class really helped me realize that the culture that you grow up in, or even just the socioeconomic status that you grow up with, changes the way that you see the world. And I kind of knew that before, but in that class I feel like I was presented with data on how much those things influence the way that people perceive and receive education. So yeah, it's helped me to be just more understanding and open and accepting of other people's ideas and thoughts on how things are. [MC480112]
>
> **Work Environment.** The following comments offer two examples of how

participants began to move towards a more empathetic stance even after they completed the course:

> Where I work, there are lots of kids who have been abused in a lot of different ways. We do interviews about whether or not they need foster care. We work with a lot of parents who have experienced domestic violence, and a lot of different types of abuse,

like drug abuse. It would be easy to just be like a blanket statement, these parents are not doing a good job, because they're struggling with these things. But with this class, I have more understanding. Each of these people have a unique experience of what led them to different things. They are….It's more than just a single story. This class helped me to empathize a lot more with individuals who have had really difficult circumstances and made difficult choices. [MC480122]

The class helped me just to judge people less and just be more understanding and empathetic and be willing to keep that in mind when I'm planning lessons and teaching. So, right now I am being mentored by an individual who is gay. I learned so many things in that class about the LGBTQ population, I feel that has helped me to understand better. Also, our speech therapist is from Argentina and English is her second language. The class helped me to understand the way [she] interacts with student[s]. Like the way she teaches her social skills lessons. It is very different than how I would teach it. She uses more stories and she talks more and there's less discussion, but she comes from a more story-telling culture than I do. And [it] works too. [MC480116]

University Program Cohort Members

Participants also described how the course helped them to learn to have more understanding and empathy for peers in their cohort group who were taking the course.

Before this course, there was just really indifference that other cohort members were there. Like, I knew that they were there, but I thought they were just colleagues. But in the class that began to shift to being, like *Oh, these are people that have experiences that are valuable to **me**.* We were able to talk and have deep and meaningful conversations with new people. I really felt like I got to know my cohort

better, which lasted and increased the whole feeling of satisfaction in the whole

program as I've gone through it. [MC480115]

The following participant described how the content of the course helped her to learn

to be more accepting of classmates:

I know that the class made me more empathetic and to think that we don't know what

people around us are going through. Because I came from a very low SES

background, before the course I was just like *there are all these privileged White girls*

*in class with me and they have **no** idea.* But then I learned they've gone through

things and they all have really close friends from different races. It made me less

judgmental as a person when interacting with my peers in my cohort. It changed my

view to be more empathetic in general, and I think that would be because I became

more respectful of other peoples' opinions. I realized that we don't all need to have

the same experience to learn these things. [MC480124]

Similarly, the following participant described how she developed new respect for a particular

member of the class:

One of our classmates is from Korea, and she's very soft-spoken. Our cohort always

called her by her an American name because when we first started the program

together, we were all a little bit intimidated. It was hard to pronounce her name. We

were like *okay, how do we say this girl's name and she doesn't talk a talk a lot and*

there's a lot of women in this group who talk A LOT. So we called her by an

American name. But that class motivated our cohort to learn her Korean name and

use it. Now she is just [Korean Name] to us. And it's kind of funny because now our

cohort—we all know how to say it and we actually teach other people how to say it

and they better pronounce it right. And that was because [Instructor Name] would

always make sure she knew what people preferred to be called and then do that. That

was a really great example to us. And now I can see all the great things [Korean

Name] brings to the table. Even if she is soft spoken, and not a very dominant

personality, she really has a lot of knowledge. [MC480106]

In the following example, a member of the class, who is also a person of color,

described how he learned to talk back against his own version of stereotyping classmates:

I do remember feeling super vulnerable in the class at first because it wasn't hard to

look around and see there was only one other boy. And besides me, there was only

one other brown person in the class, and there was one Asian. The rest of the class

was basically just White. I came into the class feeling already marginalized at times.

So, at first, when I thought of this multicultural class, I'd thought it'd be interesting

just to see White people's opinions. But it actually helped me understand that my

struggles aren't any different than—you can't really base someone's struggles on

their skin tone. Because there were a lot of girls that voiced their struggles on how

sometimes there's backlash about women. About how, *This is the ideal woman, she*

has to be skinny, smart, nice and perfect. And she has to be blonde or she is invisible.

And I didn't really think about that. It goes definitely deeper than just, *Oh, those*

people are White, I'm brown, I could see other people had struggles too. [MC480115]

Benefit of Leveraging a Safe Classroom Environment in Order to Consider Personal

Biases

Almost all of the participants disclosed that an integral part of the class was feeling

safe. Most of the participants shared that because the instructor created a safe space, they felt

like they could venture to talk about hard topics. "She [the instructor] did an awesome job of

making the class a safe environment, and so no matter what, it was a safe place to share

things. That was important, it built community" [MC480114].

The discussions were very powerful. What made it effective was that we were able to share experiences and comments on the readings in a very open way, opinions that might have been hard to share as well as differing opinions. That actually helped me a lot. It helped me to learn how my colleagues felt about that topic and it also helped me see different things that I wasn't able to see by myself. [MC480101]

The instructor just made everyone feel comfortable and safe there. It was safe to talk about anything really and just making time to have discussion and just repeatedly emphasizing that this is a safe place and we're all learning together and that not one of us like knows everything about everything about every culture. So yeah I felt safe in that class. I learned about how other people live and ways that they're different than me. I learned that differences are awesome and that like just focusing on things we have in common with each other is really important. And it's also really important to acknowledge and celebrate differences in people and not just gloss over those or be blind to the ways that people are different from us. [MC480105]

Feeling safe seemed to help some participants feel more confident to become more open to new ideas. "In the class I learned I did not have to have fear. I did not have to be afraid that—*Oh, I might say or do something wrong*. I realized I could be confident and willing to learn from others and where they are coming from" [MC480106]. This participant captured what most of the class members shared that feeling safe seemed to help students become more vulnerable and more willing to grow.

It is really good to be more vulnerable rather than to just try to be closed off. That's a huge thing in multicultural courses, people tend to be afraid to open up and experience things that are different than their way of thinking. There is this fear of, *Well, maybe the way I've been is wrong all my life. And I don't want to be wrong*. But with [Instructor Name]'s class it was like I could say—*Okay, well maybe I was wrong*

before, that's okay—it's fine, but what did I learn from it? And I could move forward

that way. Ironically, when I became more comfortable in the class, I was more

comfortable recognizing biases that I have and learning how my biases can negatively

impact someone. [MC480106]

In particular, when students felt safe, they seemed more confident to notice their own

personal biases. Several students commented on their experience in feeling comfortable and

then noting their biases.

That class became a safe space for all of us to talk and be open and have vulnerable

thoughts and say hard things. I began to feel really open and willing to have hard

conversations about my personal biases or things I was afraid about with teaching

people from different backgrounds or things like that. [MC480116]

When I first got into the class, I would always be trying to say *Well, I'm not biased,*

I'm color-blind! And [Instructor Name] was really helpful in helping me realize that

*No, that's not we want, we want you to **see** color—that makes you **see** people—that is*

an important part of who we are. We want you to be aware of your biases, so that you

can take steps to address them. So that was really helpful in I'm able to recognize my

biases a lot more. Sometimes it feels like no matter how hard I try, I will still have

biases. But I now know there are still steps that I can take to check those. So that's

been helpful. Now, when I'm interacting with people, I'm not pretending that I am all

color-blind, I'm not pretending that everyone is just like me. I can really start to see

others. [MC480126]

The opportunity to discuss difficult topics in a safe environment in ways that were

applicable to individuals' lived experiences seemed to further support participants in

recognizing biases.

People just had all these outlets in class to express themselves individually. In so

many aspects of the course [Instructor Name] really individualized it. For instance,

we even talked about societal expectations that were very current that applied to each

of us. I feel like that made a difference as well. That helped me in starting to

understand bias. This was huge for me—especially in my teaching now because we

have a diverse population at this school. The big thing that I took away was how to

overcome stereotypes, how to overcome bias, that idea of a not seeing people as a

single story stuck out to me. Understanding all people have different circumstances

and stuff. [MC480105]

Benefit of Shame Rejection Protocols Providing Emotional Space to Work on Recognizing Privilege

Many participants described how they were already feeling defensive prior to class

starting, as they expected the class would be very shaming.

I went into multi-cultural thinking that it was gonna be really White-bashing, and it

wasn't! Which was really cool, because it was—I didn't feel like I had to be on the

defensive because of my skin color, I didn't feel like um, yeah. I felt like it was a lot

more of a safe environment, and again, I felt like I was able to really recognize the

biases that I **had** because I wasn't always on the defensive. [MC480126]

I've taken other multicultural classes in psychology and stuff, and a lot of times they

REALLY shame you about White privilege—which is definitely an issue, I recognize

that now. But in those other classes I was made to feel guilty for being in the family

that I'm in. Because my dad's a doctor in the Air Force and so I've been extremely

blessed with the opportunities that I've had for education and for extracurriculars and

things like that. In those other classes I would feel guilty for being born White and

being born into what I'm born into. And so, in those other classes, I just felt—*Okay, I'm sorry, this is what I am*, so I was expecting this class to be the same. [MC480122]

Instead, participants began to realize that they could start to trust the Instructor and that no shaming would be allowed in the classroom.

I had a friend take a multicultural class here at [the University]. She said the whole class was about shame. She felt ashamed of her life—her blessings. Every time she went to class it was *Oh, you're White—Shame on you*! The key about this class was that [Instructor Name] set it up so that no shame was allowed. She taught us *Don't be ashamed of who you are. Don't be ashamed of your background. Don't be ashamed that these things might be difficult. Don't be ashamed of what you don't know. There ARE hard things to know. What I expect is that you are willing to work and be willing to learn and grow*. I was really grateful I wasn't put-down or made to feel shame. That is when I felt like I could trust her [Instructor Name] and the environment of the class. I learned I could now learn these things and be more aware and grow. [MC480106]

With no shaming allowed, participants shared they felt less defensive.

It wasn't just White bashing. I didn't feel like I had to be on the defensive all the time. It's been my experience if you are a White, middle class student in a multicultural class, you know you will be shamed and have to on the defensive. The fact this class wasn't like that—yeah, that was the big thing. [MC480126]

Another participant shared. "I think I just appreciated that it was not a White-shaming class. Most people I know comment that their multicultural classes were. I was really grateful for that because that's not okay either" [MC480125].

With no shaming allowed, participants indicated they could focus on working through the idea of privilege. "I definitely think I became more aware of my White privilege" [MC480118].

Now I realize I have privilege. I guess in some ways, we are all privileged. And in some ways, I'm honestly okay with some parts of my privilege. And I'm not ashamed about that. But I've also found that now I am motivated to be more service-oriented. More aware of those who have less privilege. But I've learned not look down upon them. *Yeah—I check that at the door*. [MC480106]

[Instructor Name] provided a classroom where people could talk openly. She brought topics to light I had never thought about before taking the class. She highlighted issues—yes—but then she allowed us to talk about them in a safe environment. And I definitely noticed a perspective change. I felt like, before the class, I didn't really know much about privilege. Taking the class, I began realizing aspects of my life where I have been privileged. I feel like it's just beneficial for everyone to realize areas where they are privileged. Because then you can see different populations and different groups of people that are underserved or don't have the same privilege that you do. I think it's humbling and it really opens your eyes to the experiences that others have around you. I know it really just opened my eyes to a lot of different issues. [MC480120]

When students felt comfortable enough to start to address privilege, they began to recognize how pervasive privilege presents itself in all areas of society including educational settings.

It's just really opened my eyes to the different problems that do exist in our society and it's really given me an appreciation for underserved communities who do not

have the same privileges that some other people have. It's just really opened my eyes. MC480119]

I think just like the realization that I'm a part of the dominant culture and really what that means and the privilege that it brings me. I think was probably my biggest eye-opener. The way we test students, or the way we design instruction, is all based off that dominant culture. Then realizing that I'm a part of that. And how I can address that. I don't need to feel guilty because I didn't have a choice being born into the dominant culture. But I can change and address that in the way I teach my students. [MC480117]

Participants shared how they continued to recall knowledge learned in the course long after the course was over.

I have noticed that every time I might think what could be classified as a racist or privileged thought, I always go back to that class and roll my eyes at myself and recognize those thoughts are just a bunch of baloney. I tell myself *Oh no, why are we even having that thought,* and I can recognize the privileged thinking for what it is—stupid. That class implanted a lot of accountability in my own heart and head. So when I have those moments where we all fall short. Maybe I judge people the way we are not supposed to, because of that class—I'm like, *okay—pause—this is wrong and because of that I need to change x, y, or z*. [MC480107]

Beneficial Instructor Characteristics and Pedagogical Teaching Strategies

Participants noted personal instructor characteristics as well as teaching pedagogy that seemed to be beneficial in the class.

Instructor Characteristics. Instructor characteristics that seemed to be most valued by the participates included authenticity and inclusiveness. Participants shared that the instructor demonstrated authenticity by admitting when she made mistakes, "when she made a mistake she always admitted it. That's a huge thing to learn as a teacher, when you've messed up, just admit it. And move on. And don't beat yourself up over it" [MC480106]. Participants also described the instructor as being authentic when she demonstrated a willingness to learn from the students in the class. "It was her words and her actions that just showed kindness. She was just honest and vulnerable and was completely open to us and willing to learn from us as students as well" [MC480107].

Finally, participants noted that the instructor demonstrated authenticity by allowing herself to be vulnerable with the students.

She [Instructor Name] wasn't afraid to show emotion and to be vulnerable, so it made all of us, in turn, kind of open up about different things. I feel like she honestly was the key. Because there were times, literally, where we would have heart-to-hearts and I would talk about things that were really hard. I think one time I would even kind of get teary talking about stuff. I don't know, she would just create this really safe environment. [MC480122]

I think what really stood out to me with that class was everyone's ability to be vulnerable with one another. And [Instructor Name] was able to kind of create that environment, especially for all of us that didn't really know each other still very well, because that was at the beginning of our program. And we were able to get to know her a lot better too. [MC480118]

Participants also commented on the importance of feeling as if the instructor was inclusive of all students. "How she did the class made it very inclusive, more people spoke in class, it was a very safe environment to have" [MC480124].

One thing that I noticed with [Instructor Name] was she just always seemed so happy to be there. When she would speak to you, her words and her actions told you that she was not only intentional about teaching but she was intentional about teaching you the way you needed to be taught. She would know that through surveys in asking us what ways we wanted to be taught. She would do that in asking us about our personal lives to an extent that was appropriate of course, and just genuinely trying to see where we were coming from. [MC480107]

Participants also shared about ways the instructor individualized instruction and demonstrated she knew the students.

At the beginning of the semester especially, I would kind of wait and if I felt like there was something really important, then I'd be, like, *Ok, I'll answer this question.* But otherwise, I'm like, *Eh, someone else is probably going to say the same thing, I'm not really going to answer.* And so she would, I felt like every time, even if there were ten people raising their hands, I hardly ever did, but when I did, she was very aware. Like, immediately, she would be, like, *Ok, what do you have to say?* because she knew that I probably wasn't going to raise my hand again for a while. But she was just so aware of each of us and knowing how we would participate, so she would make sure that everybody was heard in their own way and in their own time. I thought that was really good. [MC480121]

I remember she was just—after we had submitted our blogs, the next day that we had class, she had us sit down and was, like, *I'm just really grateful for your thoughts.* And she mentioned people's specific names and she was, like, *I really liked when you mentioned this, you were the one who mentioned that, right?* And it was super specific, her feedback. And you could tell that she really read those things that we wrote. And so by understanding that she actually read the things that I wrote—

sometimes I feel like I've been in classes where you're kind of just forgotten and you're just a number and you just take up a little bit of space in the back of the room and try not to make too much noise, I guess. But in her class you could tell that your presence was missed if you weren't there, and your presence was important to discussions, and it felt like you really had a voice. And she did a great job of just making me feel important and feeling like I should speak out more often. [MC480115]

She made each of us feel individually valued. Which I feel like is hard in a lot of classes because there's a lot of students and turnover, you have new kids every semester. But she, obviously, she knew all of our names. She knew about us, and she was aware of what we were writing in our papers and stuff when we would turn them in. And I even feel like—I don't know, a lot of teachers will memorize names and that's an awesome effort, but they don't really know who you are, they just know your picture, you know? But she genuinely knew each of us. I've had a lot of classes but there's only a few that I can name that I really remember things that we talked about. And for this class, I wanted to do well because I enjoyed it more than I wanted an A. [MC480122]

Pedagogical Strategies

In addition to helpful personal instructor characteristics, participants shared that the pedagogical strategy that seemed most beneficial was that the instructor modeled what she was talking about. "What was really helpful was that [Instructor Name] modeled really good techniques of things that you would do with people that come from different backgrounds" [MC480112]. Another participant described how the instructor modeled certain strategies:

She never would tell us a strategy and then not allow us to apply it. She would always model for us which was super beneficial. Some of the strategies can sound self-

explanatory, but it was really helpful to have kind of that modeling guidance and then practice actually applying it. [MC480126]

She had all these fun little toys and trinkets that we could play with and that helped us apply the learning. It was cool because in our other classes we'd be learning about stuff. But in her class we learned about stuff, we saw it in practice and we experienced it. I wish I had all the words but it was like she encompassed everything that she taught us. You knew she believed it because she put it into practice. [MC480106]

What she did is that she modeled what she wanted from us. And that really helped. She was always accepting of your perspective whether or not it matched her own. So just by her interactions with us, it really built the way we learned to interact with each other and then we would do the same thing we watched her do.[MC480112]

Honestly, it was one of my favorite, if not my favorite class in the Special Ed program at [University Name]. A big reason for that was just like her attitudes and her kindness. And I remember specifically, we would be talking in class amongst us as students about important strategies and then all of a sudden we would have this big moment of ***Ohhhh***, *we are learning about this and here [Instructor Name] is actually doing this in class with us in real time.* That was cool. [MC480105]

In sum, relative to research question one, there was clear evidence (noted above) that most participants felt a special education multicultural class was beneficial. However, there were a few discrepant cases (i.e., instances where individual participants did not agree with the majority of participants) that will be reviewed in the following section.

Discrepant Cases

One participant did not share the idea that the community assignments were beneficial. This participant felt the only beneficial assignments were those that dealt specifically with teaching in the classroom.

> I didn't see how it [community assignments] applied to me so then I just wasn't as interested. But the ones that she really applied specifically to teaching, that helped me to see—oh this actually does apply, like it affects me as a teacher in the future. And that's what made the biggest difference for me. [MC480101]

Another participant did agree with the majority of participants that the community assignments were beneficial in learning about biases and stereotyping, yet continued to verbally label members of the group in ways that demonstrated a continuing of fixed mindset or single story ideation.

> It was nice because we went there [Non-profit organization that supports youth who self-identify as LGBTQ+]. I wasn't really sure what to expect. There were a bunch of teenagers who looked like the kind of people who are a little bit quiet and kind of stay to the corner. They were not like the cool kids right? You look in and they're like the stereotypical not cool kids. But they were so happy and comfortable and they were themselves. They were being silly. They were being dorky. This is just a place they went to hang out because they were welcome and they were accepted. [MC480103]

Also, one participant disagreed with most of the participants who described the classroom as a safe environment which supported diverse opinions and open discussion.

> I understand that she wanted to us to learn by putting us out of our comfort zone. For me personally, I was like ehhh, I wasn't a big fan of it because I prefer, this is weird, but I prefer being lectured to. And I preferred the teaching style I was most comfortable with. [MC480102]

In addition, this participant did *not* feel the class was a safe environment for her to share her opinions. "I just remember feeling very overwhelmed if I ever disagreed because I felt I was in the minority of the people and I didn't want to get attacked" [MC480102].

Finally, one participant did not perceive the benefit of considering personal biases. This participant explained she was raised in a diverse state, and felt the focus on biases was unnecessary for her.

I don't think it was like 100% necessary. For other people yes, but not for me. Because of my life experiences, I don't feel like I have any racial or ethnic biases to be honest. I've had the opportunity to interact with people from most places and from pretty much everywhere. [MC480112]

Research Question Two

The second research question asked, "How do special education preservice teachers apply new learning from the multicultural education course to teaching contexts such as practicum or student teaching?" Findings from the data analysis indicated that students seemed to more easily apply broader concepts from the multicultural course to teaching contexts. On the other hand, findings from the data also indicated that students seemed to struggle more with applying specific teaching strategies to new teaching contexts. These findings will be discussed in the following sections. Broader concepts from the multicultural course that students seemed to more easily apply to teaching contexts included remembering to consider students' unique and individual backgrounds when planning instruction, continuing to check personal biases and advocating for diverse students.

Remembering to Consider Students' Unique and Individual Backgrounds when Planning for Academic or Behavioral Instruction

Most of the participants described why remembering to consider students' unique and individual backgrounds when planning for instruction is vital. "It is imperative that good

teaching instruction takes the individual student into consideration and how their background affects their learning" [MC480124].

> What has kind of changed about me from that class is that as I've started teaching I've realized more just how important—just how much of a deal culture really is in education. I've realized how much things like previous school culture, family culture, literal ethnic culture and historical culture—really does play a part into who each student is. It's important not to discount it. You've got to listen and understand what each part means to your students. [MC480112].

> What I've learned in my actual teaching is that no student is a cookie-cutter student. It really does go deeper than disability or even deeper than race sometimes. With students you can't really have any predisposed judgments at all because, just like I learned in that class, it does seem like every single student is, you know, a case-by-case basis. You really do just have to get to know them and see what their own background is. [MC480115]

The following participants describe how they considered students' background when focusing on behavior.

> When I think of my teaching, and I consider my students from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, it's just made me be more patient with them. I consider—*Okay, this kid may be behaving this way for a variety of reasons including what may or may not be going on at home.* [MC480101]

> Now that I'm teaching, I have a lot of students who are Latino. I'm not going to lie some days it has not been easy to manage the behaviors with them. On those days, my mind just naturally wants to start comparing them to the White students. But then I start thinking about the lessons I learned with [Instructor Name]. Where she taught us specifically that every student is a child of God. And you have to consider where

they're coming from, their individual situations and circumstances. You have to

consider what they already know, what they don't know, maybe what struggles that

their parents are dealing with at the moment etc. So I start asking myself—do I know

what these students are going through? Do I know their circumstances? What they are

enduring or have had to endure? What their parents are enduring? Do I know what

they actually already know or what they do not know? Have I considered what the

expectations are in their culture that they're coming from? These questions always

remind me to relax, stop comparing, cut them some slack, and love them by getting to

know them better. I've noticed on the days that I specifically remember to do that, it

always turns out just fine and the behaviors are pretty good and the learning is good.

[MC480107]

Participants also shared about how they considered students' individual backgrounds to

match academic instruction to their students' specific needs.

What I took from [Instructor Name] specifically into my teaching was considering

students' background in order to match instruction to specific students' needs.

[Instructor Name] taught me to be willing and not intimidated to do that. She gave us

the foundation of *Well, this is the concept*, and then *these are really important things*

to teach them and how to teach them in a certain way but there's a lot of flexibility

still to match your kids' needs. And if they're not going at as fast as pace, it's ok. Go

at their pace, but keep high expectations and keep pushing them to their abilities and

it has been really helpful. [MC480106]

Similarly, the following participant shared how she learned to consider students' background

knowledge when planning lessons and addressing students.

I make sure that I consider my students' cultural backgrounds. I make sure I address

that in my lesson planning and in my rationales. Because if I am teaching a lesson

about the ocean, and I'm talking about well, like, *Have you ever gone to the beach?* Some people have never gone to the beach, because this is an inland state, and so you have to have money to go do things like that. And so, um, just making sure that what I'm teaching, not just the content, but the applications are applications that everybody can relate to, not just a select few. [MC480126]

Continuing to Check for Personal Biases When Teaching

Participants shared ways they continue to check for personal biases in their teaching. For example, the following participant shared how she learned to overcome a personal bias that she would never be able to teach students from a different cultural group.

I used to have a pretty big bias that I would never be able to teach a student from a different culture than my own. In class I learned that was bogus. I remember one of the guest speakers who was Black taught us that just because you have different backgrounds, doesn't mean that you can't come together, learn from each other and help someone be successful. And that was a huge relief and an *ahah* moment. That made it less intimidating as far as being a special education teacher. Realizing that I could build on common ground to develop trust with individual students who are different from me on a simple, basic, human level. So, later on, when I was doing my actual summer practicum— I took that from [Instructor Name]'s class and I applied it. And I was like—*Okay, let's see if the practices work from what she preaches* and then it actually did work! And it was just really cool to see! [MC480106]

Another participant shared how learning to continually check for personal biases in the type of expectations she held for her students, helped her in her teaching.

That class helped me to develop high expectations for all students. In class we learned how some Black and Hispanic students are over identified for special education. And then we learned that Asian students tend to be under identified. And that sometimes

ELLs [English Language Learners] can be over or under identified according to age and dominate language acquisition. So you can't rely on your own beliefs. You've got to really try to figure out what's going on with students individually and have high expectations for each student. And you've got to want them to succeed. You can't just think *Oh well they failed this test so we need to lower the content level because these types of students can't handle this.* That is not appropriate at all. No one rises to low expectations. That is my favorite thing I learned from the class that I've applied to my teaching is that you need to have high expectation for your students. What's more, you've got to create opportunities for them to succeed. Do what it takes to figure it out and focus on nondiscriminatory assessments and evaluations—things like that. [MC48103]

Advocating for Students

Participants shared ways in which they applied learning to advocate for students in their teaching contexts after the class.

Since that class, I feel I have lot more patience with my students in general. You just have a lot more concern. I have elementary kids and a lot of them are from diverse backgrounds, and it was just—the class helped me to understand that as a teacher, it's not just worrying about, like, *Oh, next year someone will take care of it.* You know? It's like, no—you're the one that's most prepared to take care of these kids. You are the one who advocates for them. You have to have that mindset that you're doing that. [MC480115]

Participants also shared how they learned to advocate for safe spaces for their own students. "That class helped me see outside myself to see others better. I learned to be a better educator. I learned to be able to advocate for a safer space for my students" [MC480118]. Another student commented:

In class, we would be in different groups, and in different partnerships. You pretty

much had a chance to talk with different people every day. Our discussions would be

just very open and honest. She [Instructor Name] was like *sometimes conversations*

can be heated. But she taught us, *if you just remove the temperature you're just*

having a conversation, you know. If you just make sure that both people know that

you're not trying to change anyone, you're just talking and it's okay. That's

something she taught us to model in our own classrooms is that you kind of have to

advocate to have a classroom culture that makes it safe for everyone to have their

own culture. [MC480112]

As previously noted, findings from the data indicated that students seemed to more

easily generalize broader concepts such as remembering to consider students' backgrounds

when planning instruction, continuing to check for personal biases in teaching and

advocating for students, from the multicultural course to new teaching contexts. Even so, the

data also indicated that students seemed to struggle more with applying specific teaching

strategies to new teaching contexts. The following quote shared by a participant was

indicative of many of the study members who struggled to separate and apply both aspects of

the class.

I felt like the multicultural class was more of like general, vague principles to apply to

life. I mean there were some concrete examples and things like that, but there was

never a *do exactly this* other than multiple means of representation. I needed more

like daily objectives to apply to my teaching. I mean I always felt the class was very

purposely driven for my personal self. But I would have liked more concrete,

everyday teaching strategies that could have been applied for my teaching self.

[MC480125]

Overall, there was evidence that students applied broader conceptual knowledge from the multicultural class into individual teaching contexts. At the same time, students seemed to be less clear on how to generalize specific multicultural teaching pedagogies to their practicum or student teaching settings.

Discrepant Case

Although most of the teachers described ways they could apply new learning from the multicultural course to teaching contexts, one student indicated she did not agree. More so, this student seemed to feel overwhelmed when considering how to apply multicultural concepts to her student teaching context.

> I just felt like how am I supposed to be a teacher and I can't even talk about pizza in my own class without offending someone. In class, everyone was just raising their hands like *Our textbooks favor White people and they don't have any like ethnic people in textbooks these days. And they talk about stories that people don't get so we gotta change—we've got to include everyone*. And I'm having a hard time because I'm thinking, *Well, we **are** in the United States. The majority of the people here **are** White. The dominant language **is** English, and there's a pizza place on every street corner*. I would like to be able to talk about my life or have a story about pizza, not feeling freaked out that I'm going to be offending someone or making some sort of mistake. I suddenly felt like being a White teacher, I'm doomed to fail because I am in the majority. But I can't make my teaching like the majority because of my students. I can't talk about pizza or soccer. I can't even talk about carving pumpkins at Halloween. That was a really frustrating day. But the whole class seemed to be geared toward (mocking tone) *Everything needs to change. Our students aren't going to get this*. And I walked away from that that multicultural class feeling like I can't even celebrate the 4th of July now, you know, 'cause that's not going apply to the

Hispanic population. So now I'm relegated to pick some generic reading like *Tom has a hat and he put this hat over here.* I'm never going to put something like a *My family trip to Disneyland!* sort of reading passage or talk about those sorts of things because there are a lot of kids who have never been there or probably will never go there because their family doesn't have the money to. I brought Disneyland up in a conversation with my students one time and all of them were like *I've never been to Disneyland. I've never even left* [*town name of student teaching*]. And I was like, *oh my gosh, like it was just so sad*. So, just thinking about that, these students don't really travel a lot and holidays may not be significant to them either, I just do my teaching off more generic things instead of things they just won't experience in their lives. [MC480102]

In the end, this participant suggested that the multicultural course for special education PSTs be cancelled and that the special education department at the university consider using the credits from the multicultural class to "I don't know, use those credits or that space to fill in gaps we have curriculum wise" [MC480102].

Upon careful analysis of the concentrated responses of the participants both within individuals and across individuals, patterns emerged that resulted in thematic findings that answered the two research questions. The thematic findings described the perceptions and teaching applications of 24 special education PSTs. See Figure 1.

Figure 1

Study Findings
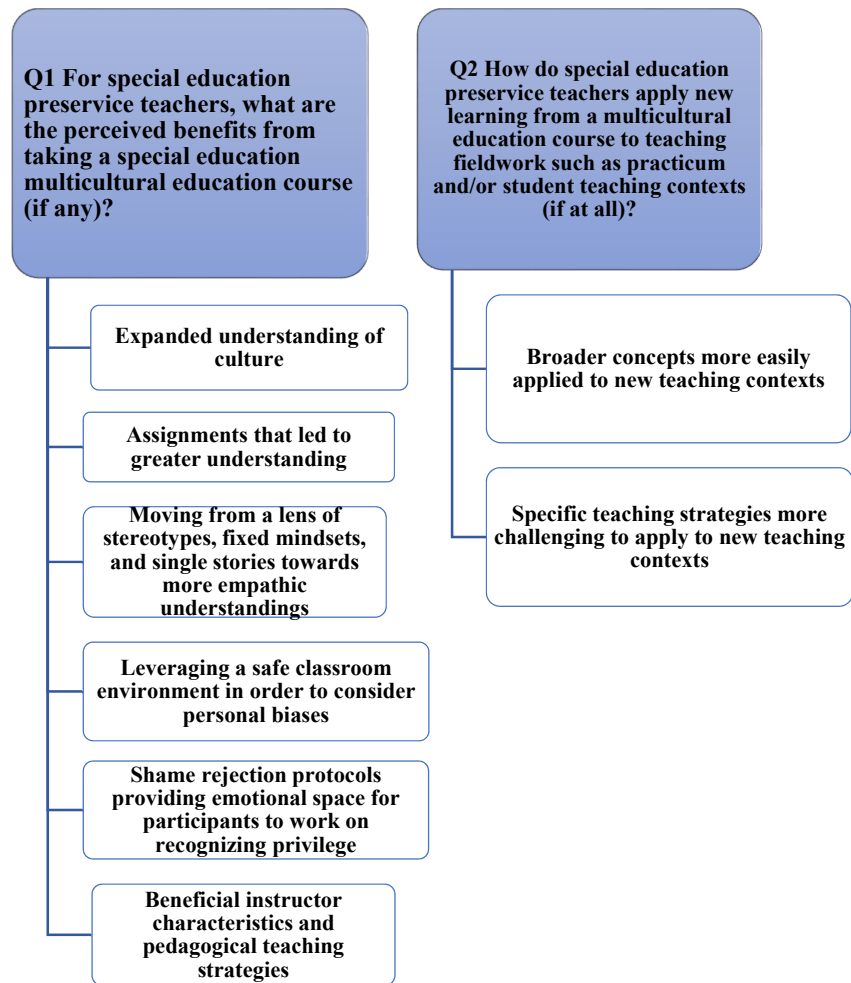
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The purpose of this thesis study was to explore and examine the experiences and perceptions of PSTs preparing to work with students with mild to moderate or severe disabilities relative to completing a required special education multicultural class as part of their required course of study. It should be noted that the interviews in the study took place *more than a year* after the PST participants completed the ME course. At the time of the interviews, all of the PST participants had also completed an intensive six-week student teaching practicum as well. At the time of the interviews, participants were either in the middle of a their year-long special education internship or had completed a half-year school internship.

The researcher incorporated a qualitative inquiry methodology known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to collect and analyze naturalistic interview data from participants who were closest to the real-life contexts of this study. Participants in the study included 24 PSTs who completed a special education multicultural class as a required component of their program course of study. The data were coded, analyzed, and organized first by research questions, then by categories, next by subthemes, and then into themes in three phases, as was depicted in the methods section. This thesis study was based on the following two research questions: (a) For special education preservice teachers, what are the perceived benefits from taking a special education multicultural education course (if any)? and (b) How do special education preservice teachers apply new learning from a multicultural education course to teaching fieldwork such as practicum and/or student teaching contexts (if at all)?

The previous chapter presented in detail the findings of this study by organizing participant data into categories to produce a readable narrative. The purpose of this chapter,

however, is to provide explanative insights into these findings. Whereas the findings chapter searched for connections and themes that emerged among the data in order to tell the story of the research, this chapter is an attempt to reconstruct a more integrated understanding. In this chapter the purpose is to tie in relevant theory and research as the themes are compared and contrasted to provide a layered synthesis.

Review of Findings

Findings from the data analysis for question one indicated that as a group, PSTs perceived six overall benefits from the special education multicultural course. Perceived benefits included the benefit of an expanded understanding of culture; the benefit of assignments that led to greater understanding; the benefit of moving from a lens of stereotypes, fixed mindsets, and single stories towards more empathic understandings; the benefit of leveraging a safe classroom environment in order to consider personal biases; and the benefit of shame rejection protocols providing emotional space for participants to work on recognizing privilege. Additionally, from the data we also obtained a description of beneficial instructor characteristics and pedagogical teaching strategies.

In particular, findings from the data analysis for question two indicated that students seemed to apply broader concepts more easily from the multicultural course to teaching contexts. On the other hand, findings from the data also indicated that students seemed to struggle more with applying specific teaching strategies to new teaching contexts.

Given the quantity of the findings, the researcher will not discuss each at length in this chapter. Instead, the discussion will focus primarily on the benefit finding of shame rejection. The data analysis revealed that shame rejection seemed to provide a space for development of cultural awareness including self, bias and privilege recognition, multicultural teaching practices, and confidence in addressing multicultural issues.

Impact of Shame

Shame or shaming has been a large concern for many different aspects of an individual's culture and/or identity, from body shaming to poverty shaming, or sexuality to race shaming, and the list goes on. The shaming of one's identity forces the perspective that there is something wrong with the person as a whole versus something wrong with behavior (Estrada & Matthews, 2016; Tangney, 1998).

The complexity of shame is exemplified in body shaming. On the surface, fat shaming seems to focus on behavior. But actually, fat shaming is undergirded by the idea that there is one right body size and dismisses the concept that bodies can be healthy in different shapes and sizes instead of a single standard figure (Bacon, 2008). In other words, a healthy individual does not need to look the same as another healthy individual. Yet body shaming attacks the individual as needing to be a cultural ideal (i.e., thin) to be healthy (Bacon, 2008).

Similarly, when addressing the multidimensional aspects of an individual's culture in a ME course, shaming focuses on the notion of right or wrong, which may result in ridicule ignorance, or denial about other people's experiences and perspectives (Andrews et al., 2019). Shame rarely produces benefits.

In fact, Tangney, 1998, suggests that because shame is often a key aspect of the development of psychological disorders, it would be in the best interest of everyone to avoid shaming in any context (Tangney, 1998). For example, Danielsdottir (2020) addressed concerns with body shaming in health care practices and suggested that body shaming is futile and harmful. Shaming involves fear, blame, and disconnection and has also been shown to lead to bullying (Dobson, 2019). One may ask, if there is a no tolerance policy for bullying in schools, should there be space for its precursor, shame, within a college multicultural course?

Shame Theory

Braithwaite's Shaming theory argues against the idea that shaming is negative. Instead, Braithwaite argues that shaming is a vehicle to provide rehabilitation for those who have committed a crime or may commit a crime (Braithwaite, 1989). However, in later work, Braithwaite (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004) admitted there was a connection between shame and bullying. Braithwaite noted that if the individual could manage their shame, they were less likely to become a bully whereas if they did not there may be a higher likelihood of them bullying. Braithwaite acknowledges that bullying is multidimensional and indicated that there are multiple sides to shame; a side that could lead to bullying or a side that could prevent children from being bullies (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004). The problem may be when shame and guilt are defined the same. There appears to be confusion in a concrete definition of shame especially in relation to guilt (Tangney, 1998).

Defining Shame

Tangney (1998) mentioned that previous studies defined shame as a focus on the events or individuals involved, which made recognizing shame more complex. For the purposes of this thesis, shame will be defined as dealing with the self or identify, while guilt deals with behavior. Therefore, guilt involves a person feeling as though he or she did something wrong. Shame involves a person feeling as though there is something wrong with the individual *self* (Estrada & Matthews, 2016). One may say that to shame someone for an aspect of their *self* is almost to say there is something wrong with the person's identity. Although Estrada and Matthews (2016), and Tangney (1998) agree with the attachment of self to shame, Estrada and Matthews sum shame and guilt into one aspect in a study that suggested shame/guilt for a decrease in racism. However, when one looks more closely at the study's findings it was actually guilt not shame that produced change.

Tangney (1998) clarifies the important outcome differences between of shame or guilt. Outcomes of shaming include feeling disconnected, isolated, more defensive and aggressive as well as hopeless, negative and stagnant. Tangney suggests that guilt rather than shame brings about change. Tangney's Differential Table of Shame and Guilt identifies key elemental differences and will be explained further in relation to the findings in the following discussion. Also, see Appendix C for *Tangney's Differential Table of Shame and Guilt*.

Evaluating Shame in the Course

The first aspect of Tangney's Differential Table of Shame and Guilt is focused on self-evaluation. Tangney suggests that shame focuses on self-identify, of evaluation. Tangney suggests that when someone is feeling shame, they focus on how their whole person or identity is bad. "*I* did that horrible thing." Tangney goes on to explain that the foci of guilt is on a specific behavior, "I *did* that horrible *thing*." Said another way, shame focuses on the self of a person as being inherently wrong or bad (i.e., "*you* did that horrible thing, therefore *you* are a bad person; *you* are overweight therefore *you* are a fatty, lazy, and less intelligent; *you* have autism, therefore *you* are not able; *you* are White therefore *you* are a racist") instead of a focus on behaviors. This is particularly damaging because often the self as viewed as unchangeable. Many PST participants in the study, demonstrated aspects of self being shamed. Notice how the following participant, based on previous experiences anticipated the course to include shaming of self, even before they entered the class. "The last thing I wanted to do was to walk into that class and just be painted with such a bad light because you know, I have no control over my Whiteness or where I came from" [MC480102]. This sentiment could be stated in another way: I have no control over the color of my skin; I have no control over my body frame when my genetics determined this size; I have no control over whether or not I have autism; I was born this way.

Tangney (1998) suggests that shame increases hopelessness is because when characteristics of self that are not changeable (such as color of skin) are considered bad, the person either shrinks or attacks. And neither produces an environment for learning. The following comment from another participant in the study describes an experience from a ME class taken before the ME class in the study. The participant demonstrates well this idea of shrinking when the unchangeable self was shamed. "I wouldn't comment hardly at all because it was just, *You're bad, why were you born*?—because as a White person and it was, like, *don't say anything*."[MC480122]

The participant felt that based on race, there was no room for her/him to express self and that she/he was considered a bad person as a whole. In Tangney's Differential Table of Shame and Guilt, the phenomenological experience section describes shame as shrinking, feeling small, worthless, and powerless. This is exhibited in the above participant's "don't say anything" comment.

Contrastingly, when considering the ME course that was the base of the current thesis study, students expressed value in their voice being heard instead of shamed with feelings of worthlessness or powerlessness, even when there was tension (an attribute of guilt) within the course as evidenced by the following quote.

> Maintaining the safe space she built was so important. I took another multicultural class—that class just drove me nuts. The teacher was very knowledgeable and informed but I, personally, felt so attacked in the class. I was in the minority with my lifestyle in that class, and so everybody was kind of just, like, bashing on White privilege and things that White people will never understand. I just felt like I walked away from the class, like, *Okay, back off*, you know? Versus in her class, it was such a conducive environment. I *wanted* to change my perspective and I *wanted* to better the way that I interacted with others, versus the other one . . . It was basically the same

things that we were learning in each course about biases and privilege—but yeah, that

one was terrible and hers was amazing. [MC480122]

The above statement maps on very well to Tangney's Differential Table of Shame and Guilt.

Notice the motivation of the participant to strike back when shamed in the first ME course

described "Okay back off!" Conversely, when the student was not shamed in the second ME

course described, the motivation was a desire to repair or be better. "I wanted to change my

perspective and I wanted to better the way that I interacted with others." Tangney describes

this as the student desiring to engage in the mental undoing of some aspect of behavior.

Meaning the student wanted to change perspectives and actions towards people, without

having to feel shame for an aspect of identity that was unchangeable (i.e., White skin).

Still another participant shared an example of how shaming caused other ME

students to remain stagnant or even develop more negative ideations towards ME.

From what I've heard about other past students who took multicultural education and

[Instructor's Name] was not the teacher, I've heard that there were not as open

discussions in their classes and they'd tended to be more opinionated and people

sticking to what they already knew. People who have taken other multicultural

classes have told me, *Yeah, we basically just get White-shamed the whole class and

you just feel so bad about being White and being privileged.* Specifically, one of my

friends told me that when she took a multicultural class, she felt ashamed and

attacked the whole time. She said it changed her perspectives too but not in a

respectful way that I feel like this class was. [MC480113]

The participant went on to describe the positive motivating outcomes of the current course of

study, producing an awareness of privilege without shaming.

I did feel like [Instructor Name] was respectful of us. No one felt afraid to share

things and she [the instructor] just encouraged really good and honest discussion. She

helped us understand our own culture and be proud of it, but also understand our

privilege. That is what was so unique. [MC480113]

Another issue with shaming is that shame interferes with empathy (Tangney, 1998).

Shaming in ME courses can be counterproductive in this way because many of the

participants spoke at length about becoming more empathic towards self and then others.

Moreover, the development of empathy for self leads to courageous motivation to learn, as

seen in the following participant statement.

A huge thing with ME—people tend to like be afraid to open up . . . (afraid) and

experience things that are different than them 'cause then there's like this fear of

"Well, maybe the way I've been is wrong all my life. And I don't want to be wrong."

This participant expressed fear for unfamiliar or uncomfortable issues, yet indicated a

growing of confidence that seemed to be related empathy towards self. The participant

continued: "But I learned in the course 'Okay, I made this mistake . . . but I learned from it'"

[MC480106].

Participants continually described how the shame free, empathy filled environment in

the ME course was essential to allow students to admit mistakes and develop a willingness to

learn as the following quotes illustrate.

I was just expecting this to be like a shaming class. I am White and middle-class from

a majority White state. I thought I was going to be made guilty for coming from that

background . . . So that was the expectation that I was going to be feeling more guilty

from where I came from. And I was thinking—just great. Instead we talked a lot

about teaching. And before I realized it—yes we talked about privilege and checking

the way you think or expect things because of privilege—but by then I could see how

it those issues were important. [MC480102]

I think that if you are going to teach multicultural it's really important to not make

people feel bad about whether or not they know things about cultures but just to start

where they are—help them understand whatever you're bringing the table we're

gonna discuss and that it's going to be safe place and it's okay. I felt like I was

definitely challenged in the way I always thought or in the way I think. But also, I

don't know, I felt like I *was more motivated to teach*. [MC480112]

The two previous quotes also serve to further elucidate Tangney's ideas that shame

creates isolation resulting in a concern with self rather than a concern for one's effect on

others. Notice how the above quotations describe a turning from self to focus on others or the

teaching of others. Concern for one's effect on others is especially important for special

education PSTs relative to diversity.

The findings in this study are similar to other more recent studies discussing the

potential dangers of shaming or a "damage centered" (Andrews et al., 2019) approach to

multicultural instruction. These studies also address the benefits of a more humanistic

approach to educating preservice teachers. Andrews et al. (2019) indicate that a damage

centered pedagogical approach,

…centers community members' long-term marginalization, exploitation, and

subjection to micro-level (interpersonal and communal) and macro-level (systemic

and institutional) mistreatment and violence as a way to shift deficit thinking and

change hearts and mindsets of PSTs to focus on equity and justice in schools. (p. 7)

This damage centered approach to teaching multicultural issues results in shame and

unintentionally may reinforce more colonialist-like beliefs (Andrews et al., 2019). This type

of approach is also more likely to "escalate students' defensiveness and negative dispositions,

which can ultimately serve to defeat the purpose of the multicultural class for the preservice

teachers" (Ukpokodu, 2002 as cited in Norris, 2016). Additionally, this approach may

increase the occurrence of micro aggressions like silence or create an atmosphere where students fear saying the wrong thing (Norris, 2016). Unfortunately, this type of multicultural instruction does not translate to modified teacher behaviors in the classroom (Lehman, 2017).

Instead, multicultural education courses should focus on a humanistic approach to teaching students (Andrews et al., 2019). A humanistic approach involves "commitments to critical self-reflection, resisting binaries, and enacting ontological and epistemological plurality" (Andrews et al., 2019, p. 2). Focus on developing self-awareness over social awareness empowers PSTs (Lehman, 2017) to avoid binaries, develop an awareness of internal ideologies, examine personal experiences (Norris, 2016). This examination must occur in a learning environment where PSTs can experience vulnerability or even defensiveness of initial normative responses to a challenge of their socialization (Andrews et al., 2019). "The courageous atmosphere in our classrooms is shaped by students' ability to sit in those emotions and grapple with what triggers them and how they move beyond those emotions to useful action for change" (Andrews et al., 2019, p. 10).

This pedagogical approach is not novel and was advocated by Cross et al. (1989) who recommended five specific skill sets including, knowing and accepting of individual differences; being self-aware; awareness of the wide array of differences; knowing the students' backgrounds; and adaptation of skills (Cross et al., 1989; Lehman, 2017).

How the concepts are approached and taught should be given as much weight as the topics to be covered (Lawyer, 2018). "Educating students in a manner that affirms and sustains their humanity and raises their critical consciousness about societal injustices should be normative and should provide students with liberatory learning experiences that contrast oppressive policies and practices" (Andrews et al., 2019, p. 4). Consideration of the whole student and their needs modeled by university personnel for preservice teachers creates an example PSTs can draw on as they foster learning environments that look to their students'

strengths and needs (Andrews et al., 2019). "In doing so, the teacher educator is working to live her or his full humanity, recognizing that this process requires ongoing self-reflection in order to model pedagogical practices that future teachers should employ." (Andrews et al., 2019, p. 5)

Learned multicultural skills improves personal multicultural competence in teaching a diverse student population (Lehman, 2017). This is especially important for special education PSTs. who must additionally advocate for a normalizing of ability levels. It is essential to understand disability and curriculum theory correctly to interpret disabilities correctly and provide appropriate classroom environments for special education students from all backgrounds (Erevelles, 2005). A more humanistic multicultural approach combined with a disability studies perspective (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004) can be more productive and provide more support for special education PSTs who will teach diverse learners.

Findings from the current study suggested that as a group, the special education PSTs benefitted from this combined approach. "I'm more encouraging of other people doing things differently because I recognize that it adds more value than I used to" [MC460116]. In addition, despite the initial expectation of White shaming, most of the PSTS in the study felt their defenses reduced as the safe and empathetic environment welcomed addressing difficult topics honestly. The findings also support Tangney's Differential Table of Shame and Guilt, as students felt more motivated to meet the challenge of multicultural education instead of shrinking. Overall, students valued the shame free environment and felt that they were able to develop an awareness of their biases while gaining a greater motivation to serve diverse students.

Implications for Teacher Education ME Courses

Teacher education programs must provide a safe space for PSTs to deconstruct personal cultural impact or stance. One of the purposes of the ME course included the

students developing an awareness of biases, privilege, and stereotypes particularly in empathetic relation to themselves due to the influence such culture has on teaching (Ukpokodu 2002). Teachers enter the classroom with cultural influences that affect the students they teach, whether consciously or unconsciously, which can "incorrectly ascribe experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and prejudices to them" (McCall, 1995). After recognizing one's personal culture, the process to deconstruct personal cultural stances or impact becomes more doable (Parsons & Brown, 2001). In order to support students to better deconstruct personal cultural stances, students in ME courses must feel safe to focus on identifying socialized feelings and discussing reactions in honest ways (Andrews et al., 2019; Estrada & Matthews, 2016).

Teacher education programs must also strive to affirm, validate and convey respect as foundational elements in ME courses (Estrada & Matthews, 2016). In this study, the majority of the PST participants emphasized appreciation of the teachers respect of the students' feelings, experiences, knowledge, and effort. As one student shared, "…there was no shame for what you know or did not know." Some researchers call this idea fostering voice (Parsons & Brown, 2001). In this study, establishing respect was foundational in validating PSTs to work through uncomfortable issues.

Teacher Education programs must also provide opportunities for teacher educators to exemplify vulnerability in ME courses. In this study, PSTs repeatedly spoke about the value of the vulnerability of the teacher which was often followed the vulnerability of the students. The teacher was willing to express personal experience working through biases, privilege, and the difficulty of supporting diverse learners. Similarly, Freedman (2005) challenged educators to be vulnerable in critically examining their own biases, to establish connections as students develop their emergent awareness.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations include that the study included in-depth student interviews only. Future research may consider interviews combined with practicum and internship classroom observations to understand more fully how PSTs apply new learning in teaching contexts. Another limitation with an opportunity for future research is that even though the interviews were conducted a year later to provide strength on the retention and application of the course content, the researcher did not apply a pre-course survey that would have allowed a comparison and better understanding of knowledge gained in the course. Also, an additional perspective might include interviews with PST mentors to gain another layer of perspective of how the PSTs' applied multicultural education knowledge.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings indicated that a shame-free environment in the classroom allowed for a more open reflection regarding one's personal biases and privilege. On the contrary, classrooms that encourage self-reflection in a shame-filled environment hamper openness and fail to encourage acceptance of self and others. Further recommendations for research with special education PSTs include conducting studies that consider a combined approach of humanistic multicultural education from a disability studies perspective. Additionally, future research studies may consider longitudinally monitoring special education PSTs' culturally sensitive teaching strategies. The implementation and effect of their teaching strategies could be noted during teaching practicum and internship, and subsequently following their sensitivity post-graduation.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

Memorandum

To: Beth Cutrer
Department: BYU - EDUC - Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
From: Sandee Aina, MPA, HRPP Manager
      Wayne Larsen, MAcc, IRB Administrator
      Bob Ridge, PhD, IRB Chair
Date: February 18, 2020
IRB#: IRB2020-060
Title: Perceived benefit of a special education multicultural course.

Brigham Young University's IRB has approved the research study referenced in the subject heading as exempt level, Category 4.

This category does not require an annual continuing review. Each year near the anniversary of the approval date, you will receive an email reminding you of your obligations as a researcher and to check on the status of the study. You will receive this email each year until you close the study.

The study is approved as of 02/18/2020. Please reference your assigned IRB identification number in any correspondence with the IRB.

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:
1. Any modifications to the approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications are incorporated in the study.
2. Instructions to access approved documents, submit modfications, report adverse events, can be found on the IRB website, iRIS guide: http://orca.byu.edu/irb/iRIS/story_html5.html
3. All non-serious unanticipated problems should be reported to the IRB within 2 weeks of the first awareness of the problem by the PI. Prompt reporting is important, as unanticipated problems often require some modification of study procedures, protocols, and/or informed consent processes. Such modifications require the review and approval of the IRB. Please refer to the IRB website for more information.

APPENDIX B

Individual Interview Protocol

The purpose of this interview is to examine your experiences with the CPSE 480 Multicultural

Course.

Protocols:

    a. Welcome the participant

    b. Ask permission to record the interview

    c. Ask Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. Please think back to the Fall semester 2019. Please share with me your thoughts about the

    CPSE 480 multicultural course.

    What do you remember the most?

    What really worked?

    What stands out to you?

2. Can you share with us any methods the instructor used in teaching the course that you felt

    were effective—if at all.

3. Did you notice any perspective changes in yourself during the class?

    If so, what perspectives did you notice change in yourself? What do you think allowed those

changes took place?

    Have you noticed any shifts or changes in your perspectives since the class that were

informed from you taking the class? Can you share?

4. Now that it has been some time since you took the course, and you have completed practicum

    . . . and or student teaching . . .

    Can you tell what, if anything, from the multicultural education course did you use in your

practicum experience?

    What, if anything, helped you understand your students better?

    Colleagues? Mentors? Etc.

5. Thinking back to when you were preparing to take the multicultural class, what did you think the course would be like? What was the course like compared to what you thought/or heard the multicultural class would be like?

6. What was most meaningful to you about the course?

7. Have you made any changes as a person as a result of taking this course?

8. If you could change anything about the course, what would it be?

9. If you heard the course was changing, what parts of the class, or the way it was taught, would you say absolutely must stay the same?

10. Final Word—Is there anything else about the course you would like for us to know?

APPENDIX C

Tangney's Differential Table of Shame and Guilt

TABLE I   Key Dimensions on Which Shame and Guilt Differ

	Shame	Guilt
Focus of evaluation	Global self "*I* did that horrible thing."	Specific behavior "I *did* that horrible thing."
Degree of distress	Generally more painful than guilt	Generally less painful than shame
Phenomenological experience	Shrinking, feeling small, feeling worthless, powerless	Tension, remorse, regret
Operation of "self"	Self "split" into observing and observed "selves"	Unified self intact
Impact on "self"	Self impaired by global devaluation	Self unimpaired by global devaluation
Concern vis-à-vis, the "other"	Concern with others' evaluation of self	Concern with one's effect on others
Counterfactual processes	Mentally undoing some aspect of the self	Mentally undoing some aspect of behavior
Motivational features	Desire to hide, escape, or desire to strike back	Desire to confess, apologize, or repair

This Table is based on Tangney's (1998) work:
Tangney, J. P. (1998). How does guilt differ from shame, in Bybee, J. (Ed), *Guilt and Children*, Academic Press, p. 7.