Care and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Online Settings

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Chapter 3
Strategies and Reflections on Teaching Diversity in Digital Learning Space(s)

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to introduce readers to critical theoretical orientations necessary for online pedagogues, including feminist pedagogies, praxis pedagogy, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, and embodied practices. These critical theoretical orientations undergird a critical digital pedagogy in an online master's course, Diverse College Students. Critical digital pedagogical strategies employed by the authors, such as high context communication, community and relationship building, and visual and audio pedagogies, are discussed. The authors conclude the chapter by engaging in a self-reflexive activity, opening space for insights about the role of current political events, personal student successes, and an engaged community beyond the classroom. Recommendations for faculty wishing to engage a critical digital pedagogy are offered, as are recommendations for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions have increased the use of online learning spaces, now offering students fully-online undergraduate and graduate degree programs, first-year experience courses, and developmental education courses (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Increasing numbers of students are engaging part or all of their education through online learning management systems and with digital tools. Despite this trend, faculty often are underprepared for the challenges and possibilities of online teaching and learning. Many older faculty have never engaged or completed an online course; and even younger faculty

who may have engaged with some level of online learning, or who grew up with digital tools, may be ill equipped to understand the pedagogical possibilities of online learning (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017).

In this chapter, the authors center one type of course that presents a unique set of possibilities for online instructors: those focused on diversity, equity, multiculturalism, and diversity. Such courses present possibilities for thinking through a critically engaged digital pedagogy. The authors argue that all online faculty should engage critical theoretical orientations *prior* to developing course content or teaching courses online. Critical theories, such as feminist pedagogy, culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogy, and embodied theory, are vital gateways for faculty in all courses. The authors utilize these critical theoretical orientations as foundation to the structuring of a master's level course entitled *Diverse College Students*. The entangling of these theoretical orientations with digital pedagogical strategies is examined, as are individual reflexive accounts of the ways critical digital pedagogies influence each author's ongoing becoming as teachers and humans.

This chapter aims to introduce readers to critical theoretical orientations necessary for online pedagogues; outline strategies currently employed by the authors for an engaged, critical digital pedagogy; and begin a larger conversation about the role of critical digital pedagogy toward ends of creating a more caring, just, equitable, democratic, humanistic, and healing educative practice.

BACKGROUND

How might faculty, pedagogues, and scholars engage in creating critical, culturally responsive, and culturally sustaining online learning environments? The authors agree with Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) assertion that "our pedagogical practice has to be buttressed with significant theoretical grounding" (p. 83). Such theoretical grounding follows bell hooks' (1994) conceptualization of theory as liberatory practice. Online pedagogues cannot simply transfer traditional pedagogical strategies into online environments without thinking about how the medium of educational engagement or delivery shifts possibilities. Nor can online pedagogues emphasize solely skills-based, technological, and technocratic approaches to online teaching and learning. In the digital age, we must also account for technocultures (Luppicini, 2012), hardware and software, and begin critically examining the role of digital technologies in the complicated relationships that undergird social and educational (in)equality (Gin, Martínez-Alemán, Rowan-Kenyon, & Hall, 2017; Nakamura & Chow-White, 2012; Noble, 2018). As the authors have argued previously (Montelongo & Eaton, Under Review), online education, particularly when focused on the multiplicity (Hames-García, 2011) and heterogeneity of people's identities, cultures, and histories, necessarily needs to account for even more complex pedagogical strategies, critical reflection, and personal commitment. As the authors aim to build an anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2000), the use of a wide range of critical theoretical perspectives humbles us to account for social structures, personal positionality (or standpoint), history, politics, sociopolitical realities, and a willingness to admit that, sometimes we just do not know (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

The authors begin by presenting several key theoretical orientations with which to think about a critical digital pedagogy (Morris, 2017). Critical digital pedagogy extends the traditions of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, and other critical standpoint theorists to deconstruct power dynamics in online learning spaces, center relational and dialogic praxis, and importantly, avoid over-reliance on the restrictions of digital technologies in erasing human connectivity, networks, and relationships. Put more simply: critical digital pedagogy seeks to center humanistic practices. The authors subscribe to

the perspective that, prior to thinking about the technological aspects of teaching and learning online, we must center critical theory. Then, when we engage the technological infrastructures of our online learning environments, pedagogues are more apt to work through the possibilities and limitations of technology affordances as we seek to create, build, and nurture an environment that reasserts relational capacities in mediums that often feel isolating, individualistic, and lacking in criticality.

Feminist Pedagogical Practices

In her powerful tome on pedagogy and research *Learning to (Re)member the Things We've Learned to Forget*, Cynthia Dillard (2012) frames the importance of history, memory, identity, spirituality, and human relationships across space and time as foundational to decolonizing practices in education. Dillard (2012) reminds, beckons, or calls us to consider education as a quest for unpacking a central question: "who are we in *relation* to one another?" (p. 4). Unpacking such a question necessarily centers personal identity (not as static, but as always in motion) and acknowledgment of cultural and political history. Education is a process of *becoming*; a process where we come to have a closer relationship with ourselves, those with whom we enter into relation in "formal" classroom environments, our ancestors, stories, and memories. She calls such a spiritual educative practice an endarkened feminism.

Inviting into classroom spaces cultural perspectives, lived experiences, history, language, and politics is foundational to feminist pedagogical practices. Vivian Gordon (1987) instructs us to understand how racial and gender power has functioned historically. Disrupting oppressive power structures in coalitional spaces requires us to build trust with those who have been historically marginalized; a process that requires patience and time. Trust building is particularly difficult when power dynamics rooted in historic and contemporary exclusion are not recognized, verified, and discussed. bell hooks' (1994) notion of teaching to transgress calls us "not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students" (hooks, 1994, p. 13). This means valuing the presence of all with whom we commune and recognizing the historical and experiential value students add to our learning spaces.

From Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/1999), the authors pull concepts such as mestiza consciousness, hybrid identity, and borderlands. "Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999, p. 1). In the borderlands, something new is always created. There are overt challenges to essentialism and dualism. For the authors, the concept of the borderland works not only in relation to issues of identity, language, and culture, but also in terms of educative practices. Online learning environments exist in a borderland: between analog and digital worlds, between human and more-than-human vitalities, between human bodies and technological hardware. Online teaching and learning is cyborgian (Haraway, 2016).

Praxis Pedagogy

Paulo Freire's (1974/2013, 1992/2014, 2000) pedagogical strategies are often evoked and taught in graduate preparation programs. Praxis, Freire's conceptualization of reflection and action upon the world, takes up an anti-transactional, anti-Fordist, and anti-standardization educational philosophy. Praxis pedagogy is contradictory to most contemporary perspectives in neoliberal educational discourse that highlight efficiency, standardization, competency, and assessment (Giroux, 2014; Giroux & Gir-

oux, 2004). Freire's praxis pedagogy is inherently humanizing, operating not from deficit perspectives (e.g., which view students, learners, and others as empty vessels to be filled through a banking form of education from experts or teachers), but from a culturally informed perspective (e.g., views cultural, pragmatic, and experiential knowledge as necessary for creation of dialogical communities of practice where all are both teachers and learners). The aim of Freireian praxis pedagogy is critical conscious-ness: building dialogic communities that critically examine unjust, inequitable, or socially undesirable conditions, and then alter such structures through *conscientization*, or consciousness-raising. In other words, inequitable power structures are transformed both through personal transformation and societal restructuring. Freire's is a both-and pedagogy of solidarity, hope, and transformation.

Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy, first articulated by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), seeks to think of pedagogical practices along a series of continuums. These include: how teachers conceive of self and others; how teachers build social relations with students; and where and how teachers conceive of sites of knowledge. In her original theory, Ladson-Billings was interested in challenging deficit discourses in education, particularly as related to African American students. She wanted to advance pedagogical strategies that centered educational achievement through valuing student expertise, community, and so-ciopolitical critique. She uses Patricia Hill-Collins' (2000) notion of caring, not only rooted in affective notions (e.g., *I care about my students*), but also in desires for articulating how pedagogical practices prepare students to participate, function, and thrive in the real world. Often this means fierce commitment to advancing pedagogical practices acknowledging students' experiential realities, while also prepar-ing students to navigate the terrain of an unjust and, "inequitable and undemocratic" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 474) system of education.

In 2014, Ladson-Billings "remixed" culturally relevant pedagogy, advocating for Paris' (2012) no-tion of *culturally sustaining pedagogy*. Paris and Alim (2014) discuss the importance of pedagogues unpacking their employment of particular theoretical positions. "Asset pedagogies" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86), which value cultural traditions and history, cannot be essentialized, but must always ac-count for heterogeneity in cultural practices. In other words, while pedagogues seek to honor and think pedagogy from the cultural perspectives of African American, Hispanic, Chicanx, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian American, queer, and other cultural perspectives, we must be willing to lovingly critique: meaning, ensuring we are not engaged in cultural appropriation, or that we are not advancing perspectives that may dehumanize others or uphold problematic hegemonic perspectives. Culturally sustaining pedagogy explicitly centers and sustains cultural pluralism by valuing and integrating linguistic and cultural ele-ments into academic courses, seeking to create a more democratic, engaging, and anti-oppressive space (Kumashiro, 2000; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Tenderness and Embodied Practice

Thompson (2017) discusses the role of tenderness in teaching. Her book is relevant for critical digital pedagogues, particularly as she states her own admonition of the ways that online learning might be de-stroying the potential for embodied practices in education: "I am skeptical about the escalation of online courses. For the life of me, I can't imagine how to teach about missing and finding bodies if the actual process is, itself, disembodied" (p. 95). Thompson (2017) states: "in our highly technological and often

segregated culture, practicing tenderness in the classroom has become essential for teaching, for our lives" (p. 2). The authors take issue with Thompson's assertion that embodied practice is incompatible with online pedagogy. The concept of embodied practice is as relevant to online learning as face-to-face practice. Teaching with tenderness is about focusing on relational capacities with others. Relational practice is not only about human-human relationship, but also relationship with ourselves, our environment, individual and collective histories, and the ways we recognize the role of trauma, difference, and similarity through our intra-actions (Barad, 2007). The authors draw on Thompson's concept of teaching with tenderness because many ideas resonate with our online pedagogical practices. Her closing admonition resonates with the authors: "What if our work as teachers is to find our own tenderness and then help create spaces so students can feel tenderness too?" (Thompson, 2017, p. 112).

Online Learning

While online education experienced exponential growth since the early-2000's, myths and misconceptions continue to characterize the experiences associated with this type of learning and factors affecting online student success have not been adequately identified (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007). Despite its tremendous growth, faculty often view online teaching as a new frontier (Carwile, 2007; Jaschik & Lederman, 2017). Preconceived notions of online education largely result from unfamiliarity of what occurs within digital learning spaces. Compared to its earliest formats resembling correspondence courses, online course instruction has since transformed into one where content delivery, course interaction, and content engagement utilize innovative technologies and enhanced learning management systems (Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007). The lack of exposure to digital pedagogy possibly leads to hesitation when approaching this form of teaching (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012).

Faculty justifiably become concerned when they are unable to sense how students are reacting and responding to their course instruction. However, online learning can still comprise essential elements of constructivist learning where emphasis is placed on active participation and independent exploration of new ideas. Faculty question the level of active engagement and exploration that can be cultivated within digital learning spaces. The assumption is that active learning is better nurtured in brick-and-mortar classrooms since interaction and communication occur in real-time and are easily observed (Ashby & McNary, 2011; Zimmerman, 2014). Online learning can still comprise essential elements of constructivist learning where emphasis is placed on active participation and independent exploration of new ideas. When using constructivist models of learning, online education is viewed as problematic to such vigorous instruction (Lewis, 2010).

Hesitation and anxiety when approaching online teaching may imply the continued need for more digital pedagogy research. Research regarding effective pedagogical practices in online environments, while growing in the field, is still in its early stages of development (Carwile, 2007; Westbrook, 2014). When studying the effectiveness of online education, learning outcomes and student satisfaction often are assessed to determine course effectiveness (Ashby & McNary, 2011; Carwile, 2007; Lewis, 2010). While studies like these helps enhance online course delivery, more research is being conducted to provide new ways of looking at teaching and learning within online courses (Westbrook, 2012; Zimmerman, 2012). Time, effort, advanced work and planning are necessary to obtain such goals with online teaching (Carwile, 2007). Multiple studies confirm that effective online teaching requires more time than face-to-face instruction (Gabriel & Kaufield, 2008; Kenny & Fluck, 2017). Online learning that

relies on haphazard teaching preparation likely results in dissatisfaction with course experiences and the continuation of online education misperceptions. Quite simply, online teaching requires careful thought and meticulous structuring of course content and delivery.

TEACHING DIVERSITY IN DIGITAL SPACE(S)

The key aim of this chapter is to begin unpacking how we take the critical theoretical orientations and commitments of the numerous scholars who we cite in our background, and to whom we are committed, and put them into practice within digital learning platforms~environments~learning. The authors contextualize this discussion by dissecting a very specific academic course both teach: *Diverse College Students*. The pairing of critical pedagogical approaches with this course, in particular, undergirds the inherent relationship between critical praxis and topics of diversity, social justice, equity, and multiculturalism. However, this chapter, and the critical theoretical orientations undergirding our own pedagogical practices, are vitally important for online educators to consider across the full range of courses delivered and engaged through online learning environments. In other words, critical digital pedagogy is not only applicable to courses traditionally marketed, packaged, or separated out in curricular structures as "those courses" dealing with "diversity" (Ahmed, 2012). Rather, critical digital pedagogy is a necessary approach for online pedagogues regardless of disciplinary or curricular material.

The authors draw on experiential reflection and comparative analyses to unpack how the previously mentioned critical theories, and digital pedagogical practices, influence decisions in designing, implementing, sustaining, and altering the course *Diverse College Students*. We refer to this as a process of centering and holding "in-tension" (Springay & Truman, 2017) critical pedagogy and digital pedagogy, as well as their intersections, divergences, and mutual entanglement. As we have written about previously (Montelongo & Eaton, Under Review), this iterative, reflexive process aligns with technological pedagogical content (TPACK) models by accounting for the triadic relationship between content, pedagogy, and technological infrastructure. This is a necessarily processual undertaking - meaning that our strategies as described below are consistently held in-tension, revised; and altered as we continue our own "becoming" as scholars and pedagogues; as technologies and their affordances or structures shape-shift; and we enter into new relationships with those alongside whom we engage each term in *Diverse College Students*.

Strategies

High-Context Communication

Faculty need to consider a range of issues regarding communication in online learning spaces, including language of delivery, accessibility, and balancing modes of lexical, verbal, and non-verbal communication delivery (Roberts, Crittenden, & Crittenden, 2011). Online courses provide a variety of mediums in which to deliver content and information within the digital learning environment. However, when online courses use written text as the primary method to construct lessons and interactions, nonverbal communication is missing. How communication is employed within online courses is important to evaluate when considering the inclusiveness of courses for all learners. Nonverbal communication is a key aspect

of learning for students who come from high-context cultures. Westbrook (2014) notes that "students who come from high-context cultures may find the low-context culture of online education to lack cues that they would normally expect when meeting face-to-face" (p. 281). High-context cultures emphasize the relations occurring between individuals and appreciate nonverbal communication conveyed by individuals, places and events (Hall, 1976; Westbrook, 2014). Recognizing the differences between low-context and high-context online learners is viewed as important for effective teaching across diverse groups of students. The authors will share their ideas in creating high-context online learning environments with attention placed on communication, visual cues, and relationship building.

Video Introductions

Standard digital pedagogical practices agree that faculty presence within an online learning environment is key to students feeling connected to a faculty member of record for a course. While static information about a faculty member is often included (i.e., a faculty photo, contact information, credentials, and sometimes a resume or CV), building relationships with students and creating a culturally sustaining community begins with strong faculty introductions that humanize the faculty member.

Video introductions provide students background information on their instructor, including previous administrative experience in the field and research experience. Introduction videos also include the faculty member's personal reflections on why they teach the course and connection to the topic. For the online diversity course, the authors hope to ease the initial anxiety that students tend to have at the start of a diversity course (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2012). By allowing students to see faces and hear voices of their future professors in their digital learning space, these videos serve to eliminate the anonymity that is often connected to online learning. The video familiarized students to the future asynchronous and synchronous video presence of the authors within the online diversity course.

Students also develop a video introduction to other members of the course or introduce themselves during a live synchronous meeting. The authors ask students to share information about who they are; their current institution of employment and the type of work they do in the field of higher education; perhaps some of their long-term goals and personal, non-academic goals and interests; and, importantly for a course contemplating and dialoguing on issues related to multiculturalism, equity, and diversity issues, questions such as: what makes you a diverse individual; how do you (or do you not) experience diversity in the college, university, or work environment; and what are your hopes and fears for the course?

Weekly Overviews

Once the course is available to students, the video presence of the authors continues into the individual lesson modules. A weekly overview video is placed at the start of each lesson module. The authors provide initial thoughts on module topics and their experiences with the topics in their own lives. If the opportunity exists, comments on current events connected to the course lessons are also offered in the overviews. Knowing that the asynchronous nature of online courses allows different course pacing for students, the authors encourage students to check modules early to get an idea of what is ahead. The authors also are mindful of time within the digital learning space and intentionally keep these overview videos around 5 minutes in length. Along with the videos, a list of key lesson module items is placed to supplement the overview video.

Using this strategy allows for the continuation of the authors' online presence in the digital learning space and provides high-context communication in how the authors respond to course topics or current events. Voice tone and facial expression provides students cues in areas which caught the interest of the authors. Such presence follows principles of feminist practice by placing emphasis on current events and recognizing how these topic impact our own being (hooks, 1994; Thompson, 2017). The weekly overviews also allow timely opportunities for cultural critiques (Ladson-Billings, 1995) on current events connected to diversity matters addressed in the course.

Video Feedback/Feedforward Insight

Student performance in online courses relies on evaluations delivered through the institution's learning management system (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle). Written comments normally are the means through which critiques and comments on student assessments are provided students. The authors in their planning of the online diversity course understand that these responses need more context to help students understand their relationship with course material. Diversity courses often introduce material to students that make them question their own identity development, privileged status, and awareness of social justice (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2014). Knowing that diversity courses often become personal journeys of discovery for students, the authors evaluate how to best use the online environment to assist with these journeys through various course activities. The strategy to provide video feedback/feedforward insight is utilized to achieve this purpose.

Video feedback/feedforward insight is offered to give students more than just written comments to their work. The authors produce short videos, usually 3 minutes in length, with responses and reactions to students' coursework. Video feedback/feedforward insight supplement any written comments or grading rubrics and is embedded in the comment field of the LMS grading module. In reviewing their performance, students have an opportunity to receive the high-context communication from the authors where tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language can be observed with the evaluation. The authors use these high-context cues to emphasize areas of concern, questions on awareness levels, and most importantly, praise on student epiphanies. Using such feedback/feedforward insight reflects Thompson's (2017) ideas about teaching with tenderness where course evaluation is seen as more than objective measurements. Insight serves as relational indicator of how the student and faculty share a mutual understanding of personal growth within the course. Video feedback/feedforward insight also provides culturally relevant pedagogy by offering high-contextual communication for students from cultures where such context is appreciated and beneficial in their understanding of course material (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Westbrook, 2014).

Synchronous Live Meetings

The authors also utilize video conferencing to provide synchronous live meetings. These synchronous meetings are structured class discussions planned in advance for students. The authors use video conference tools within the LMS or through online services. Course instruction still largely occurs asynchronously. However, the authors feel that opportunities for students to not only hear their classmates' thoughts on diversity should be provided, but also a sense of community should be established. Typically, 1-2 synchronous meetings are scheduled based on the students' availability. Once scheduled, the synchronous meetings include student introductions, real-time discussions of course material, opportunities to

ask questions to the class, and possibilities for student presentations. Attendance at the synchronous meetings is mandatory for students. Advanced scheduling is necessary for this strategy to be employed. Synchronous meetings for the online diversity course provides a way to add context to how individuals in the class respond to diversity topics. Real-time conversations through synchronous class meetings is effective to break down the anxiety typically found when starting a diversity course (Montelongo & Eaton, Under Review; Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2012). Having an additional synchronous meeting later in the semester can provide a culminating experience for students to share their knowledge and understanding on diversity issues that have been addressed throughout the duration of the course.

Community and Relationship Building

Relationship-building is considered a significant feature in online diversity course development. In the course, students cannot question concepts like microaggressions, privilege, and oppression without first giving some introductory context. Students have to first get a basic idea on how these topics connect to them personally, as well as with their classmates and professor. After several semesters of teaching, the authors find that the course starts with some uncertainty about class dynamics. The first online lesson activities usually are characterized by anxious students worried about what will be said in class and how it will be received. When the course ends, students comment how they value the community building that occurs within the class and with the professor (Montelongo & Eaton, Under Review).

Dialogic Possibilities

Online teaching requires faculty to reconsider classroom dialogue. A challenge of many learning management systems is the static nature of traditional discussions forums. In the authors experience, approaching online course dialogues from a solely textual or lexical perspective is unnecessarily limiting. However, discussions forums-where a faculty member or member of the scholarly community may post questions, reflective statements, or provocations to be considered by other students are not always limiting. For example, many students benefit from the opportunity to reflect "slowly" on particular prompts or topics. When the authors consider learning styles of students, introverts, verbal, or low-context learners often find value in the space static discussion forums provide for critical thinking, integration of course materials, or managing multiple perspectives that may not have previously considered.

Yet, the authors also recognize that static, lexical, and "slow" discussion forums can be limiting for other students, particularly in courses focused on multiculturalism, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Thus, the authors suggest a balance of "slow" and "fast" discussion forums. Technological tools inside and outside of traditional learning management systems can facilitate such dialogic space. Author 2 has experimented with integrating SLACK, a web and application-based social platform similar to Twitter, in the *Diverse College Students* course. This tool allows students to engage in more back-and-forth dialogue on topics of importance, as well as share resources, videos, and opinions in real time. While integration of such a tool requires intense faculty engagement, for some students-such as extroverts or social learners-the tool opens a space for dialogue resonant with in-person discussion.

Similarly, the authors have each opened space in *Diverse College Students* for students to engage traditional discussion forums and wikis with video reflections. Video based technologies allow students to easily respond to prompts, thoughts, or insights in discussion forums by talking through a thought

stream. For extroverts or social learners, such possibilities are more accessible and in alignment with variant approaches to engaging with others about the sometimes contentious and difficult course topics.

The authors advocate that, contrary to what many faculty and pedagogues believe about online learning, dialogic space is expanded through technological infrastructure and affordances. When faculty open space for a variety of intra-active dialogic components in online courses, they actually expand possibilities for student engagement. This is not to advocate that every dialogue includes all possibilities for dialogic engagement, but rather that faculty carefully consider how to best integrate a variety of technological tools to facilitate dialogue and community building in online courses. Such considerations open a true dialogic space, as advocated by Freire, or open new ways for all members of the community to consider how we each process information, reflect, and engage.

Multicultural Chats

Both authors also advocate for individual relationship building with students. In *Diverse College Students,* each author spends time individually with each student during the term, setting up a Zoom, Skype, or in-person conference of 30-60 minutes. The aim of multicultural chats, which usually occur from mid-to-late term, is to facilitate a caring conversation with each student about their own experiences with the course. Feminist pedagogies inform this activity. Although students receive "credit" for engaging in these dialogues, the authors find students actively engaged in these dialogic and relational conversations. Many students in our courses have never had a one-on-one conversation with a faculty member, and many walked away intrigued that a faculty member would actually center time, energy, and care toward relationship building. For both authors, the multicultural chat is an opportunity to engage students in a more intimate and in-depth conversation about topics with which they struggle in the course; or to engage in individualized conversation about course topics, professional development, and life. When we think about Dillard's (2012) assertion, for example, that the purpose of teaching is to care for our student's souls, or see teaching as an engaged spiritual practice, the authors recognize that such engagement cannot occur solely through dialogue on classroom topics. Rather, we must find opportunities to demonstrate and show genuine care for meeting students where they are or push the envelope of their ways of being and knowing. For the authors, the multicultural chat is one possibility to achieve this spiritual and ethical practice in our pedagogy.

Visual and Audio Pedagogies

Visual and audio resources and assignments are increasingly important, particularly for online learners. Infographics, video podcasts, and visual memes are only a few ways that faculty can engage students beyond traditional forms of content delivery (Kelly & Kortegast, 2018). As faculty engage visual and audio pedagogies, it is important to consider issues that may arise, such as accessibility, bandwidth capacities, and paywalls.

Song of Inspiration

Becky Thompson (2017) cites Joy Harjo: "The spirit is vulnerable and needs to be fed with tenderness and songs" (p. 53). One way the authors have accounted for the power of music in *Diverse College Students* is through the Song of Inspiration project. Each term, students enrolled in the course submit the

name of a song that inspires them, speaks to their culture, home, or current place in time. Each week throughout the term, as new course modules are opened up or a new week begins, the authors will post a "Song of Inspiration" from a student in the community. This project provides an opportunity for others in the class to acknowledge the humanity of their classmates. Additionally, the authors have started a Spotify playlist to keep track of the songs that students submit each term. Importantly, this playlist creates a historical record of music students find inspiring, important, or critical, while also connecting students across space-time continuums of academic terms.

Sometimes students submit music and songs directly related to the course topic of *Diverse College Students* (e.g., songs focused on social change, protest, or social commentary); at other times, students submit music that focuses on who they are as people; and sometimes the songs are literally just those meant to inspire you to keep going, or to put you in a good mood. When the authors or others pull up the playlist, we might be inspired by the likes of Nina Simone (*Mississippi Goddam*); John Lennon (*Imagine*); Andy Grammer (*Good to be Alive*); Bob Marley (*Get Up, Stand Up*); or Hillsong United (*Oceans*).

Point of View Cameras

In delivering course content, the authors make additional use of video technology in the production of podcasts covering scheduled course topics. As accentuated by Westbrook (2014), placing videos with lesson introductions, interviews, and interactions with campus settings provide high-context communication within online lesson modules. One distinct method for this visual communication is use of point-of-view action cameras (e.g., GoPro) in producing course module podcasts. The video technology provided in point-of-view cameras allows educators new ways to record events through small mobile handheld recording devices and are easy to produce material for online course use. The use of point-of-view cameras offer students information beyond the use of static images placed in lesson modules. Point-of-view camera recordings allow viewers an immersive experience by providing a wide-angled perspective and high-definition high-resolution video.

For students to learn about diversity, the authors consider the use of immersive video experiences to provide campus tours of Minority-Serving Institutions and interviews with diversity leaders. Point-of-view cameras are used also to capture details of campus artifacts like pictures, murals, and plaques to add information on a campus' history and culture up close. In using these devices for online diversity courses, the authors also believe the unobtrusiveness of point-of-view cameras can lead to genuine and honest conversations and relaxed interactions with individuals in the recordings. When using such discreet video technology, the privacy and values of students from different cultural backgrounds should be considered and respected. Only those who agree to participate in any recording are to be used in any video footage used for course instruction. Montelongo (2018) recommends that any individual who has not agreed to be part of an interview or campus footage be edited out of the final recording placed in the online lesson module

In using point-of-view cameras for online lessons module podcasts, students are provided opportunities to hear and observe the different perspectives of those who are directly impacted by issues or events related to the course. Having these perspectives captures rich contextual information akin to taking a virtual field trip that static images fail to provide within an online learning environment (Montelongo, 2018). The video technology fosters a culturally informed perspective from constituents of campuses being studied in the course that goes beyond relying on written text to describe these experiences.

Mindful Listening

Berila's (2015) text on mindfulness for social justice educators discusses the importance of mindful listening. Mindful listening is an active process where we are open to being fully present to what another has to say; to what they are communicating with us devoid of judgement or overthinking response. Krista Tippett's Civil Conversations Project () asks us to be open to the possibility of listening to one another. We actually function in a world where we have to teach~engage students in processes designed to hone attention and mindful listening. The technological infrastructure and noise that surrounds us on a daily basis make it difficult to listen. Often, we may have on background music; or, if you are a podcast listener, you may multitask – listening to podcasts, books, or other audio while driving, at the gym, or walking the dog. Certainly, such actions and behaviors are efficient, and we may partially listen. But, helping students to really think about what it means to listen, non-judgmentally, is vital in a class focused on social justice, equity, and inclusion.

In face-to-face classes, it might be easier to practice listening. We can engage in activities designed to help students focus attention or even model active listening. How do we do this in an online setting? To begin, what signals do we send students about the care and concern we have for who they are in the online setting? If we have a synchronous meeting, do we get right down to business? Or, do we bring our knowledge of students into the space for others to hear and see? How do we show and demonstrate concern for students who may be looking distressed? Or, who have a running, screaming toddler in the background? The authors suggest modeling humanity for students in these moments, inviting them into our pedagogical space as part of the ontological experience.

The authors work actively to incorporate opportunities for students to practice mindful listening. For example, integrating podcasts into the course, and then engaging students in critical reflection on the podcasts, attunes students to new mediums for gathering perspective, while also asking them to really slow down and listen. Podcasts such as *On Being*, *Code Switch*, or Scene on Radio's *Seeing White* invite students to listen carefully; and, for those who cannot listen, to read and think carefully about what people are discussing.

Author 2 has also incorporated an assignment into the course entitled "having a difficult conversation." In this assignment, students are encouraged to reflect on Berila's (2015) process for mindful listening, and David Isay's (Tippett, 2016) thoughts about listening as an act of love; and then engage in a difficult conversation with someone close to them about topics covered in the course (privilege, oppression, race, ethnicity, sexuality, identity, history, etc.); or about which they have had difficulty communicating. Students often reflect that this assignment is both difficult and emancipating. Many students have never really worked to enact a mindful and loving listening practice. Many leave the assignment humbled by the difficulty of such a task, but also refreshed to actively listen to others in their life. This is a critical process of truly engaging others in relationship, which is so vital to the goals of a course like *Diverse College Students*.

Visual Assignments

The authors also advocate that faculty push pedagogical strategies in the arena of course assignments. The use of infographics, memes, and videos can open new possibilities for students to reflect and integrate course material. Both authors have incorporated such assignments into *Diverse College Students* for the purposes of drawing on student's strengths and challenging students to reflect differently on course

material. In one assignment, students are asked to watch the film *Dear White People*, and then create an infographic about the film. The infographic can select a character, and dissect their development through various racial or ethnic identity development models discussed in the course; or, students can select key moments in the film and unpack the action through organizational or critical race theoretical perspectives (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1996; Lynn & Dixson, 2013).

Experiential Reflections

Becoming~Teacher~Becoming~Human

Ladson-Billings (1995) asserts that culturally relevant pedagogues engage in ongoing, introspective analysis. In their *loving* critique of culturally sustaining pedagogy, Paris and Alim (2014) engage in such reflection: challenging their own complicity in (un)intentionally perpetuating hegemonic structures, humbling themselves about the difficulty of enacting a culturally sustaining pedagogy, and opening an ongoing dialogue with other scholars, and themselves, about the need to continuously (re)invent their pedagogical practices.

Here, the authors insert themselves into this important dialogic space through a process we call *becoming~teacher~becoming~human*. In *Diverse College Students*, the authors advance a critically important perspective for students: that this course is not the end, but the beginning. The college student educators with whom the authors work will go into a postsecondary educational environment of swirling, shifting, and divergent needs. Like the authors, the students with whom we work often leave the course humbled by human capacity for relationship building and the limitations of knowledge. In the authors estimation, a core goal of the course is to help students understand that ongoing personal reflection and action upon the world - what Freire called praxis; what Dillard calls endarkened feminism; what Anzaldúa called a mestiza consciousness and hybridization - is necessary. The authors invite students to consider this a process of becoming~human~becoming~professional: always in process and incomplete. Thus, we offer some closing self-reflexivity on our own journey of becoming through engaging in this course and writing.

Author 1 Narrative

The importance of establishing community and relationship-building in an online diversity course was particularly important for this author during the 2014-2015 academic year. The turbulent summer prior to the fall semester in Ferguson, Missouri was still fresh in student's minds. High profile events involving police shootings and the rise #BlackLivesMatter movement were intense points of discussion for the class. By spring that academic year, the University of Oklahoma fraternity singing racist chants in a party bus was a somber reminder that racism still was a scourge on college campuses. By the end of the year, the hunger strike of graduate student activist Jonathan Butler at the University of Missouri brought attention to racist incidents on his campus and elsewhere.

As a pedagogue for an online course on diverse student populations, awareness that a well-planned course schedule that was flexible enough to address real-time current issues was important. Allowing students to discuss current events was important in order to make sense of these diversity issues. Several important questions challenged this author in the delivery of the online diversity course:

- How could discussions occur in real-time when a course is delivered asynchronously?

- How could students voice their thoughts on these daunting higher education dilemmas without the benefit of face-to-face discussions with classmates and the professor in a physical classroom space?
- Could authentic conversations occur on these topics?

As the semester progressed, opportunities were provided in the course to have a "face" to it. Synchronous class meetings, short video presentation assignments, and video feedback on discussion boards and assignments were ways to provide personalized interaction within the digital learning space. In teaching the course over several semesters, this author realized that a diversity course is much more than a required part of the student's program. When structured well and planned with opportunities for self-growth and reflection, an online diversity course allowed students the space to critically dialogue not only the course material, but also how the material allowed them to apply a critical lens to view current societal issues. Achieving these outcomes did not come easy and required a great amount of effort. However, this author found that the online teaching of this course improved his overall teaching effectiveness in digital and face-to-face learning environments.

Since that challenging academic year where racial strife and social justice advocacy were front and center in the United States, this author reflected on the aforementioned questions and concluded that several areas were important to address to create meaningful and impactful online diversity courses. First, anxiety and anxiousness that is likely occurring by students who are entering a course on diversity must be dealt with early in the term. Offering initial efforts in establishing community and relationship-building was a key strategy for genuineness in the course. Authentic discussion did not come without knowing what others bring first to the digital learning space. After that, this author eased into the topic conversations by first connecting it to something students could relate with in their lives. Do not shy away from popular media and culture. Songs, movie clips, artwork, comedy skits and others were effective in breaking the ice and loosening up the anxiousness that was possibly present as discussions were initiated in the course.

After that, the vast wealth of knowledge on diversity research should be offered to let students become aware of the prominence of critical thinking on topics. Once delivered, this author challenged students to create action and to put skills to use. Lastly, reflection was key to understanding how course content made an impact. Online journaling allowed students an additional private space to have authentic conversations with themselves. Especially for White students, this private space allowed further exploration of questions that dealt with their role in influencing privilege and inequities.

Author 2 Narrative

Several terms ago this author had a student whose young son was naturally curious, and thus would often sit alongside the student during our synchronous meetings. One day, this young individual wanted to ask a question based on the conversations we were having. While his mother tried to quiet him down, this author invited him to ask his questions. As you might expect, these questions were beyond insightful, and highly relevant to our conversation in the class. "Why aren't there any Black male teachers at my school? Why are all the teachers White women?" This was not only relevant to our conversation in the class - about issues of representation, structural diversity, and access - but also demonstrated that this young man recognized a problem in his environment related to racism, systemic inequalities, and power.

Several weeks later this same student sent me a text message describing how she had been listening to an audiobook version of Beverly Daniel Tatum's (2017) *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, which we were also reading in class, during her driving to and from school with her sons. Her son started noticing microaggressions in his elementary school, and they proceeded to discuss microaggressions and how to handle them in real life. For this author this represents the ways that our classroom spaces move outside boundaries; and, that our "students" are not the only ones to whom we are responsible. Our community of scholars extends far beyond those listed on our role and enrollment sheets - it includes youth; community members; family members; extended family. All of these individuals come into our pedagogical orbit as we teach - and how we care and welcome them into our community is vitally important to our success in advancing what Thompson (2017) calls a pedagogy of tenderness.

As a white, queer, cisgender, able-bodied scholar, this author recognizes the ongoing work he must do to unpack his own privileges. This author recognized the important role that he might play in advancing a dialogue so desperately needed for college student educators: one that centers culturally sustaining pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and humanization in world so bent on consistent erasure and dehumanizing practice. As an online pedagogue, this author is constantly thinking of how to advance the cause of a tender, embodied, and critical praxis through technological mediums.

What this author is coming to appreciate is that technologies advance our capabilities, if we are open, to advance these dialogues. When we center relational capacities in our approach to courses such as *Diverse College Students*; when we work to be fully engaged in providing insight and challenge to students with whom we are working; and when we are open to students challenging our own shortcomings as pedagogues and humans; in these moments the possibilities of a different world emerge.

We are in the work of healing. Sometimes this work involves healing ourselves. At other moments this work involves helping others on the path toward healing. Ultimately, our work as critical digital pedagogues is about working in relation with others to heal a world that is deeply fractured and complex, but also beautiful in its possibilities. This author is consistently reminded of these responsibilities (response-abilities) when he encounters the beautiful and unexpected moments such as the one shared earlier in this reflection. Or, in a story like this.

Once, this author had a student enrolled in the course who decided to use the "Difficult Conversation" assignment to engage in a dialogue with her ex-husband. This author had learned throughout the term of the difficult relationship and challenging divorce between this student and her former husband. There was emotional abuse, cultural misunderstandings, and years of frustration. The student dialogued with the author during our Multicultural Chat about how to approach this conversation with mindful listening, and with love. She was skeptical of the possibilities for mindful, loving listening. In her reflective video of the experience, through tears and laughter, this student discussed how mindful loving listening had worked. Both she and her ex-husband felt they had been heard; they both expressed thoughts, feelings, and emotions that had been unspoken for years. The aim of these assignments is not to have students complete tasks so they can earn a grade. Rather, assignments such as these aim toward praxis-reflection and action upon the world. Grounded in critical theory, and enacted in the real world, courses such as *Diverse College Students* impact more than educational practice. The course has real world consequences.

We heal the world and shift its possibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An important recommendation when teaching an online diversity course is to not make the space devoid of personalization and interaction. The authors make intentional efforts to understand how different types of interaction impact the online diversity course experience. Knowing that student-student and student-faculty interactions are frequently researched in educational success literature (Zimmerman, 2012), the authors suggest that online pedagogues learn more about student-content interaction. With effort and creativity, online teaching provides the opportunity to re-imagine the student learning experience. This aligns with feminist pedagogical practices. Online pedagogues also have to consider the influence of student-interface interaction in online learning.

The authors argue that faculty engaged in online pedagogy should comprehend how new technologies fit into pedagogical practices. As new tools emerge, faculty need to familiarize themselves. Chief amongst faculty concerns should be privacy issues. Recent issues with privacy breaches, and new rules governing privacy of data such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), necessitate that, ethically, we inform students about how tools we engage will collect their data, and how that data will be used. This concern should also extend to learning management systems. We have a level of responsibility to protect our students, their data, and their privacy.

Given the wide range of tools available through web-based and phone applications, faculty should be open to offering students opportunities to engage new tools in the classroom environment. The authors suggest that faculty encourage students to share digital tools they are using in their own life that may enhance pedagogical practice. In addition, remember that as new digital tools are integrated for assignments, faculty should provide flexibility. The aim should be fostering new and different thinking, rather than perfection of product. The authors often ask students to use tools with which they are unfamiliar (for example, creating infographics or recording podcasts). As the authors request students to use these tools, there is also consistent emphasis placed on how the assignment or project is geared more toward thinking differently, as opposed to creating a perfect product. The authors refer to this as process-oriented pedagogical practice.

Relationship-building in online courses, while demanding a decent amount of labor, is needed to establish a culturally responsive and culturally sustaining experience rooted in genuine care. The authors focus on student development during the course, emphasizing the importance of doing more than providing objective assessments. Community and relationship building is aided by high-context communication strategies of video chats and one-to-one appointments with students. In teaching the course over several semesters, the authors realize that a diversity course is much more than a required part of the student's program; it is a personal journey of discovery and challenges. When opportunities for self-growth and reflection are provided, an online diversity course allows students the space to critically dialogue not only the course material, but also apply a critical lens to crucial societal issues.

Finally, the authors implore online pedagogues to read critical theory. Too many training sessions, conferences, and approaches to online pedagogy are rooted in skills and competency-based approaches. While technological skills are important, they will never be enough to create an engaged, critical digital pedagogy. Rather, online pedagogues must engage critical theory, including many not mentioned in this chapter. Further, online pedagogues need to consistently engage in culturally sustaining praxis, internally and in community with others. The authors have found important resources in other critically minded scholars on campus, and through national networks such as the *Digital Pedagogy Lab*.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

There are many arenas for further inquiry related to critical digital pedagogy and teaching diversity courses online. To begin, there are currently no research studies we can find that examine how faculty engage critical pedagogies for online teaching and learning. Much of the writing about critical digital pedagogy is theoretical or philosophical in nature. Thus, future research should examine a broader array of faculty practices, dispositions, and challenges with enacting critical digital pedagogy.

Second, there is significant need to advance research related to embodied practices in online learning. The authors emphasize, once again, that *the body* does indeed matter in online learning. Embodied practice is at least partially about taking care of the body, and thus studies should examine the physiological strains on the body (i.e., the eyes, the hands, the back, etc.). Additionally, there is a need to research how an embodied set of practices might still be engaged through online learning (i.e., yoga, mindful breathing, etc.). For example, the use of synchronous meetings and other digital tools may enhance mindfulness and embodied practice for online pedagogues, but this is an arena that is undertheorized and unexamined in the extant research literature.

This book centers on care in online learning. However, the authors notice a dearth of research about the ethic of care in online pedagogy. Faculty insights into caring practices could be examined. Additionally, there is room for understand how students develop communities of care in online learning. The authors know, from anecdotal evidence, that an ethic of care amongst geographically distributed students does occur. What are these relationships of care predicated on, and how do students experience care on and through online and distributed learning environments?

Finally, the authors suggest further research into how social identities influence student engagement and experiences in online courses. The critical perspectives offered in this paper recognize that history, culture, and politics are inherently entangled with educative practices. There is no reason to believe this is not also true in online learning spaces. Inquiry into how race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, and language influence critical digital pedagogy is highly under-researched.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the authors have engaged in three critical tasks. First, to outline, center, and engage readers in understanding the important role strong critical theoretical frameworks play in our own pedagogical strategies. Second, to utilize those critical theoretical orientations, and our pragmatic, experiential knowledge of online teaching and learning, to discuss strategies for teaching one course, *Diverse College Students*, from a critically engaged, digitally informed pedagogical perspective. Finally, the authors provided short reflective pieces, in alignment with a culturally relevant pedagogical perspective, to model methods of thinking critical digital pedagogy as a faculty member. As the authors close, it is important to recognize that our learning community extends to you, the reader. Dialogue with us about these topics, share new, intriguing, and important theoretical perspectives with which you are thinking, and your strategies for a critically engaged digital pedagogy. Collectively we can build a community of scholars who are critically informed and committed to teaching online in an engaged, embodied, caring, and tender way.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Critical Digital Pedagogy: A pedagogical approach to online teaching and learning that begins with examination of critical theories (feminist, queer, critical race, poststructural, etc.) and then interrogates digital tools, learning management systems, and other digital practices to ensure relational and humanizing pedagogy is enacted.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A theoretical and practical pedagogical approach advanced by Gloria Ladson-Billings emphasizing student achievement, acknowledgement and affirmation of student's cultural identities, and critique of sociopolitical dynamics influencing deficit-based perspectives and unequal educational outcomes.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A theoretical and practical pedagogical approach advanced by H. Samy Alim that seeks to advance cultural acknowledgment and affirmation while also lovingly critiquing hegemonic power structures in cultural forms (i.e., racism, homophobia, sexism, Islamophobia).

Feminist Pedagogy: A wide field of study encompassing a variety of theorists. Feminist pedagogies advance perspectives on embodied practices, the role of gender in approaches to ontology and epistemology, and examination of historic, cultural, political, and sociomaterial influences on teaching and learning.

High-Context Communication: Communication that emphasizes relational capacity between individuals. These relations are typically assessed by the level of nonverbal communication that is occurring between individuals, places, and events.

Interface Interaction: In response to the growth of online education, this form of interaction reflects how students and faculty interact with technology and other multi-media components as part of the online course requirements and experience.

Low-Context Communication: Communication that emphasizes specific facts and is largely encoded in written text. The use of nonverbal communication is disregarded and emphasis on relations is ignored.

Point-of-View Action Camera: Small, mobile, and high-resolution video camera recorders that provide viewers wide-angled perspective and high-definition image quality with 140-to-170-degree field of vision.