



DOUGLAS COLLEGE

Transformative Learning and the Sociological Imagination



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Teaching and Measuring Sociological Imagination

- Professors believe that the development of SI is one of the most important “take-aways” from Sociology courses
- Developing a sociological imagination is a form of consciousness - a cognitive skill

YET

- We tend to teach it as a vocabulary term (Bidwell, 1995)
 - We define and then model it
- Measure students’ acquisition of it by asking them to define it

Research – phase one - purpose

- To compare 2 groups
 - One structurally diverse (Canada)
 - One non-diverse (UK)
 - The dominant group in both societies is white British
- To compare 2 courses
 - One with diversity-infused content (Sociology)
 - One without diversity-infused content (Education)

Intolerant Schema Measure

- Overall low levels of intolerance in all conditions
- No significant changes in ISM scores
 - Dropped insignificantly in the structurally diverse experimental group
 - Increased insignificantly in the non-diverse group

Figure 1. Overall ISM Means for Structurally Diverse Group (n = 58)

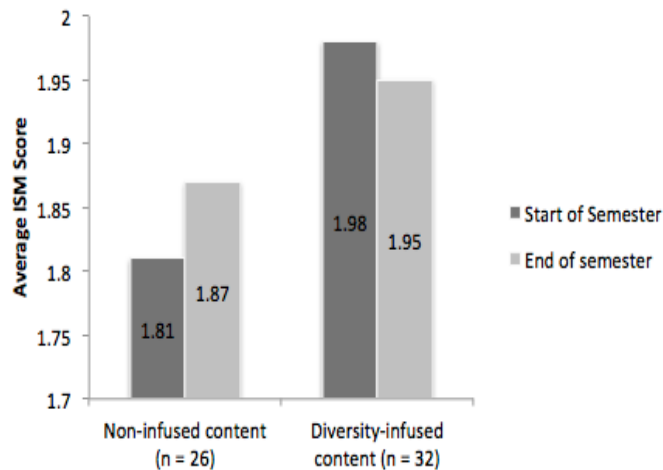
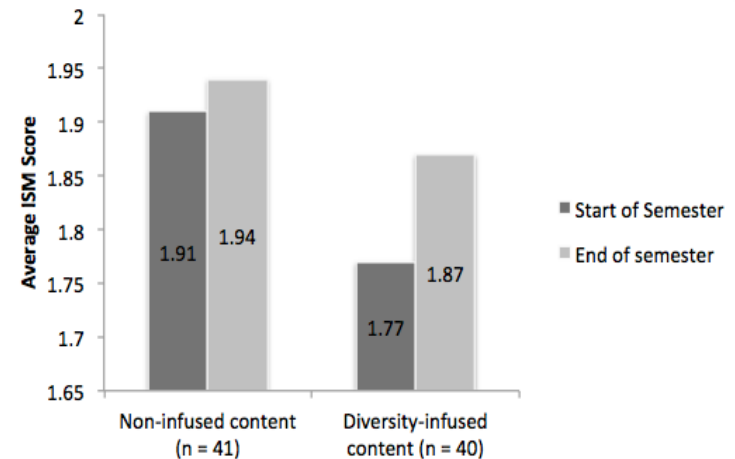


Figure 2. Overall ISM Means for Non-Diverse Group (n = 81)



- Simple exposure to diversity does not guarantee lowered intolerance
- Attitude change may not happen over one course

Phase 2 – Focus groups

- UK cohort (Social Justice and Inclusion)
- Students indicated that
 - Debates with their colleagues
 - Internship placements
- had most significant impact on their perspective
- i.e. these experiences were transformative

Transformative Learning

- Shift focus to longer term “transformative learning” (Mezirow):
 - Learning that encourages a new view of the world
 - A process that moves students towards a frame of reference that is more inclusive and critically reflective
 - Triggered by a disorienting dilemma
 - An experience that changes the learner’s expectations and perspective

Phase 3 – Transformative Learning Survey

- UK cohort (Social Justice and Inclusion)
- Most indicated that they had not had a transformative experience

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- They indicated that they had experienced certain precursor steps to TL
 - Experienced a disorienting dilemma
 - Questioned their own beliefs
 - Realized others also questioned their own beliefs
 - Felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations

Relating the sociological imagination and transformative learning

- Both SI and TL are the result of **resocialization**
- SI is a unique form of transformative learning
- Developing a sociological imagination is transformative:
 - It encourages a different way of thinking about the world
- This can not be achieved entirely through lecture
 - Although storytelling is a powerful teaching and learning tool

How can we encourage TL AND SI?

- How can classroom techniques present students with disorienting dilemmas?
 - Clickers and discussion
 - Guest speakers
 - Role-playing games
 - Use of websites like PostSecret.com
 - Journaling
- Can we measure acquisition of sociological imagination by measuring transformative learning?
- How can we develop SI/TL when we only have them for 1 class?
- Your suggestions/best practices?



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Thank you

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