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# Examining Undergraduate Students' Intercultural Competence in a Teaching Methods Course

Christopher M. Estepp[1], Jacquelyn D. Wiersma-Mosley[2], and Catherine W. Shoulders[3]

**Abstract**

*As our society becomes more interconnected and multicultural, it is imperative we develop and assess intercultural competence among future professionals in agricultural education and communications. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the effect of intercultural competence training on students' intercultural competence in a teaching methods course. Students (N = 27) in this experimental design study were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group, where the treatment group members completed the Intercultural Development Inventory and underwent intercultural competence training. Results showed that students in the treatment group scored low in intercultural competence and did not mention social identity factors as frequently as the control group. Additionally, females mentioned more social identity factors than males. Recommendations from the study were that high-impact pedagogical practices should be implemented to teach intercultural competence, longitudinal studies should be used to further assess intercultural competence development over time, and research should examine the role of gender in intercultural competence development.*

***Keywords:*** intercultural competence; social identity factors; agricultural education; agricultural communications

## Introduction

The United States is increasingly becoming racially, ethnically, and culturally more diverse. Estimates have predicted that by 2060 the non-Hispanic, White population will decrease 8.2%, while in the same timeframe the Hispanic population is expected to increase by 114%, Black by 42%, Native American by 41%, and multiracial by 225% (Colby & Ortman, 2015). One of the fastest growing demographic groups has been Hispanics; in fact, they accounted for half of all population growth from 2010-2019 (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). This growth is prevalent in the State of Arkansas where, while the number of individuals in all minority groups have increased, the number of Hispanic people increased by over 600% from 1990 to 2006 (Farmer et al., 2007), and more recently, by another 21.5% between the years of 2010 to 2017 (Miller & Knapp, 2019). Consequently, the demand for agricultural messages to be able to connect with a wide variety of audiences is vital (Gibson et al., 2020).

These demographic shifts have been particularly apparent in U.S. public schools. In 2015, White public-school students, who saw their percentage of enrollment drop to 48%, became the majority-minority, while the percentage of Hispanic students increased from 16% to 27% (Hussar et

[1] Christopher M. Estepp is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Education in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Technology at the University of Arkansas, AFLS E111, Fayetteville, AR 72701, estepp@uark.edu
[2] Jacquelyn D. Wiersma-Mosley is a Professor in Human Development and Family Sciences in the School of Human and Environmental Sciences at the University of Arkansas, 118 HOEC, Fayetteville, AR 72701, jwiersma@uark.edu
[3] Catherine W. Shoulders is a Professor of Agricultural Education in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Technology at the University of Arkansas, AFLS E111-A, Fayetteville, AR 72701, cshoulde@uark.edu

al., 2020). This has also been evident in Arkansas, as enrollment of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in public schools increased from 30% to 34% over the last decade (Office for Education Policy, 2020). However, while overall student demographics have changed, student enrollment and teacher demographics in school-based agricultural education (SBAE) programs have not shifted as quickly (Lawrence et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2012). During the 2020-2021 school year, BIPOC students continued to be underrepresented in SBAE courses in Arkansas with SBAE enrollment about 12 percentage points below overall enrollment (Arkansas Department of Education, 2020). Furthermore, only one percent of secondary agriculture teachers in the state identified as BIPOC (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2021). Recruitment of BIPOC individuals into agricultural education has not kept pace with demographic changes, and calls have been repeatedly made to make SBAE more inclusive and increase the number of BIPOC individuals within agricultural education programs (Roberts et al., 2016). Brown et al. (2021) stated that, "If SBAE programs seek to recruit more minorities . . . and to become more reflective of the nation's population, it is critical for agricultural education curricula to become more culturally inclusive" (p. 560). Nonetheless, it is plausible that as the nation's demographics continue to change the number of BIPOC students in SBAE programs will increase.

The need for communicating with diverse audiences is not exclusive to SBAE settings; agricultural educators in informal and nonformal settings, including extension agents and agricultural communications specialists, must also be prepared to work with diverse audiences (Bittner, 2019; Irani & Doerfert, 2013; Moncloa et al., 2019; National Research Council, 2009). Skogrand and Shirer (2007) specified that Cooperative Extension Service (CES) directives guide extension educators about working with all families and individuals within a community. However, Bittner (2019) argued that CES's established model of focusing on traditional, rural populations has hindered their ability to meet the needs of a changing society and is not sustainable, as less than one-fifth of Americans live in rural areas. Bittner contended that extension agents must understand and build relationships with people of different cultures in order to break barriers and better serve historically underrepresented communities. Additionally, agricultural communicators must deal with changing demographics when preparing agricultural messages; globalized markets, changing consumer preferences, and attitudes about agriculture all affect how the agricultural industry is perceived by individuals of all cultures (National Research Council, 2009).

Unfortunately, many agricultural educators and communicators have not been trained and prepared to work within the context of cultural diversity (Benge & Beattie, 2021; Bittner, 2019; Irani & Doerfert, 2013; LaVergne et al., 2011; Vincent et al., 2012). A study by Vommi and LaVergne (2015) found that a majority of SBAE teachers received no intercultural training in their teacher preparation programs or as inservice teachers, and they later reported (Vommi & LaVergne, 2016) that most SBAE teachers desired training for working with students whose first language was not English, students from different racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and learning about customs of students from different cultural backgrounds. Dissimilar to SBAE teachers, LaVergne (2015) found that many 4-H youth educators had received intercultural training, however, 86% of them indicated that colleges and universities need to do more to provide intercultural training opportunities for undergraduate students. As cultural diversity increases, departments of agricultural education and communications must work to ensure graduates can embrace the ethnic, racial and cultural expressions of individuals, as increased diversity will present unique opportunities for agricultural educators (Roberts et al., 2016; Schwarzenthal et al., 2019). One way to prepare individuals to meet diversity opportunities is by providing instruction focused on intercultural competence (LaVergne et al., 2012; Schwarzenthal et al., 2019), where intercultural competence is defined as an awareness of one's own cultural identity and the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures (Deardorff, 2011).

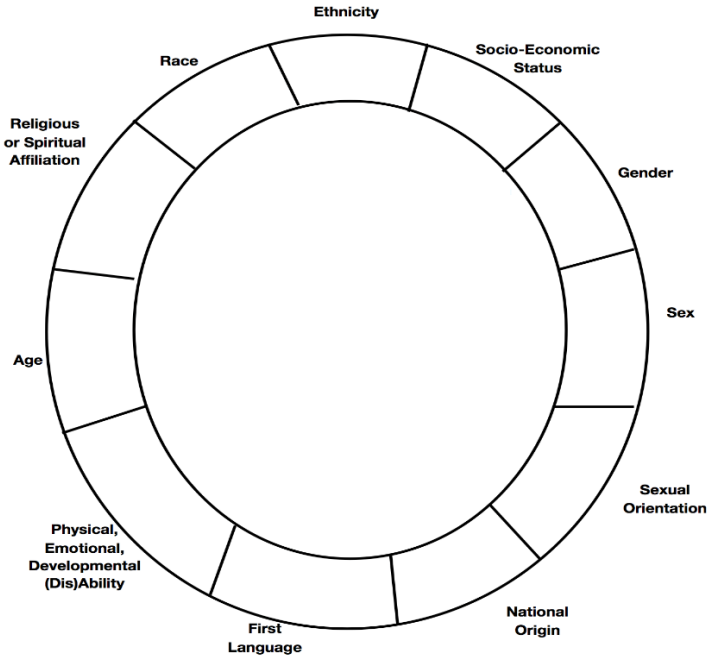
Much of the inquiry into intercultural competence within agricultural education has centered around the use of international experiences such as study abroad or international service-learning and their effect on undergraduate students' intercultural attitudes and global learning (Bost & Wingenbach, 2018; Bunch et al., 2018; Rampold et al., 2020; Roberts & Edwards, 2016; Russell & Morris, 2008). Whereas results have generally been positive, they have varied based on students' length of exposure and interaction with other cultures, and much of the focus on intercultural competence has dealt with race and ethnicity within a foreign context. While race and ethnicity are two of the most visible pieces of culture, they are only two pieces of the larger cultural puzzle (Tubbs, 2015; Vincent et al., 2012). Culture has been defined as the confluence of actions, perceptions, and beliefs of individuals informed by their various life experiences (Tubbs, 2015). Accordingly, multiple social identities have been associated with the concept of culture, including, but not limited to race and ethnicity. Other social identity factors informing culture include socioeconomic status; gender; sex; sexual orientation; national origin; first language; physical, emotional, and developmental (dis)ability; age; and religious or spiritual affiliation (University of Michigan, 2017).

## Theoretical Framework

This study utilized two theoretical frameworks: The Social Identity Wheel (University of Michigan, 2017), and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS; Bennett, 1986). The Social Identity Wheel (Figure 1) consists of 11 identity factors: ethnicity; socioeconomic status; gender; sex; sexual orientation; national origin; first language; physical, emotional, and developmental (dis)ability; age; religious or spiritual affiliation; and race. While these factors are not all-inclusive regarding the identity factors with which a person can identify, the Social Identity Wheel has been used in studies and trainings focused on students' consideration of others' identities and the promotion of social justice (Mason, 2019). In the context of this study, the Social Identity Wheel was used to categorize various aspects of cultural identity, by which individuals identify.

**Figure 1**

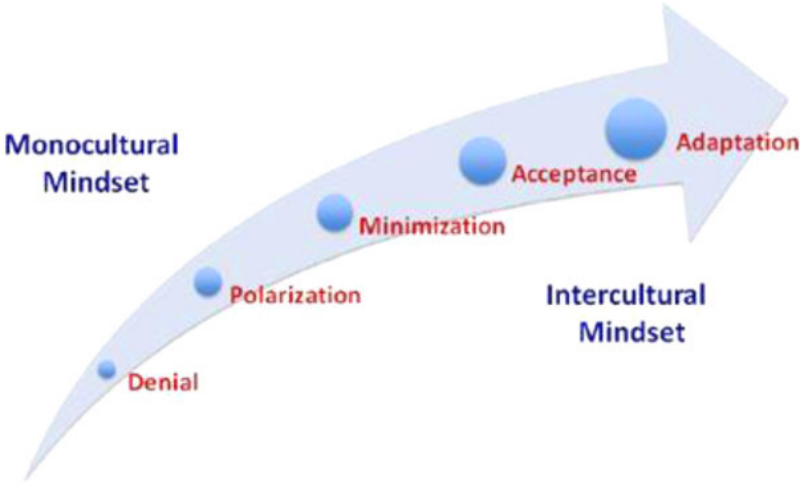
*Social Identity Wheel (Michigan State University, 2017)*



The second conceptual framework, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS; See Figure 2) (Bennett, 1986), was used to codify participants' sense of intercultural competence. The DMIS framework is arranged along a continuum illustrating individuals' orientations toward cultural similarities and differences. The DMIS continuum ranges from monocultural or ethnocentric orientations to intercultural or ethnorelative, and includes the following five positions: *Denial, Polarization, Minimization, Acceptance* and *Adaptation*. *Denial* reflects limited experience and capacity to understand and respond appropriately to cultural differences. *Polarization* espouses an "us vs. them" mindset either through Defense (seeing cultural differences as divisive and threatening to one's own culture) or Reversal (valuing other cultural practices while denigrating one's own culture group). *Minimization* highlights commonalities to the point of masking a deeper understanding of cultural differences, while *Acceptance* recognizes and appreciates patterns of cultural differences and commonalities. Lastly, *Adaptation* is when one can bridge diverse communities using an increased repertoire of cultural frameworks and practices in navigating cultural commonalities and differences.

**Figure 2**

*Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (IDI, 2021)*




According to the DMIS framework, intercultural competence develops when three major domains are addressed: 1) identity development (i.e., deep self-awareness), 2) learning about cultural differences, and 3) bridging or adapting behavior with different groups through experiences. Intercultural understanding encompasses both cognitive and affective domains (Hill, 2006). The cognitive aspect of intercultural understanding comprises knowledge about one's own identity and culture as well as learning about others who are different (Hill, 2006). Further, the cognitive domain includes the ability to compare the similarities and differences among cultures. To an extent, self-awareness and education can increase one's intercultural competence, but it takes authentic experiences and engagement with other cultures to further intercultural competence growth and reach the later stages (e.g., acceptance or adaptation) of development.

Various factors contribute to one's intercultural competence development, and during the initial development of their Intercultural Development Inventory, Hammer and associates (2003) tested the instrument for differences according to various demographic variables. They found no differences for demographic variables apart from gender. Hammer et al. reported that females' *Denial* scores were significantly lower than males, however, because gender differences were not found within other developmental orientation areas, they deemed gender did not influence intercultural competence.

Nevertheless, more recent research (see Nichols, 2011) has shown that females consistently possess lower ethnocentrism, participate in international study abroad experiences more than their male counterparts, have lower intercultural communication apprehension, and have larger gains in intercultural competence after a cultural intervention. Thus, gender is presented as a variable of interest in this study.

## Purpose and Objectives

Increases in diversity will require that agricultural educators and communicators develop intercultural competence in order to understand and appreciate the cultural differences among diverse audiences. Intercultural competence has not been widely studied within agricultural education, nonetheless, the literature supports the idea that agricultural educators are underprepared to work with diverse audiences. One potential approach to help improve agricultural educators' intercultural competence is to provide opportunities for students to consider audience diversity within a teaching methods course. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the effect of intercultural competence training on students' intercultural competence in a teaching methods course. Specific objectives for the study included:

1. Describe students' use of social identify factors in lesson planning after an intercultural competence assessment and training,
2. Describe students' use of social identify factors in lesson planning without an intercultural competence assessment and subsequent training,
3. Determine the difference in students' use of social identify factors in lesson planning between those who received and did not receive training on intercultural competence, and
4. Determine the difference in students' use of social identity factors in lesson planning between genders.

For objectives 3 and 4, three null hypotheses guided this study's statistical analysis: $H_O1$: No statistical difference ($p > .05$) will exist in students' use of social identity factors in lesson planning among those who received and did not receive training on intercultural competence ($\mu_{control} = \mu_{treatment}$); $H_O2$: No statistical difference ($p > .05$) will exist in students' use of social identity factors in lesson planning among genders ($\mu_{males} = \mu_{females}$); and, $H_O3$: No interaction effect ($p > .05$) will exist in students' use of social identity factors in lesson planning among students who received and did not receive training on intercultural competence and gender.

## Methods

The population of interest for this experimental design study was undergraduate students in AGED 3133-Instructional and Presentation Strategies at the University of Arkansas ($N = 27$). AGED 3133 is required for all agricultural education and agricultural communications students in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology. Students were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group at the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester. All students volunteered to participate and the Institutional Review Board at the University of Arkansas deemed the study exempt.

Treatment group members ($n = 14$) were asked to complete the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer, 2011), and participate in a one-hour training on intercultural competence. During the training, treatment group members were introduced to the Social Identity Wheel (Michigan State University, 2017), as well as the five positions of the DMIS framework (Bennett, 1986). Additionally, they were individually debriefed on their IDI results with IDI qualified administrators. Part of the debriefing process included strategies to help participants increase their intercultural

competence. The control group ($n$ = 13) was not administered the IDI, instead they participated in an alternate training on use of the university library system. Control group members were given the option of completing the intercultural competence training at the conclusion of the semester.

Using the DMIS (Bennett, 1986), Hammer (2008) developed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to measure individuals' lenses of cultural similarities and differences along the developmental continuum. The IDI is an appropriate instrument for assessing students in higher education because of the nature of the developmental process that can be supported through education. This instrument has been tested on diverse (ethnic and national) populations; data from various studies have shown high reliability and construct validity, and no significant correlation with a social-desirability scale (Hammer et al., 2003; Paige et al., 2003). The IDI has been used in more than 30 countries in corporate, non-profit, government, faith-based, and educational contexts (Hammer, 2015).

The IDI is a 50-item instrument available online ($12/student) that can be completed in 15–20 minutes and includes questions regarding intercultural experiences in terms of (a) cross-cultural goals, (b) challenges faced when navigating cultural differences, (c) intercultural incidents that individuals have encountered with cultural differences, and (d) the ways individuals navigate cultural differences. Scores on the IDI range from 50 to 145, which indicate a participant's primary orientation toward cultural differences and commonalities, or Developmental Orientation (DO). The DO is the perspective the student is most likely to use in situations where cultural differences and commonalities need to be bridged. Within the range of scores on the IDI, DO categories align with Bennett's (1986) DMIS positions of *Denial* (55-70), *Polarization* (71-85), *Minimization* (86-115), *Acceptance* (116-130), and *Adaptation* (131-145).

As part of the course requirements, all participants completed four microteachings, each accompanied by a comprehensive daily lesson plan, which asked them to provide background and details about three potential audience members. For all audience descriptions, we counted frequencies of students' inclusion of each of the 11 social identity factors included on the Social Identity Wheel (University of Michigan, 2017). Phrases and terms used by students in their descriptions of audience members were coded into the categories of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, first language, (dis)abilities, age, and religion. We met to discuss the data analysis and concurred as a research team on all frequencies, yielding an inter-rater reliability score of 1.0.

Data for objectives one and two were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, range, means, and standard deviations. For objectives three and four, main effects and interactions between group and gender regarding differences in social identity use were determined using a two-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA). The assumptions of ANOVA are normality, homogeneity of variance, and independence of observations (Hopkins & Glass, 1978). To assess normality, the Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted, which revealed that the data violated the assumption of normality, $W(27) = .89$, $p = .009$. However, according to Hopkins and Glass (1978, p.348), "…nonnormality has inconsequential results—ANOVA is 'robust' with respect to the normality assumption." Levene's test was used to assess homogeneity of variance, and the data were found to have equal variances, $F(3,23) = .461$, $p = .712$. Lastly, all observations were deemed to be independent, therefore, we proceeded with the ANOVA analysis.

## Results

Results of the study showed that the mean age of participants was 21.0 ($s$ = 2.32) years of age; the majority were female (70.4%), and Caucasian (81.5%). The remainder of the participants' ethnicities were 11.1% American Indian, 3.7% Hispanic, and 3.7% two or more races. The treatment

group contained 6 males and 8 females, while the control group consisted of two males and 11 females. The treatment group were the only participants who took the IDI assessment. The average IDI score for the treatment group ($n$ = 14) was 83.28 ($s$ = 12.37) with a range of 69.09 to 106.42. Regarding the Developmental Orientation categories, 7.2% ($f$ = 1) of students were in the *Denial* category, 50% ($f$ = 7) were in *Polarization*, and 42.8% ($f$ = 6) were in the *Minimization* stage. No students were in the *Acceptance* or *Adaptation* stages.

The purposes of objectives 1 and 2 were to describe students' use of social identity factors in lesson planning. The total frequency of social identity factors mentioned across both groups was 220, while the frequency of social identity factors mentioned within the control group ($f$ = 149) was greater than the treatment group ($f$ = 71). Regarding each social identity factor, gender was the most mentioned ($f$ = 121) followed by age ($f$ = 71). The least mentioned identity factors were race, ethnicity, sex, and religion ($f$ = 0), followed by sexual orientation ($f$ = 1), first language ($f$ = 1), national origin ($f$ = 3), socioeconomic status ($f$ = 10), and (dis)ability ($f$ = 13). The treatment group mentioned gender most frequently ($f$ = 37), followed by age ($f$ = 25), (dis)ability ($f$ = 7), national origin ($f$ = 1), and socioeconomic status ($f$ = 1). For the treatment group there were no mentions of the remaining social identity factors. Within the control group, gender was the most frequently mentioned social identity factor ($f$ = 84) followed by age ($f$ = 46), socioeconomic status ($f$ = 9), (dis)ability ($f$ = 6), national origin ($f$ = 2), sexual orientation ($f$ = 1), and first language ($f$ = 1). For the control group there were no mentions of the remaining social identity factors. Table 1 illustrates the frequency breakdown of social identity factors mentioned by the treatment and control groups.

**Table 1**

*Frequency of Social Identity Factors Mentioned across all Microteachings by Group*

| Group | Social Identity Factors | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SES | Gender | Sexual Orientation | National Origin | First Language | (Dis)ability | Age | Religion |
| Treatment | 1.0 | 37.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 7.0 | 25.0 | 0.0 |
| Control | 9.0 | 84.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 6.0 | 46.0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 10.0 | 121.0 | 1.0 | 3.0 | 1.0 | 13.0 | 71.0 | 0.0 |

*Note*. Race, Ethnicity, and Sex were excluded because they had frequencies of zero.

Means were calculated to describe the average number of social identity mentions per student by group, and gender. The mean number of factors mentioned by all students across all microteachings was 8.15 ($s$ = 7.30) with a range of 0 to 29. The mean number of identity mentions per student in the treatment group across all microteachings was 5.07 ($s$ = 5.43), while the mean for the control group was 11.46 ($s$ = 7.78). Regarding gender, the mean number of factors mentioned by males was 4.38 ($s$ = 5.53) and females was 9.74 ($s$ = 7.49). Within each group, males and females differed in their average number of identity mentions. Males in the treatment group mentioned social identity factors a mean of 3.33 ($s$ = 5.43) times, while the mean for females in the treatment group was 6.37 ($s$ = 5.40) times. In the control group, the mean number of social identity mentions for males was 7.50 ($s$ = 6.36) and females was 11.46 ($s$ = 7.78). Table 2 illustrates the mean numbers of social identity mentions by group and gender.

**Table 2**

*Mean Number of Social Identity Mentions by Gender and Group*

| Gender | Treatment ($n$ = 14) | | Control ($n$ = 13) | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| Male | 3.33 ($n$ = 6) | 5.43 | 7.50 ($n$ = 2) | 6.40 | 4.38 | 5.53 |
| Female | 6.37 ($n$ = 8) | 5.40 | 12.18 ($n$ = 11) | 8.06 | 9.74 | 7.49 |
| Genders Combined | 5.07 | 5.43 | 11.46 | 7.78 | 8.15 | 7.30 |

For objectives 3 and 4, a two-way analysis of variance was calculated to determine if differences existed in the mean number of social identity factor mentions by treatment or control group or by gender. Main effects were not found for group $F(1,23) = 2.49$, $p = .128$ or gender $F(1,23) = 1.49$, $p = .234$. Additionally, no interaction effects were found between group and gender $F(1,23) = .067$, $p = .798$. Therefore, we failed to reject all null hypotheses.

## Conclusions/Discussion/Implications

The results of this study allowed us to draw several conclusions. First, however, we must mention the limitations of the study. The sample size of this study was small, which did not provide the statistical power to find significant differences between groups. Additionally, IDI assessments were based on self-reports from a single group pre-test, thus there may be testing effects and other potential biases in this sample; findings should be interpreted with caution. A strength of our study is the use of control and treatment groups in cultural competence training. Deardorff (2015) observed a need for holistic behavioral assessments (i.e., working in diverse teams and developing relationships) for assessing cultural competence, advocating for control groups and performance-based measures, which we have done in the current study.

The treatment group was the only one to complete the IDI, and overwhelmingly, students scored in the ethnocentric range of the DO continuum. One student was in the *Denial* orientation, half of all students scored in the *Polarization* orientation, and the remainder scored in *Minimization*. About 16% of adults score in the *Polarization* range (Hammer, 1998), and individuals in *Polarization* may focus on the "us vs. them" mindset either through Defense (seeing cultural differences as divisive and threatening to one's own culture) or Reversal (valuing other cultural practices while denigrating one's own culture group). Students may be fearful and angry regarding diversity topics in the classroom, leading to backlash and retreat from teaching practices addressing equity and inclusion, and there may be an overemphasis and judgement of racial differences stemming from the fear of loss of power, privilege, control or group identity (Harewood & Zemsky, 2020).

To help students move beyond *Polarization* they must recognize when they overemphasize differences and search for commonalities, so they can move into the stage of *Minimization*. Hammer (1998) indicated that in the adult population 65% fall in the *Minimization* orientation, whereas 3% are in *Denial*, 15% are in *Acceptance*, and 2% are in *Adaptation*. According to prior research (Wiersma-Mosley, 2019), the students in this study are similar to other college-aged students in regard to their developmental orientations. However, with any assessment, it is important to note that scores do not

indicate a person has completed their cultural competence education. Rather, cultural competency is considered a journey and not a destination (Wiersma-Mosley, 2019).

On average students used about eight social identity factors across the four microteachings or about two per lesson; the two most mentioned factors were age and gender. No significant differences in the use of social identity factors were found between treatment and control or genders, nonetheless, large value differences in frequencies and means were noted. Females mentioned, on average, about twice the number of social identity factors than males, within groups and overall. Furthermore, the control group mentioned social identity factors at about twice the rate of the treatment group, and the overwhelming majority of the control group consisted of females. While no significant differences were found, the data support the conclusion that females tend to possess higher levels of intercultural competence, which aligns with the assertion by Nichols (2011). Moreover, interactional effects could account for the control group's greater use of social identity factors. First, as mentioned, the group was mostly female, and second, in alignment with Harewood and Zemsky (2020), the intervention could have caused students to exhibit greater Defense and Reversal attitudes. When Caucasian students mask their own cultural identity (Perry, 2001), it is important to foster their ethnic identity development, which can be done through high impact practices (HIPs; Kuh, 2008). HIPs are one of the best ways to foster cultural competence growth (Wiersma-Mosley, 2021), especially for Caucasian students when they are exposed to people from diverse backgrounds (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Loes et al., 2012).

In addition, age and gender are two easily identifiable social identity factors with which students are familiar, so, perhaps this is why they were the most mentioned. At their current age and maturity level, students mostly lack the experiences and identity development to be fully cognizant of cultural similarities and differences necessary for increasing intercultural competence. Future research should seek to measure the effects of cultural competence longitudinally with larger sample sizes, rather than over one semester; as with any development, this skill may take additional effort and time to fully form (Wiersma-Mosley, 2019; 2021). Another limitation is the IDI assumes individuals become interculturally competent in a linear progression, thus forcing individuals into stages without allowing for the possibility that individuals can express multiple, complex and conflicting aspects of intercultural competence (see Perry & Southwell, 2011 for a review). Additional studies using qualitative data, reflections, and interviews would help illuminate students' learning and cultural competence growth. Lastly, congruent with prior research (Nichols, 2011) and due to the large differences noted between genders in this study, future research should examine the role gender plays in intercultural competence development.

Growing students' intercultural competence can start in the classroom, and it is important faculty members create assignments to effectively reach this end. However, intercultural competence training lasting longer than a one-hour meeting is needed. Congruent with prior research, immersion and service-learning experiences, such as study abroad and international research opportunities, allow future agricultural educators and communicators to work with diverse groups, which may help facilitate intercultural development (Bost & Wingenbach, 2018; Bunch et al., 2018; Rampold et al., 2020; Roberts & Edwards, 2016; Russell & Morris, 2008; Williams, 2005). What is more, Fanous et al. (2020) suggested that assessing educators' intercultural competence is warranted, as they are likely one of the greatest influences on if and how cultural competence develops among students. Thus, assessing the intercultural competence of agricultural education and communications instructors is clearly needed because they may directly impact students' cultural competence development, or the lack thereof.

As our society becomes more interconnected and multicultural, it is imperative we develop and assess intercultural competence among future agricultural educators and communicators. Intercultural competency has been shown to increase communication, empathy towards understanding others, and creates a healthy environment where students learn to accept and respect differences (Taleisnik, 2017).

However, no course or discipline can cover all aspects of diversity. Additional resources are needed for agriculture students to increase their opportunities to engage in intercultural interactions. Thus, it is imperative institutions of higher education systematically make changes in their curriculum, assessment, campus policies and environments, and with personnel in all sectors of higher education.

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