

Developing Intercultural Competence in Preservice Teachers: An Analysis of Course Work Reflections

Jason H. Bullock¹

Joy E. Morgan²

Wendy J. Warner³

Elizabeth B. Wilson⁴

Jessica T. DeCuir-Gunby⁵

Abstract

Teacher preparation programs must provide diversity-focused coursework to preservice teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population in secondary education. The Intercultural Development Inventory® evaluates intercultural competence as an individual's capacity to appropriately adapt to cultural differences and commonalities. Evaluation of intercultural competence development, as assessed by the IDI®, guided this qualitative study. Document analysis of select participants' written reflections and IDI scores provided insight into the effectiveness of developing intercultural competence in preservice agricultural education teachers. The research was framed in Deardorff's (2006) process model of intercultural competence, Bennett's (1986) development model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), and Hammer's (2003) Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Intercultural competence is credited with helping individuals navigate cultural differences and commonalities and can strengthen teachers' impact when teaching diverse learners and establishing diverse and inclusive learning environments. Findings indicated minimal intercultural competence development after completing diversity-focused course components modified due to COVID-19 restraints. While minimal intercultural competence development was concluded, preservice teachers did emphasize their plans, hopes, and possibilities for future classrooms that were a result of changed perspectives and ideas from course components.

Introduction

Higher education institutions face the challenge of preparing graduates to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society. These institutions must equip graduates with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to engage in cultural differences during their professional careers (Deardorff, 2004; Fabregas Janeiro et al., 2014). In preparing future educators, the increasing diversity in the K-12 student population

¹Jason H. Bullock is a CTE is a CTE Vet Science Teacher, Science and Math Institute, Tacoma Public Schools, WA. jbulloc@tacoma.k12.wa.us

²Joy E. Morgan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University, jemorga2@ncsu.edu

³Wendy J. Warner is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University, wjwarner@ncsu.edu

⁴Elizabeth B. Wilson is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University, bwilson@ncsu.edu

⁵Jessica T. DeCuir-Gunby is a Professor of Education, Educational Psychology in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, decuirga@usc.edu

presents additional challenges to teacher preparation programs. Content area certification and teacher licensure requirements are often lacking when equipping teachers to engage diverse student populations (Boutte, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Agricultural education is no exception to these diversity challenges, with a predominantly white teaching force (Foster et al., 2020) and the impact limited teacher diversity has on the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students (LaVergne et al., 2011; Talbert et al., 1997; Warren & Alston, 2007). With an increasingly diverse K-12 student population in the United States, teacher preparation programs within colleges of education and colleges of agriculture must reflect on preservice teachers' preparedness to teach and meet the needs of diverse learners effectively.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. is projected to become more racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse, with 69% of children under the age of 18 belonging to racial and ethnic minorities by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Vespa et al., 2020). This increase in diversity will be evident in K-12 public school classrooms across the U.S. (Diller & Moule, 2005; Luft, 1996; Milner et al., 2003; Vespa et al., 2020) and creates the need for incorporating differentiated instructional strategies. However, the current teaching force does not reflect this diversity and is not expected to increase with the same intensity as the student population (de Brey et al., 2019; Foster et al., 2020). This disparity in racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in agricultural education has been met with initiatives, scholarships, programming, and professional development for preservice and in-service teachers to help prepare them to work with diverse learners.

As teacher preparation programs reflect on the appropriateness of their curricula in preparing preservice teachers to teach diverse students, engaging in action to update, modify, and create new curricula using frameworks such as multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy as a foundation is encouraged (Banks, 1994; Gay, 2000; Warren & Alston, 2007; Woods, 2004). Teacher preparation programs can proactively begin by providing culturally diverse experiences and curricula to prepare preservice teachers for instructing diverse learners (Heinert & Roberts, 2016; LaVergne et al., 2012; Talbert & Edwin, 2008). Diverse learners include not only racial or ethnic identity but also dimensions of diversity such as disabilities, language, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender, age, socioeconomic status (SES), and more. Universities have explored various iterations of curriculum reform and programming by creating diversity-focused courses, promoting inclusive teaching strategies, and providing professional development for faculty, staff, and students to increase intercultural competence (Bell et al., 2009; Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Drape et al., 2017; Fabregas Janeiro et al., 2011; Fabregas Janeiro et al., 2014; Kruse et al., 2014; Woods, 2004). Warren and Alston (2007) focused on North Carolina agricultural education teachers' perceptions of benefits and barriers to diversity inclusion and concluded that multicultural education (Banks, 1994) was a strategy "that could create major dividends for agricultural education programs if implemented correctly" (p. 76). Developing intercultural competence in preservice agricultural education teachers validate the recommendation and dire need to incorporate inclusive pedagogical approaches into teacher preparation programs to meet the needs of diverse learners effectively.

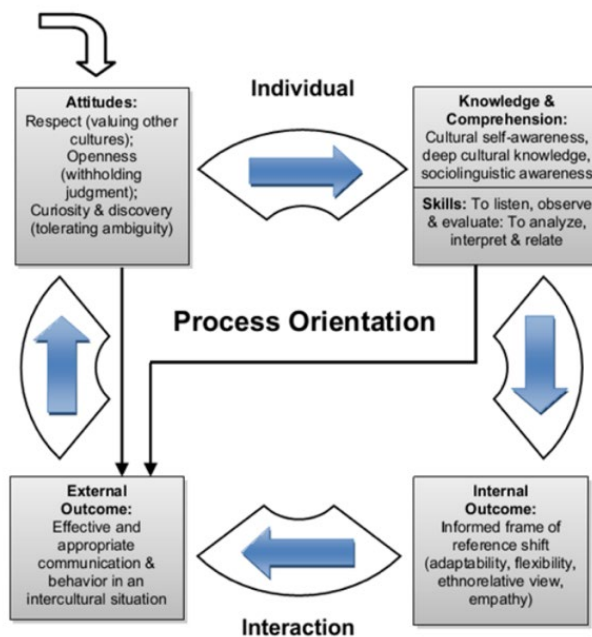
Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by Deardorff's (2006) process model of intercultural competence and Hammer's (2008) intercultural development continuum (IDC). Deardorff's process model of intercultural competence (PMIC) shows that intercultural competence development involves requisite attitudes and intentional, lifelong development of knowledge and skills for an individual to effectively and appropriately behave and communicate in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2006). Deardorff (2004) defined intercultural competence as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 194). Deardorff's model (Figure 1) is a process model illustrating the ongoing developmental process of intercultural competence

with a consistent starting point of an individual's attitudes. The process model displays movement through the same components with varying degrees of navigating cultural differences based on the degree of attitudes, knowledge, and skills an individual possesses at any given time. Since intercultural competence development is being measured over a period of time in this study, Deardorff's process model provides the theoretical framework for the definition of intercultural competence.

Figure 1

Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence



Note. From "The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States" by Dr. Darla K. Deardorff, 2006, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10, p. 241-266. Copyright 2006 by D. K. Deardorff.

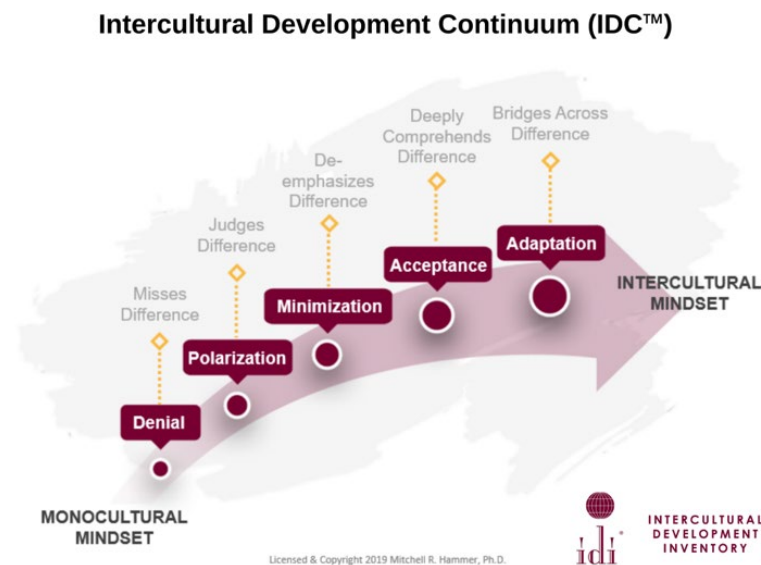
Over 20 years of research on intercultural communication between trainers and learners led to Milton J. Bennett's (1986) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS). This model provided a development continuum with six orientations: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. Continuum movement is attributed to an individual's experiences with differences and their view of the world concerning their own culture. The first three stages (Denial, Defense, and Minimization) are *ethnocentric*, defined as an individual experiencing their own culture as "central to all reality" (Bennett, 1986, p. 182). The final three stages (Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration) are *ethnorelative*, which Bennett defined as an individual where "cultural difference is both acknowledged and respected" (p. 184).

Mitchell Hammer constructed the Intercultural Development Inventory® (IDI®) (Figure 2) to measure intercultural competence and determine an individual or organization's orientation toward cultural differences by adapting Bennett's model (Hammer et al., 2003; Hammer, 2008). The IDI is a 50-

item, valid and reliable questionnaire (Hammer, 2011) for measuring an individual or organization's orientation towards Bennett's DMIS orientations (Hammer, 1999a; Hammer, 1999b; Hammer et al., 2003). Hammer et al. (2003) assumed that "as one's experience of cultural difference [intercultural sensitivity] becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423). While attitudes, beliefs, and skills may be developed by experiencing cultural differences, the DMIS focuses on developing an individual's worldview.

Figure 2

Hammer's Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC)



Note. The Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) adapted from Bennett's proposed Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1986) is assessed by the Intercultural Development Inventory®. From "Why should you consider using the Intercultural Development Inventory® (IDI®)?" by Hammer, M. R., 2015, Berlin, MD: IDI, LLC.

Purpose/Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of diversity-focused course components on intercultural competence development in undergraduate, preservice agricultural education teachers. The specific question guiding this research was:

1. What intercultural competence characteristics are evident in preservice agricultural education teachers' written reflections on course components?

Methods/Procedures

Case study research is characterized by a comprehensive and in-depth examination of a bounded system, employing multiple sources of evidence such as interviews, documents, observations, and artifacts to facilitate data collection (Yin, 2018). The boundaries of the case are explicitly delineated in terms of time, place, and activity, ensuring a focused and contextualized analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the present study, a course on teaching diverse learners served as the case, with student reflections from nine distinct assignments comprising the primary data sources.

Qualitative research is constantly open to researcher bias (Crotty, 2003). Hence, the researcher completed a statement of subjectivity to make the foundation behind decision-making transparent. My experiences as an undergraduate student in the Agricultural and Extension Education program nineteen years ago and as a high school agricultural education teacher for fifteen years frame my position and interest in this study. My undergraduate coursework did not include instruction on teaching diverse learners or delivering diversity-focused education. As a teacher, this was one of my biggest challenges when teaching at a rural school with a diverse student population. My open-minded and continued interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion in agricultural education inspired this study and influenced my interaction with the data.

Table 1 highlights the course components selected for use in this study to explore the impact each component had on the intercultural competence development of each participant. Course components were selected based on their context related to the expanded definition of diversity that includes race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, learning ability, language, etc. The various classifications of students that may be present in their future classrooms consist of, but are not limited to, students with disabilities, English language learners, LGBTQ students, urban students, rural students, students from various religions, and students from different cultures and ethnicities. In addition, students completed various movie reviews, as described in Table 1, and completed guided reflections for each film. Reflections included content-based questions from the movie, and critical reflection prompts to assess how the movie influenced their cultural understanding. These assignments were submitted and graded by the primary instructor. Analysis of the consenting participants' assignments was not conducted until after the final grades were submitted for the course to mitigate the risk that students will write reflections that have a bias or social desirability influence and encourage authentic, critical reflections.

Before the COVID-19 mandate for remote learning, structured weekly lessons occurred on Mondays, and students completed field experiences on Wednesdays and other scheduled times during the semester. These experiences and activities aligned with the Intercultural Learning Opportunities outlined in the Individual Development Plan for each IDI respondent (see Table 1). The sudden mandate to convert all instruction to remote learning due to COVID-19 affected the course components significantly. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 regulations, students did not complete the field experience visits related to cultural diversity, language, and disabilities, which could have influenced their intercultural competence development.

Preservice agricultural education teachers completed 18 written assignments as required course components. For qualitative data in this study, nine written reflections were selected from the total population of assignments and analyzed with participant ($n = 15$) consent. These selected assignments were chosen due to the assignment asking students to reflect on their experiences or views about specific assignment topics. Capitalizing on the term *diverse* in the course title, instructors evaluated how to expand the course to incorporate multiple diversity dimensions better. This evaluation included various assignments, experiences, and activities (Table 1) that addressed diversity dimensions such as racial/ethnic minorities, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and religion.

Table 1

Participants' Course Assignments for Qualitative Analysis with Corresponding Intercultural Learning Opportunity Category

Assignment	Description	Intercultural Learning Opportunity Category*
Diversity Perspective Paragraph	A short paragraph of each participant's initial thoughts on "diversity" and "inclusion."	Intercultural Journal
<i>McFarland, USA</i> Video Reflection	Ten questions guide reflection on the film <i>McFarland, USA</i> , which displays a high school coach navigating cultural differences and similarities.	Theatre, Film, and Arts
<i>180 Days: A Year Inside an American High School</i> Assignment	Eight questions guided reflection on the film <i>180 Days: A Year Inside an American High School</i> , which brings awareness of racial and cultural diversity and its impact on an urban classroom and student success.	Theatre, Film, and Arts
DCC Part 2 Reflection	A question-based assignment that guided reflection on Developing Cultural Competence (DCC) Program Part 2 – Developing Cultural Knowledge.	Training Programs, Educational Classes, Personal Interactions
<i>Bully</i> Video Reflection	Seven questions guided reflection on the film <i>Bully</i> , which addresses student struggles based on specific identities.	Theatre, Film, and Arts
Gender and Sexual Identity Discussion Forum	Discussion forum asking students to respond to one of seven prompted questions on gender identity, allyship, and sexual orientation.	Personal Interactions, Educational Classes
Religion Reflection	Following a guest speaker's presentation on how religion plays a role in education, students were asked to complete a reflection guided by three questions.	Personal Interactions, Educational Classes
Diversity Philosophy	Two-page document showcased the student's diversity and inclusion teaching philosophy statement.	Educational Classes
DCC Part 4 Reflection	Discussion Forum post outlining students' experience in applying the concepts of the DCC series to their own intercultural experiences.	Training Programs, Educational Classes, Personal Interactions

Note. Assignments are listed in chronological order as completed in the course by participants.

Through two coding cycles, participant assignments from the course were analyzed using thematic analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) and a combination of evaluation, subcoding, simultaneous, in-vivo, and values coding (Saldaña, 2016). Participant data were analyzed to identify evidence of intercultural competence characteristics as displayed in Deardorff's Intercultural Competence Process Model (PMIC) and as outlined in Hammer's Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC). Dedoose, a CADQAS software, was utilized to compile all the codes and participant data for complete analysis to determine evidence of intercultural competence characteristics in participants' written reflections. To

address qualitative validity, intercoder agreement (Creswell & Clark, 2018) involved a graduate school colleague and faculty member, each receiving participant data and the coding structure to analyze. Codes and themes applied to participant data were consistent across the researcher and two additional coders, resulting in the emergence of three prevalent themes.

Results/Findings

This research sought to discover evidence in participants' written reflections on course components of intercultural competence characteristics. Qualitative analysis of nine written course reflections provided evidence for intercultural competence characteristics. Thematic content analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) and a combination of evaluation, subcoding, simultaneous, in-vivo, and values coding (Saldaña, 2016) determined the prevalent themes throughout participant documents based on Deardorff's PMIC and Hammer's IDC. Saldaña (2016) defined a code as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 4).

After coding all participants' data, preliminary codes were arranged into categories, allowing for the emergence of themes presented in this section. Categories were selected based on Deardorff's PMIC and Hammer's IDC and can be viewed in Table 2. Direct quotes provide evidence of intercultural competence characteristics. Understanding that the IDI continuum is not a measure of person or character but a continuum on which a respondent will land does not allow a measure of growth to be applied between the pre- and post-IDI DO scores. Participants portrayed in writing their attitude and knowledge toward cultural differences based on their experiences and past interactions, whether positive, negative, or non-existent. As aspiring educators, participants could predict their intercultural interactions with students they will eventually teach based on their pedagogy, classroom management, and overall educational approach in their respective future programs. Analysis of participant reflections provided evidence of intercultural competence characteristics.

Table 2*Grouping of Codes to Form Themes*

Theme	Categories	Subcodes	# of codes
Build Rapport and a Positive Learning Environment	Attitudes ^a	Respect, openness, curiosity, discovery, values, willingness to learn, build rapport, care, positive learning environment, safe space	203
	Knowledge & Comprehension ^a	Knowledge, knowledge construction, culture, awareness, skills	112
Awareness Leading to Change	Internal Outcomes ^a	Flexibility, empathy, adaptability, reflect	64
	External Outcomes ^a	Action, communication, behavior, change	76
Evidence of Orientations	IDC Concepts	Culture, diversity, inclusion	99
	Denial ^b		2
	Polarization ^b	Us vs. them	73
	Minimization ^b		43
	Acceptance ^b		47
	Adaptation ^b		3

Note: ^aConcepts from Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence.

^bOrientations from Hammer's Intercultural Development Continuum.

Theme 1: Build Rapport and a Positive Learning Environment

Deardorff's process model of intercultural competence indicates that individuals enter the model based on their attitudes, and the "degree of intercultural competence depends on acquired degree of attitudes, knowledge/comprehension, and skills" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 256). For example, participant 11 values the need to "be curious and open to adapting and learning more..." and "...willing to address the potential cultural barrier" when reflecting on ways to overcome conflicts, mistakes, and gaps in cultural values. Participant 5 was willing to "ask questions and apologize" and "keep an open mind" when an error is made regarding someone's culture. Other attitudes evident in participant reflections were enthusiasm expressed by the teacher, a willingness to ask questions and gain understanding when working with students with diverse needs and maintaining an open mind despite personal beliefs and values. These attitudes and perceptions connect to the collective theme of building rapport with students while creating and maintaining a positive learning environment.

Analysis of codes across all participants, using Dedoose software, showed that all fifteen participants expressed the importance of building rapport with students and maintaining a positive learning environment as pertinent to their teaching philosophy and interaction with students with diverse needs. Recalling the rapport established with a previous teacher whom they could trust, communicate with, and ask questions, participant 14 "will strive to be there for all of the students in my class the exact same way." In addition, many participants felt that building relationships with students by greeting them

at the door, speaking to each student every day, building community in the classroom, and supporting students in extracurricular activities such as clubs and athletics were essential to creating and maintaining a positive learning environment. To summarize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by teachers to navigate cultural differences in their classroom, participant 19 wrote:

As an agricultural educator, I am called to create a warm, welcoming environment that nurtures creativity, promotes critical thinking, encourages inclusion, advocates for real-world experiences and lends itself to failures and successes. My classroom will mold students to become open-minded, educated, confident members of our community.

Theme 2: Awareness Leading to Change

Once an individual possesses a respectful and discovery-driven attitude to increase knowledge and develop skills for navigating cultural differences and similarities, an internal shift can occur, allowing that individual to be adaptable, flexible, and empathetic towards others (Deardorff, 2006). As displayed in Deardorff's PMIC, these internal outcomes lead to interactions exhibited as external outcomes. For example, participant 01 shared their "plan to create safe spaces by developing a sense of community within the classroom, encouraging creativity and free-thinking, and taking time to know each student individually." This intrinsic desire to provide a safe and positive learning environment indicates a willingness to be adaptable and flexible with students with diverse needs and backgrounds. Participants also shared their interest in getting to know their students' parents and the community in which they live. When thinking of how to apply the knowledge and skills learned during various course components, participant 11 expressed,

I can better adapt my classroom and push to adapt SAE/FFA events to be more inclusive of students who are not part of the FFA dominant culture so they can feel more welcome, celebrated for what they can bring, and more able to succeed without having to give up their own cultural values.

Deardorff's process model is cyclical, meaning the cycle continues with each experience. Entering a situation with a respectful and open attitude, gaining knowledge about cultural differences, developing skills to engage with others, and possessing the internal desires to be adaptable and flexible complete three-fourths of the process model leading to external outcomes. External outcomes can be observed as "effective and appropriate communication and behavior in an intercultural situation" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 256). Many participants experienced cognitive dissonance when viewing the *Bully* film (Waitt & Hirsch, 2011) and shared a change of viewpoint on utilizing seating charts in their future classrooms. Participant 15 planned to implement seating charts "to have a better way of managing my students and controlling any bullying that may occur under my supervision." When reflecting on the Developing Cultural Competence (DCC) workshop series, participant 05 expressed their plan to "implement cultural awareness by hosting workshops within my FFA program" and that these workshops "can make students more open-minded and be aware of cultural differences."

Theme 3: Evidence of IDC Orientations

During the coding process and analysis of participant reflections, evidence of each IDC orientation was evaluated. This evidence was organized based on the specific orientation, and the data was integrated. As stated previously, the IDC orientations range from the monocultural orientation of Denial and Polarization to the transitional orientation of Minimization to the intercultural orientations of Acceptance and Adaptation.

Denial Orientation. Based on IDI-qualified administrator training, individuals with a primary orientation of Denial typically have inexperience with engaging in intercultural situations and utilize “benign stereotypes as a way of understanding differences from their own experience” (Abdul-Wahid, 2022). Evidence arose in a *McFarland, USA* film (Caro, 2015) reflection, where participant 19 shared, “we were all the exact same” and “I did not know I had a culture” based on their experience coming from a high school with “very little diversity.” This experience seeped over into their first year of college, where their interaction with a roommate from a different culture “made me feel weird and like I was uncultured” due to the misaligned expectations between each other. Participant 19 “felt rude, and no matter how much I wanted to learn about that person and how good my intentions were, our expectations never matched up.” Although IDI scores did not place any participant in the Denial orientation, these reflection comments provide evidence of a participant’s life experience related to isolation from difference and lack of experience in intercultural situations.

Polarization Orientation. IDI administrator training describes Polarization as an individual who “begins to see culture and its differences, and with that comes judgment” and often deemphasizes commonalities, resulting in an “us vs. them” mindset. Based on IDI DO scores, four participants were in this orientation after pre- and post-assessment, with one participant switching from Minimization to Polarization in their post-DO score. When analyzing for evidence of Polarization mindsets, a reflection on the film *180 Days: A Year Inside an American High School* (Jones, 2013) led participant 08 to feel that the students in the movie were “not future-oriented due to the number of peers that have been killed at their age.” These societal, social, and historical context differences led participants to judge students based on their differences and challenging experiences. Many participants felt that the film’s students differed from those at the schools they attended. Participants felt “very shocked,” “amazed,” and “surprised” at the challenging situations these students faced, with participant 01 sharing “being from a rural county, it would be difficult for me to adapt to a very urban school.”

Additionally, polarization is characterized by expressing an “us vs. them” mentality. For example, during the Religion assignment reflection, several participants described how they would “pull their students that may feel uncomfortable or their entire chapter and do something else with them” (Participant 08) when participating in activities with religious components. This separation focuses on differences instead of embracing the differences and commonalities among the students. Another example focusing on differences and not commonalities was evident when participant 15 expressed, “Due to my background, students might be wary of forming a relationship with me because I am not like them or would not understand them.” Finally, participant 02 felt “it would be hard for students like these who have experienced so many hardships to respect someone who has not had to experience those types of things” when reflecting on the challenges faced if they were a teacher in the DC school. These judgments were attributed to the vast differences between the teacher and potential students as opposed to acknowledging differences and embracing commonalities when engaging in intercultural situations.

Minimization Orientation. As a transition between a monocultural and an intercultural mindset, the Minimization orientation is described as an increased focus on commonalities, a deemphasis or ignoring of differences, and a desire to assimilate and feel that “we are all fundamentally the same” (Abdul-Wahid, 2022). Evidence of the Minimization orientation arose throughout participants' reflections in various ways. For example, participant 15 shared that because they had witnessed the hardships faced by Black community members in their hometown, they would be able to establish trust among their students and “show them that I have seen others go through what they have, and I care about their lives.” This focus on similarities based on observed experience does not provide space for the variations of cultures that may exist in one given community and lends itself to the view that all members of the Black community, in this example, are the same based on shared identity. Further, a lack of awareness about one’s culture was highlighted when participant 19 shared, “I really did not know who I was as a person and I did not know I had a culture” when reflecting on their experience from an area with little diversity to entering a college

with a plethora of diversity. Additionally, several participants plan to treat all students “the same even though they are different” and that “no matter the difference, students will all be treated equally and be given the same quality in all matters,” as reflected by participant 16. In juxtaposition, participant 12 believes “in student equity, meaning that I will strive to provide students with what they need in order to be successful,” which provides evidence of transitioning out of the Minimization orientation because of an understanding and value for differences.

Based on IDI administrator training, Minimization orientation can also include individuals working through an awareness of privilege and how to navigate intercultural situations. Participant 15 showed evidence of this transitional stage of Minimization when reflecting that “understanding that many of us are born into privilege without realizing it will make us better able to help those who are not as fortunate to succeed and chase their dreams.” When asked about overall thoughts on the *180 Days: A Year Inside an American High School* movie (Jones, 2013), participant 06 shared that “realizing my own privilege has been my biggest takeaway from this documentary.” Participant 12 shared the eye-opening revelation of “how closed off I really was to other cultures because I was always trying to mask differences with similarities” when reflecting on their DCC Workshop series experience. Gaining this awareness of privilege can help move an individual from Minimization into the Acceptance orientation.

Acceptance Orientation. Transitioning out of the Minimization and into the Acceptance orientation brings an individual into an intercultural, ethnorelative mindset. Individuals become curious about differences and gain “a deepening understanding that one’s experience is only one of many”; however, they are “unsure of how to engage with” those differences (Abdul-Wahid, 2022). Evidence of the Acceptance Orientation occurred throughout participant reflections. For example, participant 16 shared how they “learned that there are differences and needs of individuals that are deeper than what we can see...such as cultural preferences, health needs, and social needs.” They plan to consider these differences when establishing a “safe and supportive environment” in their future classroom. Participants felt a mutual curiosity to learn about cultures and the application of cultural knowledge to agricultural education programs. Teaching strategies shared include modifying lessons to include cultural components, embracing the students’ cultures present in the classroom, and exposing students to diverse cultures in an effort “to teach others more accurately,” according to participant 14. Curiosity piqued when participant 06 found it “very interesting to see all the cultural differences in our classroom” during one of the DCC workshops. The DCC workshops helped participant 01 learn “that the best way that I can ensure to have positive interactions with students of different cultures is to understand them.” Being open-minded, willing to understand others, asking questions, and learning from mistakes were common expressions when participants reflected on incorporating diversity into their future classrooms. A felt need was present and nurtured through the course components. Participants felt it was an “enlightening experience” (Participant 14) where they started to “understand culture and cultural values” that they “would not have considered otherwise” (Participant 02).

Adaptation Orientation. Individuals moving from the Acceptance orientation to the Adaptation Orientation begin to build bridges around cultural differences and commonalities and possess the “ability to shift both perspective and behavior” during intercultural situations (Abdul-Wahid, 2022). Another characteristic of an individual in the Adaptation orientation is an ability to acknowledge differences and understand that “they do not have to give up anything they believe in order to accept others’ ways of being” (Abdul-Wahid, 2022). Three participants perceived they were in the Adaptation orientation after their post-PO scores. Still, developmentally only one participant was assessed in the Adaptation orientation based on their post-DO score after completing the diversity-focused course components. While evidence of Adaptation orientation within participants’ reflections was scarce, participant 11 shared that when overcoming cultural conflicts, mistakes, or gaps in cultural values, “The first step I would think would be to be curious and open to adapting and learning more—that makes it possible to change in the first place.” This willingness to adapt and expand understanding highlights the internal

motivation to navigate cultural differences and similarities. Action items expressed among participants included the effort to “ensure classroom materials are obtainable for students with diverse needs” (Participant 05), such as sensory activities, flexible seating, fidget toys, weighted blankets, and the intentional use of preferred names and pronouns.

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications

Attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed for intercultural competence were present in participants’ reflections on course components. Deardorff’s Process Model of Intercultural Competence indicates that the “degree of intercultural competence depends on the acquired degree of attitudes, knowledge/comprehension, and skills” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 256). Course components helped to provide participants with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate intercultural situations. Evidence of Hammer’s Intercultural Development Continuum orientations was present in participant reflections, except for the Denial orientation, due to no participant assessing in this orientation. Thematic analysis of participants’ reflections discovered that building rapport with students, showing care and compassion to students, creating a positive learning environment, and becoming culturally aware were attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed by interculturally competent preservice teachers. Some course components provided more evidence of intercultural competence than others. For example, based on their reflections, the Developing Cultural Competence workshop series had the most considerable overall impact on participants due to the program’s intercultural interactions and critical self-reflections (Deardorff, 2004; Rice et al., 2014). In addition, all the movies selected for the course contributed to evidence of intercultural competence development in preservice teachers, as supported by Hammer’s (2011) Intercultural Learning Opportunities. The qualitative findings indicate that strategically designed course components with critical reflections provide space for preservice agricultural education teachers to discuss the impact of cultural differences and commonalities on educational opportunities and life experiences, and should be incorporated into education courses when possible.

With many of the outcomes and desired changes being hypothetical, as these were written reflections, which included the plans, hopes, and possibilities that preservice teachers hope to carry into their future classrooms and learning environments, an accurate evaluation of external outcomes is needed to observe participants once they establish their classrooms. Further research to explore the degree of modifying lesson plans to include culturally responsive content, teaching with inclusive practices, and invoking change in agricultural education program activities is needed to better understand how teachers are incorporating these components and the challenges that may hinder the modifications.

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