



Exploring Cultural Competence in Family Science Classrooms

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Background

- Undergraduates are becoming an increasingly more diverse group in many aspects such as age, ethnicity, and ability (see AAC&U News, 2019)
- Research suggests that classroom diversity facilitates short- and long-term outcomes:
 - ✓ Increased student growth and reflection
 - ✓ Better career preparation
 - ✓ Better collaboration and communication skills
 - ✓ Increased civic participation (Campbell, 2007; Goethe & Colina, 2018; Kelly, 2016)
- However, simply observing diversity or being part of a diverse classroom, may not be enough to support the development of **Cultural Competence (CC):**

Being sensitive to and equipped to understand and communicate about the “socio-historical and socio-cultural knowledge of a multicultural globalizing world” in its various forms.

- Seeberg & Minick, 2012, pg. 2

- Classroom exercises that facilitate the development of cultural competence may not be frequently available in classrooms or may simply be reactive to addressing classroom diversity (Civitillo & Denessen, 2016; Pecukonis et al, 2008)

What We Want to Know

- ✓ What are students’ own perceptions of their CC?
- ✓ Does the subject of the class matter?
- ✓ What topics do they want to learn related to CC?

Pilot Study Research Question

How do HDFS students in varying classes understand their cultural competence (awareness and knowledge) before and after taking the class?

Method

Sample

N = 174 in both pre- and post-test over one semester

126 in Family Interaction (Class 1)

(upper level course incorporates cultural discussions in content)

48 in Children and Families in a Multiethnic Society (Class 2)

(upper level course focuses on multicultural issues)

Age: M = 22, SD = 3.692

Gender: Female (89.7%) Ethnicity: Hispanic (27.4%)
Male (10.3%) Non-Hispanic (72.6%)

Orientation: Straight (92%) Race: Indigenous (2.3%)
Gay (1.1%) Asian (10.9%)
Lesbian (1.1%) Black (8%)
Bisexual (5.2%) White (61.1%)
Other (.6%) Other (17.7%)

Religious Affiliation: Christian (54.3%)
Buddhist (3.4%)
Hindu (.6%)
Unaffiliated (24.6%)
Unsure (11.4%)
Other (5.7%)

Measures

✓ Demographics

✓ Multi-Cultural Self-Assessment (MCA) Tool (D’Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991)

- Multi-cultural awareness (items 1-6)
 - E.g., “Culture is collective to a group of people but also evolves within an individual”
- Multi-cultural knowledge (items 7-10)
 - E.g., “At the present time, how would you rate your understanding of racism?”
- Response range: 1 – 4; higher numbers indicate more awareness/knowledge

✓ Open-ended questions (*not reported here*)

Pre-test

1. What contributes to your current level of cultural competence?
2. What course topics do you think will increase your cultural competence?

Post-test

1. What classroom exercises did you feel most contributed to your cultural competence?
2. What topics do you wish would have been covered that were not?

Discussion

• Demographic Data

- No significant differences in MCA scores by demographics for full sample or by class

• Post-test Cultural Competency

- **Overall, students felt that they had more cultural awareness and cultural knowledge at the end of the semester versus the beginning of the semester in the total sample**
- **Class 2 MCA-Knowledge scores were higher at the end of the semester than the beginning**

• Class Subject/Type

- Even though there were no significant differences between Class 1 and 2 in scores, the post-test mean scores for Class 2 were higher than Class 1
- Data collection is ongoing in these classes as well as lower level classes, so it remains to be seen what between class significance will emerge with a larger and more diverse class sampling

Implications

- ✓ Students may show growth in cultural competence in any type of class. Positive outcomes can result from attending to issues of culture and diversity even in classes where those issues are not the primary focus
- ✓ Preliminary analyses on data from additional semesters indicate higher MCA scores for the upper level multicultural-focused class as compared to other upper and lower level classes
 - Educators should consider providing lower level multicultural-focused classes so that students may be exposed to these issues earlier in their academic careers
- ✓ Future research should continue to focus on:
 - Regional difference and influence
 - Qualitative reports of cultural competency understanding and topic/issue preferences

Quantitative Results

Measure	Pre-test			Post-test			Significance	
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
MCA-Awareness	113	3.06	.47	61	3.23	.47	$t = 2.27^*$	
MCA-Knowledge	113	3.22	.63	61	3.53	.50	$t = 3.32^{**}$	
MCA-Awareness	Class 1	85	3.07	.47	41	3.22	.51	NS
	Class 2	28	3.04	.46	20	3.27	.38	NS
MCA-Knowledge	Class 1	85	3.28	.64	41	3.50	.54	NS
	Class 2	28	3.04	.57	20	3.59	.43	$F(1,46) = 12.99^{**}$

*p < .05, **p = .001

Please send questions to Sarah Mitchell at sarahmitchell@unr.edu