The effects of social identities on student learning outcome attainment

NACTA 2019

Shalyse Iseminger, Ph.D.

Pamala V. Morris, Ph.D.

Kris Acheson-Clair, Ph.D.

Colleen Kelly, Ph.D. student

Introduction

- Globalized nature of agricultural careers
- Need for cultural self-awareness, critical thinking, openness to culturally different others, and other key learning outcomes in undergraduate agricultural education
- Need to assess courses that aim to develop these learning outcomes to document student needs and growth

Introduction

- Research supports the need to afford undergraduate students with opportunities and experiences to critically examine:

  – cultural and social groups,

  – Groups historically marginalized or disregarded in the curriculum

- Diminishes deeply held beliefs, prejudices and inappropriate assumptions.

Course Description

- Communicating Across Cultures
  - Agriculture course fulfills multicultural awareness requirement
  - Flipped-design **transformative learning** course with a combination of active, collaborative, and experiential instructional methods and technologies designed to increase **intercultural competence (IC)**
  - 2 weekly 50-minute lectures
    - Ftf section: weekly, two-hour, discussion-based lab session, and the online section has a discussion forum

Course Learning Outcomes

- **Examine one's beliefs, values and assumptions regarding cultural differences and social group memberships and experiences**

- Define the basics of culture

- Describe the categories of discrimination and their effects, including but not limited to gender, racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, social stratification, and disabilities.

- Examine cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication within multicultural interactions and settings.

- **Analyze differences in power and privilege related to social identity groups**, i.e., but not limited to, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, language, citizenship, religion, class, sexual orientation, or physical ability.

Literature review

- Many research studies have been conducted on the assessment of cognitive learning outcomes in higher education courses (Diamond, 2008).

  – Transformative learning experiences, which often highlight the affective dimension of learning, cannot be assessed in the same way

Literature review

- IC- "set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, 2015, p. xxiii)

- Deardorff (2011) raises the question, "What roles do personal traits, self-schema, emotions, and motives play in intercultural competence development and assessment?" (p.77).

Objective

Which aspect of students' identities are most salient to their experiences in the course, Communicating Across Cultures?

Instrument: BEVI

- BEVI = Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory
  - a validated, reliable, psychometric instrument administered online
  - 3 interrelated components: set of **demographic/background items, 2 validity and 17 process scales**, and 3 reflective open-ended questions

  www.thebevi.com

Relevant BEVI scales

Domain	Scale	Description	Sample Items
Formative Variables	Background Information	demographic and experience items	"What is your gender?" "What is your ethnicity?"
	Negative Life Events	difficult childhood; parents were troubled; life conflict/struggles; many regrets	"I have had a lot of conflict with one or more members of my family." "My family had a lot of problems with money."
Fulfillment of Core Needs	Needs Fulfillment	open to experiences, needs, and feelings; deep care/sensitivity for self, others, and the larger world	"We should spend more money on early education programs for children." "I like to think about who I am."
Tolerance of Disequilibrium	Identity Diffusion	indicates painful crisis of identity; feels bad about self and prospects	"I don't always feel good about who I am." "I have gone through a painful identity crisis."
Critical Thinking	Basic Determinism	prefers simple explanations for differences/behavior; believes people don't change	"AIDS may well be a sign of God's anger." "It's only natural that the strong will survive."
Other Access	Religious Traditionalism	highly religious; sees self/behavior/events as mediated by God/spiritual forces	Without religion there can be no peace." "There is one way to heaven."
	Gender Traditionalism	men and women are built to be a certain way; prefers traditional/simple views of gender and gender roles	"Women are more emotional than men." "A man's role is to be strong."
	Sociocultural Openness	progressive/open regarding a wide range of actions, policies, and practices in the areas of culture, economics, education, environment, gender/global relations, politics	"We should try to understand cultures that are different from our own." "There is too big a gap between the rich and poor in our country."
Global Access	Global Resonance	invested in learning about/encountering different individuals, groups, languages, cultures; seeks global engagement	"It is important to be well informed about world events." "I am comfortable around groups of people who are very different from me."

Methods

- Data collected Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters

  - Students completed BEVI as a course assignment at both beginning and end of course

- Distributed to face-to-face sections

- T1: N= 198; T2: N=194

Student demographics

- 157 domestic students and 37 international students

- 78 males and 116 females

- 152 Caucasians, and 42 students of color

- 86 conservatives, 41 liberals

- 145 religious students, 37 non-religious

Findings

- Which aspects of students' identities are most salient to their experiences?
  - Country of origin
  - Gender
  - Ethnicity
  - Political affiliation
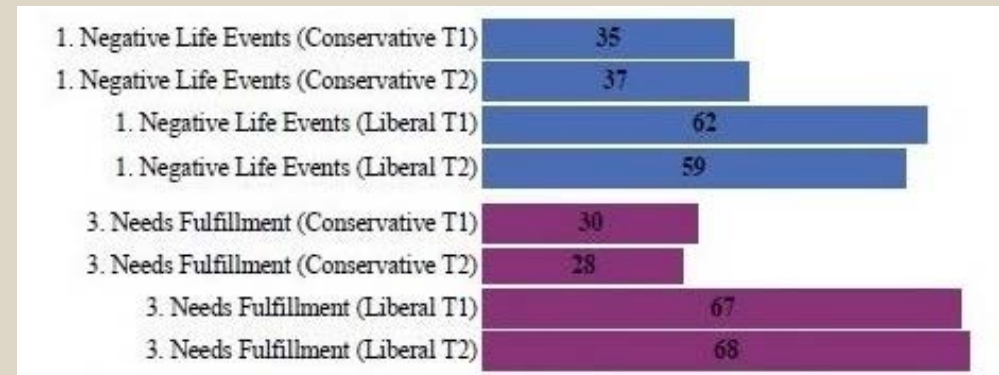 - Religiosity
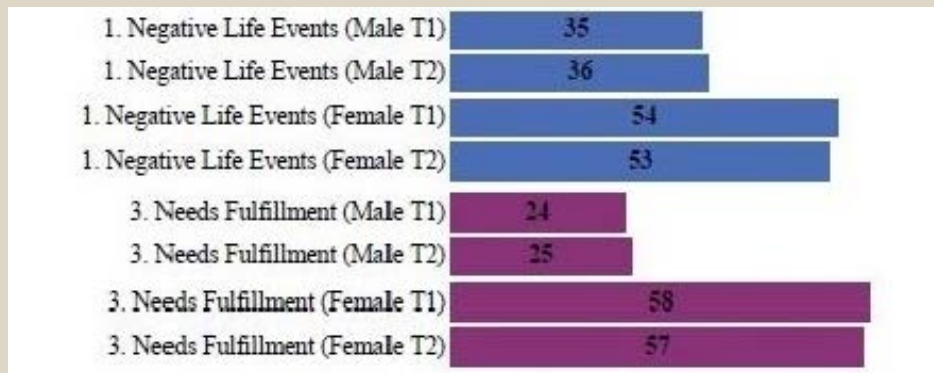
Discussion

- Themes
  - Resilience
  - Distance from course objectives
  - Intended learning outcomes
  - Backlash response
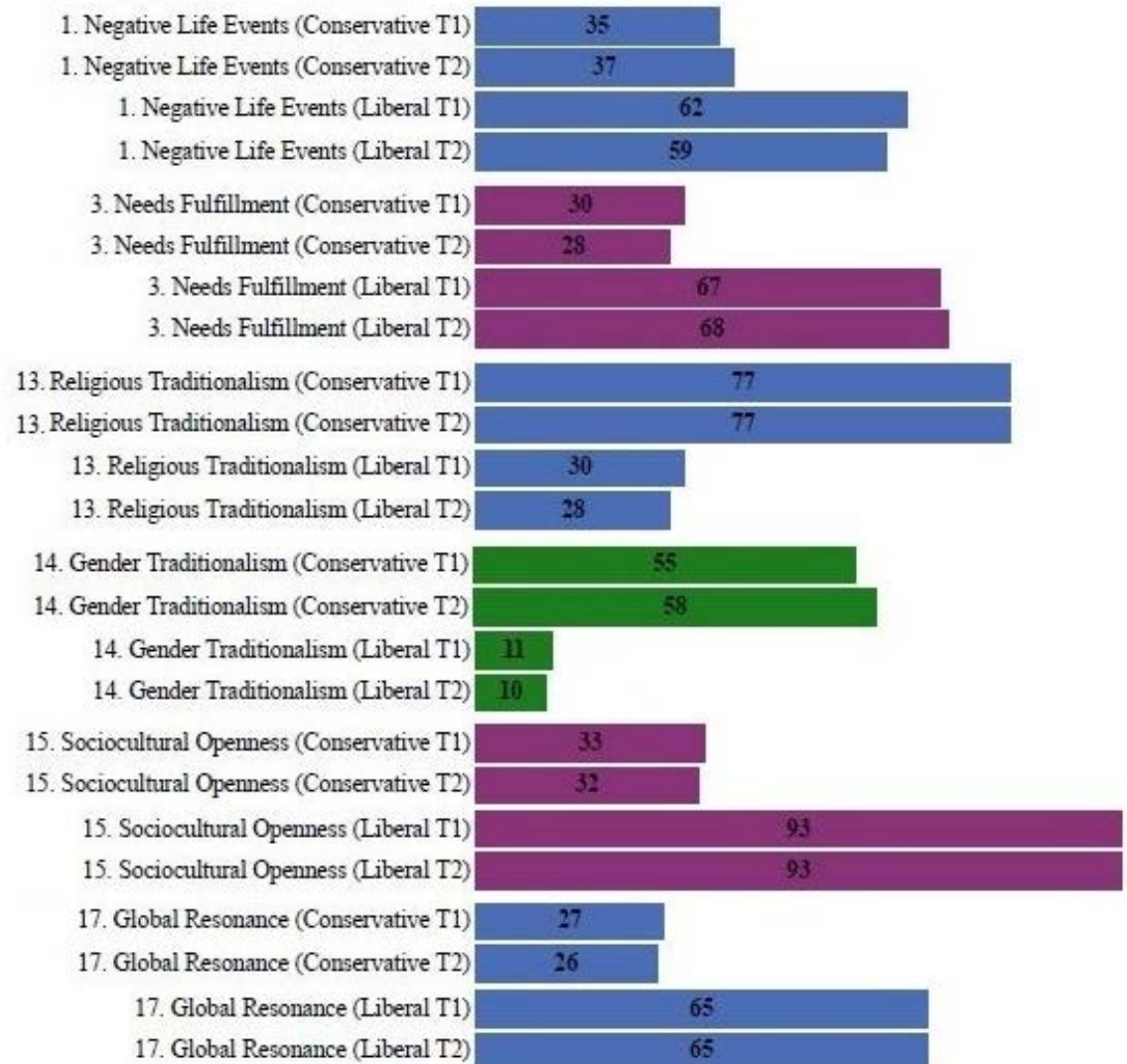 - Identity unsettling

Resilience

- Women, domestic students, students of color, liberals
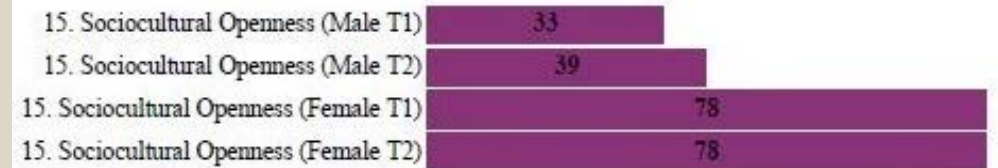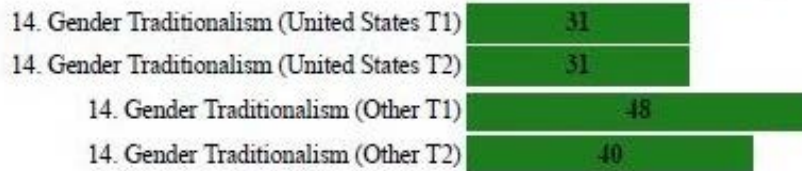
Distance from learning objectives

- Divide by political affiliation

- Similar divisions based on gender and religiosity

Intended learning outcomes

- Decrease in gender traditionalism for international students

- Increase in sociocultural openness for males

14. Gender Traditionalism (United States T1)	31
14. Gender Traditionalism (United States T2)	31
14. Gender Traditionalism (Other T1)	-48
14. Gender Traditionalism (Other T2)	-40

15. Sociocultural Openness (Male T1)	33
15. Sociocultural Openness (Male T2)	39
15. Sociocultural Openness (Female T1)	78
15. Sociocultural Openness (Female T2)	78

Backlash response

- **Increases in basic determinism = increased rigidity in thinking**
  - Similar shifts in religious and gender traditionalism

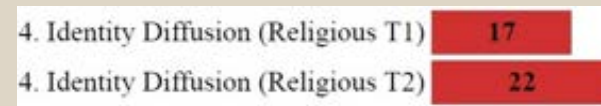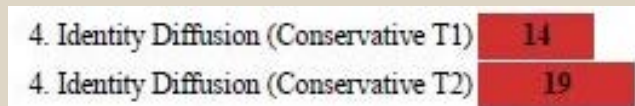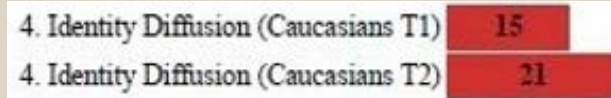|	
7. Basic Determinism (Male T1)	43
7. Basic Determinism (Male T2)	53
7. Basic Determinism (Female T1)	26
7. Basic Determinism (Female T2)	31
7. Basic Determinism (Caucasians T1)	34
7. Basic Determinism (Caucasians T2)	42
7. Basic Determinism (Conservative T1)	43
7. Basic Determinism (Conservative T2)	53

- **Decreases in sociocultural openness and global resonance**

15. Sociocultural Openness (Religious T1)	53
15. Sociocultural Openness (Religious T2)	54
15. Sociocultural Openness (Non-Religious T1)	89
15. Sociocultural Openness (Non-Religious T2)	83
17. Global Resonance (Religious T1)	37
17. Global Resonance (Religious T2)	36
17. Global Resonance (Non-Religious T1)	56
17. Global Resonance (Non-Religious T2)	50
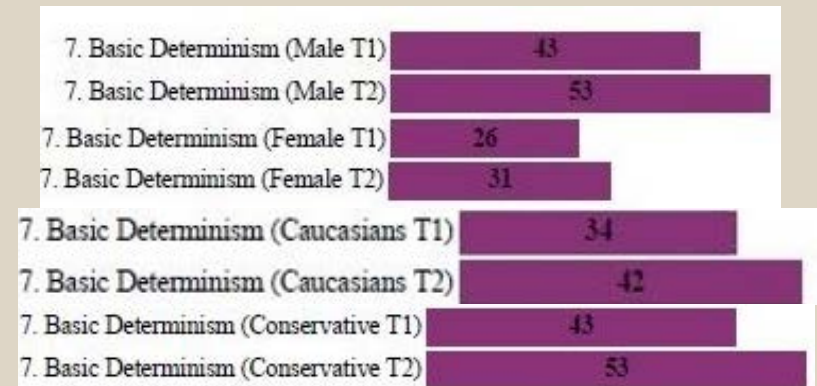
Identity Unsettling
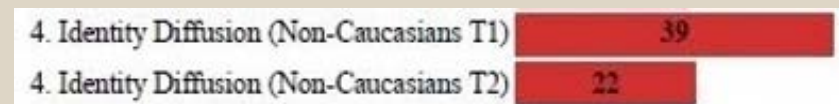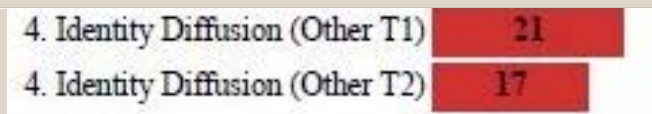
- After the class, were less settled

  – Domestic, Caucasian, conservative, and religious students

4. Identity Diffusion (United States T1) — 17	4. Identity Diffusion (Caucasians T1) — 15
4. Identity Diffusion (United States T2) — 22	4. Identity Diffusion (Caucasians T2) — 21

4. Identity Diffusion (Conservative T1) — 14	4. Identity Diffusion (Religious T1) — 17
4. Identity Diffusion (Conservative T2) — 19	4. Identity Diffusion (Religious T2) — 22
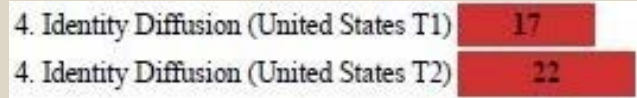
- After the class, were more settled

  – international students and students of color

4. Identity Diffusion (Other T1) — 21	4. Identity Diffusion (Non-Caucasians T1) — 39
4. Identity Diffusion (Other T2) — 17	4. Identity Diffusion (Non-Caucasians T2) — 22

Recommendations

- Revise course to better support students farthest from learning outcomes

    - Consider curriculum and pedagogical revisions to reduce backlash effect

        - increase autonomy?

- Consider educationally productive learning outcomes e.g., civic engagement.

- Recognize/honor highly resilient students

- Consider how the ethnic diversity of faculty who teach these courses affect students' responses

- Integrate multiple theoretical perspectives to better understand the experiences of students from different backgrounds.

Recommendations

- Identity unsettling may be good as the beginning of a transformative process. Is there a way to support students after the course?
  - Colleges and universities should consider requiring multiple courses to address a broad range of learning outcomes as a result from exposure to diversity coursework
  - Extend into other areas of students' academic and co-curricular experiences

- When teaching undergraduate students about cultural diversity a sufficient number of minorities may be required to facilitate the intergroup interaction necessary to influence changes in cultural beliefs and attitudes.

Future study

- Backlash response

  - How to overcome? Matter of time (T3) or pedagogical changes

- Intersectionality

- Comparison between online and face-to-face sections

References

- Bennett, J. (2015). Introduction. In J. Bennett (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of intercultural competence* (pp. xxiii-xxvii). Thousand Oakes, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- Deardorff, D.K. (2011). Assessing intercultural competence. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2011*(149), 65-79.

- Diamond, R. (2008). *Designing and assessing courses and curricula: A practical guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Wandschneider, E., Pysarchik, D. T., Sternberger, L. G., Ma, W., Acheson, K., et al. (2015). The Forum BEVI project: Applications and implications for international, multicultural, and transformative learning. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 25*, 150-228.

Questions?

Shalyse Iseminger: stindell@purdue.edu

Pamala Morris: pmorris@purdue.edu

Kris Acheson-Clair: krisac@purdue.edu

Colleen Kelly: ColleenKelly@purdue.edu