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Creating Cultural Competency Curriculum: How Diverse are Your Jellybeans?

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Citation

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Abstract

As college enrollment continues to grow and diversity becomes more prominent, it is crucial to recognize the importance of nurturing cultural competence in campus communities. Cultural competence refers to the ability to build relationships with individuals from both similar and diverse backgrounds. In order for students to be successful in their future careers, they must develop knowledge and skills to effectively collaborate with people from different backgrounds. As college students actively engage in conversations about multiculturalism, cultural awareness, and the significance of appropriate accommodations, it is imperative that multicultural education plays a more significant role in college settings. This thesis explored how a classroom tool could help develop competence among students. The classroom activity known as the Jellybean Project, allowed students to identify their preferences and biases. The study findings revealed diverse perspectives and motivations behind engaging in the Jellybean activity, emphasizing the importance of incorporating culturally competent curriculum in college settings. Participants varied interpretations of the activity highlighted themes of self-awareness, reflection, and exploring diversity, underscoring the need for ongoing discussions and interventions to address biases among students.

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Introduction

As college enrollment continues to grow and diversity becomes more prominent, it is crucial to recognize the importance of nurturing cultural competence in campus communities. Cultural competence refers to the ability to build relationships with individuals from both similar and diverse backgrounds. In order for students to be successful in their future careers, they must develop knowledge and skills to effectively collaborate with people from different backgrounds. As college students actively engage in conversations about multiculturalism, cultural awareness, and the significance of appropriate accommodations, it is imperative that multicultural education plays a more significant role in college settings. This thesis explored how a classroom tool could help develop competence among students. The classroom activity known as the Jellybean Project, allowed students to identify their preferences and biases. The study findings revealed diverse perspectives and motivations behind engaging in the Jellybean activity, emphasizing the importance of incorporating culturally competent curriculum in college settings. Participants varied interpretations of the activity highlighted themes of self-awareness, reflection, and exploring diversity, underscoring the need for ongoing discussions and interventions to address biases among students.

Literature Review

Cultural competence plays a role in fostering connections between individuals from parts of the globe. It serves as a tool for bridging gaps enabling people with diverse backgrounds to appreciate each other's beliefs, languages, and customs. By observing and appreciating nuances within cultures individuals can gain insight into how the world operates and understand the origins of others' values and beliefs (Ashwell, 2004). However, despite its significance, there is no consensus on terminology or specific assessment methods for competence. This lack of

language is reflected in the terms used to describe cultural competence, such as multiculturalism, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural sensitivity, and cultural intelligence among others (Deardorff 2011). This diversity adds complexity to comprehending and evaluating competence, across contexts. To properly evaluate competence, it is crucial to have a shared understanding of the aspects that need assessment. While scholars have invested time, in defining competence within the United States these precise definitions are often not adopted by postsecondary institutions (Deardorff, 2011). This difference emphasizes the importance of establishing an understanding of cultural competence assessment across institutions and organizations.

Cultural Competency Theory. A model based on grounded theory suggests that assessment should be seamlessly integrated into targeted interventions to develop competence effectively (Deardorff, 2011). This approach acknowledges the need for assessment throughout the learning process. Moreover, this model emphasizes the role of critical thinking skills in acquiring and evaluating knowledge as well as the influence of attitudes in fostering intercultural competence.

Among the aspects of competence identified experts unanimously agree on one; the ability to see things from others' perspectives. This goes beyond knowledge such as food, greetings, and customs (Deardorff, 2011). It requires an understanding of nuances and the capacity to empathize with and comprehend different worldviews and values.

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is widely recognized as a test, for assessing competency (Cushner, 2011). This tool is designed to determine where an individual stands on the intercultural development continuum, ranging from denial to acceptance which comes from the DMIS. It indicates the degree of ethnocentrism or ethnorelativism, in a person's

mindset (Cushner, 2011). By assessing an individual's sensitivity and their attitudes towards differences the IDI offers a comprehensive evaluation of their level of intercultural competence.

In contrast to the IDI, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) focuses on measuring sensitivity, which is considered as the emotional aspect of intercultural competence (Perry & Southwell 2011). The ISS evaluates how individuals emotionally respond and their attitudes towards differences in work settings. It includes factors such as enjoyment of interactions, respect for differences confidence in engaging with cultures and attentiveness during interactions.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) also provides insights into how individuals perceive and understand differences. It serves as the foundation for the assessment (Perry & Southwell 2011). This model consists of six stages that illustrate the journey from denial or ignorance of differences to acceptance and integration of diversity. It suggests that as individuals gain experience and acquire an understanding of cultural differences their potential, for intercultural competence grows.

Developing understanding involves both emotional aspects (Perry & Southwell 2011). Understanding competence involves acquiring knowledge, about one's culture and other cultures as well as cultivating positive attitudes towards different cultures. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) along with the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provides an assessment that measures both knowledge acquisition and affective responses. This highlights the significance of considering both aspects in developing competence.

In summary, the IDI, ISS, and DMIS offer a framework and assessment for comprehending competence. The IDI specifically determines an individual's position on the

spectrum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism while the ISS evaluates responses and attitudes towards differences. The DMIS provides insights into the progression towards competence. By incorporating knowledge and affective responses these assessment tools contribute to an understanding of intercultural competence.

Cultural Competence on College Campuses

Based on Christian Cardona's (2021) research on university students' intercultural communication and their institutions' focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts there is a correlation between the two factors. This suggests that when colleges actively prioritize and invest in DEI initiatives it enhances communication among students. This finding is significant because strong intercultural communication skills are crucial, in today's workforce and society.

Exposing students to a range of perspectives and experiences can greatly benefit college campuses' efforts, in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Through DEI exposure, students develop the skills to interact and connect with individuals from diverse backgrounds preparing them for a world that values inclusivity and interconnectedness. This need is apparent as, "the diverse voices calling for intercultural skills contrast sharply with evidence suggesting that, to date, students are still not being adequately prepared to participate and thrive in diverse workplaces and personal contexts" (Lee et al., 2012, The Call for Intercultural Skills Section, para. 4)

Cummings and associates (2023) have explored strategies to promote DEI on campus. These include having a commitment towards diversity and inclusion ensuring diversity at all levels of the institution actively reaching out and recruiting prospective students from diverse backgrounds providing support services for diverse students and fostering an inclusive campus environment. According to Cumming et al. (2023) it is crucial to institutionalize DEI initiatives

in education to create an equal environment for all students. These strategies highlight the importance of taking an approach towards implementing DEI measures that address aspects of campus life and structures. They emphasize the need for changes that will foster an environment for every student.

In summary, the significance of DEI on college campuses is crucial. Researchers propose that investing in DEI initiatives not only enhances students' intercultural communication skills but also contributes to establishing DEI efforts as a part of institutional practices (Cardona, 2021). This ultimately leads to an inclusive environment, for all students. By creating a campus community that embraces diversity and inclusivity universities can play a role, in preparing students for a diverse society. This fosters unity, empathy, and understanding among individuals.

Jellybean Activity

In the book titled *What color are your jellybeans? Intersections of generation, race, sex, culture, and gender* by Felicia Harris there is an activity involving jellybeans that aims to promote awareness and understanding of diversity in relationships. The activity uses jellybeans of shapes, colors, textures, and sizes as representations of the diverse range of people on our planet.

During this activity, participants are provided with cups labeled with racial and ethnic groups like White American, African American, Native American, etc. These labels are not exhaustive but rather offer participants a selection to choose from. Each participant receives a cup and is instructed to select a jellybean from the labeled cups that best represents their views on various questions. The questions posed during the activity revolve around participants' interactions with individuals, from ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For instance, some questions may inquire about the race or ethnicity of the person they recently had lunch with the

backgrounds of their neighbors, or even the cultural background of the author whose book they recently read.

After each question, participants are asked to place a jellybean that represents a race or ethnicity, into their cups. Once all the questions are answered participants are then prompted to observe the colors of the jellybeans they have collected in their cups. This visual representation often reveals patterns and tendencies in how participants interact and highlights any lack of diversity within their circles. Many participants may find themselves surprised or reflecting upon their exposure to individuals who differ from them racially culturally and generationally.

By using jellybeans as a visual representation of diversity, this activity encourages self-reflection and raises awareness about personal biases, prejudices, and potential limitations when it comes to building inclusive relationships (Harris, 2017). It underscores the importance of seeking out interactions with people from different backgrounds and challenging oneself to expand social circles. This jellybean exercise also emphasizes the significance of going beyond thoughts and spoken words by revealing how unconscious biases and stereotypes influence connections. It serves as a reminder to actively broaden one's understanding and diverse meaningful relationships.

Methods

In this study conducted at a large midsouth university, 90 freshmen students enrolled in an agriculture college participated in the Jellybean activity method as a means to assess their interactions and knowledge. The average age of the participants was 18.18 years. The distribution of majors among the participants were as follows: Agriculture Business (N = 21), Apparel Merchandise and Product Development (N = 2), Animal Science (N = 37), Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences (N = 10), Food Science (N = 10), Horticulture (N = 5), and

Nutrition (N = 3). There were 51 students who identified as female (57%), 31 students who identified as male (41%), and 2 students who identified as nonbinary (2%). The racial/ethnic composition of the sample revealed that the majority of participants identified as White/Caucasian/Anglo American (N = 75), followed by Black or African American (N = 8), Latino/Latinx (N = 8), Asian or Asian American (N = 1), American Indian or Native American (N = 5), which are representative of the college demographics.

During the activity, participants engage in selecting jellybeans that represent various ethnic groups. The facilitator prepared cups for students to place their jellybeans in, and students labeled their jellybeans with different ethnic groups, like White American, African American/Black, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Latino/Hispanic. Each participant was asked to choose a jellybean that best aligns with their responses to a series of questions. These questions are designed to assess their interactions and knowledge about people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, participants were asked about the race or ethnic background of the person they had lunch with and the backgrounds of their neighbors. Once all the questions were answered, participants examined the colors of the jellybeans they collected in their cups. This visual representation helps identify any patterns or tendencies in participants' interactions and reveals if there is a lack of diversity, within their circles.

Additionally, at the end of the activity, participants were given a survey to complete. The purpose of the survey was to collect data on participants' perspectives on the activity, and as an evaluation of their choices in their understanding of biases, and their feedback, on what they enjoyed or did not enjoy about the activity. The participants were asked to indicate their age, major, gender or gender identity, and race/ethnicity.

Results

Responses were categorized into various categories, and the number of individuals falling into each category was as follows. For the question "What do you think the purpose of this activity was?", students responded: Analyze your Circle (N = 29), To see how diverse our lives are (N = 26), Evaluate how Inclusive you are (N = 9), Self-Awareness (N = 6), Reflection (N = 4), Guilt Trip (N = 4), Uncomfortable (N = 4), See Cultural Competence (N = 2), To Learn Diversity (N = 2), Raise Awareness (N = 1), N/A (N = 3). This data provides insights into the diverse perspectives and motivations behind engaging in the activity.

In response to the question, "Did you expect your jellybeans to look the way they did? Why or why not?" participants provided a range of responses:

Yes (N=70)	with specific responses such as:
	because I have a diverse group: 17 participants.
	because I am surrounded by white people: 15 participants.
	because I am not diverse: 9 participants.
	because they look like me: 7 participants.
	because they are the same color: 6 participants.
	because it is what I am used to: 3 participants.
	because of the kind of questions: 2 participants.
	because I am self-aware: 2 participants.
	No Reason: 9 participants
No (N=15)	with specific responses such as:
	because I ran out of jellybeans: 6 participants.
	because I thought I'd have more colors: 3 participants.
	I had more colors than expected: 2 participants.
	but it makes sense: 2 participants.
	because I am more diverse: 1 participant. because
	No Reason: 1 participant.
Other (N=5)	

Participants' responses to the question "*How do you feel about your cup of jellybeans?*" were categorized into several categories. The majority of participants expressed positive feelings towards their cup of jellybeans, with 20 respondents indicating that they felt "good" about it.

Additionally, 18 participants expressed a desire to change something about their cup of jellybeans. A smaller number of participants reported feeling indifferent (N = 15), not good (N = 3), not diverse (N = 8), okay (N = 2), expected (N = 9), sad (N = 3), guilty/ashamed (N = 5), very good (N = 2), shocked (N = 3), diverse (N = 1), or responded with N/A (N = 1). These findings suggest that the majority of participants had positive feelings towards their cup of jellybeans, with a subset expressing more negative emotions and desires for change.

Participants were asked to describe the jellybeans in their cups on a 1-5 scale, with an average response of 2.41, indicating students had 2-3 jellybean colors on average. When asked about their perception of other people's cups without looking, the average response was 2.50, with students estimating that their peers had 2 different colored jellybeans on average. Participants were asked to rate their surprise level after the activity, with an average response of 3.65, indicating they had no idea what their jellybeans might look like, on average. Participants were also asked to rate their feelings about their jellybeans activity, with an average response of 2.71, where students indicated they felt neutral, neither proud nor ashamed, on average. When participants were asked if they thought about the people they spend time with in this way, 70% (63 participants) reported that they had never considered this before. They were then asked why or why not, and responses were categorized into various categories: I think about my circle (N = 14), I just hang out with my people (N = 19), I have not thought about it (N = 21), I do not think about it like that (N = 26), It is normal (N = 3) I do not care (N = 2), N/A (N = 4), Cultural differences (N = 1). When participants were asked if they believed they have conscious or unconscious bias, 35 individuals reported having conscious biases, whereas 15 participants denied possessing any biases. However, 40 individuals were unsure about the presence of their biases.

Discussion

The purpose and objective of this Jellybean project revolved around highlighting the importance and practicality of incorporating a culturally competent curriculum in college settings, especially as college enrollment grows and diversity becomes more prevalent. It aimed to explore a useful tool for instructors to incorporate into a college classroom as an essential element of creating cultural competence among students. The results of the Jellybean activity offer valuable insights into the perceptions and attitudes of participants towards cultural competence and diversity in the curriculum, in line with the purpose of emphasizing the importance and practicality of incorporating a culturally competent curriculum.

Participants' interpretations of the purpose of the activity revealed a variety of responses, with the majority associating it with themes of self-awareness, reflection, and exploring diversity in their lives. This indicates that the activity effectively prompted participants to consider their own cultural competence and awareness, aligning with the goals of the study.

The responses regarding participants' expectations about the appearance of their jellybeans may have been influenced by factors such as their surroundings, personal diversity, and familiarity with certain ethnic groups. These findings suggest the significant impact of individual backgrounds and experiences on perceptions of diversity, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and addressing diverse perspectives in educational settings.

The positive feelings expressed by the majority of participants towards their cup of jellybeans, alongside desires for change expressed by some, indicate varying levels of comfort and satisfaction with perceived experiences with diversity. Furthermore, participants' perceptions of the number of jellybean colors in their cups and their peers' cups demonstrated a general awareness of diversity within their social circles, emphasizing the influence of social interactions

on cultural understanding and acceptance. The average surprise level after the activity indicated that participants had limited expectations regarding the appearance of their jellybeans, reinforcing the themes of self-awareness and reflection established in the study. This suggests that activities focusing on these elements can effectively engage students in critically examining their biases and attitudes toward diversity. They become aware of their critical consciousness which is "shifting of one's gaze from self to others and conditions of injustice in the world" (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009).

The results of the Jellybean activity indicate the importance of promoting cultural competence and diversity in educational settings. The findings highlight how activities centered on self-awareness and reflection can engage students in meaningful discussions about diversity and biases. The varied responses suggest the necessity for ongoing discussions and interventions to address both conscious and unconscious biases among students, underscoring the significance of incorporating a culturally competent curriculum to foster diversity, inclusion, and self-awareness among students. These insights offer guidance for educators and curriculum developers seeking to enhance cultural competency in educational settings, emphasizing the practical applications of promoting diversity and inclusion in the curriculum. Practicality is important, but the intentionality of creating and actively facilitating these kinds of activities for students is equally if not more important (Lee et al., 2012, Engaging Diversity for Intercultural Outcomes, para. 2).

The unexpected result of 35 participants reporting conscious biases, 15 denying possessing any biases, and 40 individuals being unsure about the presence of their biases warrants further discussion and analysis. One possible explanation for the disparity in responses could be attributed to the complexity and nuance of biases. Some individuals may have a

heightened level of self-awareness and introspection, leading them to acknowledge and admit to having conscious biases. On the other hand, those who denied possessing any biases may have a lack of awareness or understanding of their own biases, possibly due to societal norms or internalized beliefs that prevent them from recognizing their prejudices.

The uncertainty expressed by 40 participants about the presence of their biases may stem from a lack of clarity or understanding of what constitutes bias, as well as the nuanced nature of biases that can be subtle and ingrained in individuals' beliefs and behaviors. It is possible that individuals may struggle to identify their biases due to social desirability bias or a reluctance to acknowledge potentially negative aspects of themselves (Monteith & Mark, 2005).

Furthermore, cultural and personal factors, such as upbringing, education, exposure to diversity, and personal experiences, may influence individuals' attitudes toward bias and their ability to recognize their own prejudices. These factors can contribute to the varying responses seen in the study and highlight the importance of addressing biases through education, awareness-raising, and open dialogue. In the context of agriculture colleges and fields, this often means that white men are overrepresented, both in terms of student demographics and faculty staffing (Leslie et al., 2019). This lack of diversity has the potential to indirectly perpetuate uninspected biases, create feelings of exclusion among minority students, and result in a curriculum that is not as comprehensive or inclusive as it could be. Promoting diversity and cultural competence in agricultural colleges is crucial, not just for social fairness, but for the cultivation of a new generation of agriculturists equipped to tackle the complex and diversified challenges of the 21st century (Zhai & Scheer, 2004). The agricultural world is profoundly diverse, reliant on a vast spectrum of plants, animals, climates, soils, technologies, and human cultures. A diverse and culturally competent agricultural workforce can offer varied perspectives

and approaches to these challenges, greatly enhancing innovation, creativity, and problem-solving skills. (Zhai & Scheer, 2004). The IDI would be a tool to track their growth since this population is generally white males (Punti & Dingel, 2021).

Overall, the unexpected findings regarding participants' beliefs about their conscious or unconscious biases underscore the complexity of bias and the need for ongoing efforts to promote self-reflection, awareness, and education about biases in order to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment. This highlights the importance of incorporating strategies to address biases and promote cultural competence within educational settings to create a more inclusive and diverse learning environment. One program that can educate students on their everyday microaggressions is the "Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts Program" which is shown to increase students' awareness of their everyday language and the perceptions/biases they hold against people (Riley et al., 2022).

By comparing this study's findings to the existing literature in the field, it is evident that both sources share common goals of promoting cultural competence and diversity in educational settings, while also presenting distinct approaches and perspectives on assessing and enhancing intercultural understanding among students. These similarities and differences can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the significance and practicality of incorporating culturally competent curriculum to foster diversity, inclusion, and self-awareness among students in educational settings.

Strengths and Limitations

The Jellybean activity method used in this study is unique and provides a hands-on approach to assessing participants' interactions and knowledge about people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The study includes a diverse sample of freshmen students from an

agriculture college, representing a range of ag majors, genders, and racial/ethnic backgrounds, which enhances the generalizability of the findings. The study also combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including the activity itself and a follow-up survey, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of participants' perceptions and experiences. The study sample consists of only 90 freshmen students who were in the classes surveyed meaning that students were not sought out. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Moreover, the data collected through the survey relies on participants' self-reporting, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccurate responses. Additionally, the majority of participants in the study identified as White/Caucasian/Anglo-American, which may limit the diversity of perspectives and experiences reflected in the findings. Furthermore, the study primarily focuses on participants' immediate reactions to the Jellybean activity and does not include a follow-up to assess any lasting effects or changes in perspectives over time.

There is a risk of selection bias as the study participants were recruited from a specific agricultural college, which may not be representative of the overall student population or the broader community. So, participants' responses to the survey questions may have been influenced by social desirability bias or the framing of the questions leading to confirmation bias. Additionally, the activity may have inherent cultural biases based on the ethnic groups represented by the jellybeans, impacting participants' interpretations and reactions with the possibility of cultural bias influencing the study.

Future Research

Moving forward, future research directions may involve implementing similar activities in diverse educational contexts to assess the long-term impact on students' perspectives and behaviors regarding diversity and cultural awareness as Aronson and Laughter (2016) have

started exploring cultural pedagogy. Additionally, exploring strategies to mitigate and diminish unconscious biases among students could further enhance the effectiveness of culturally competent curricula in fostering inclusive environments and promoting acceptance of diverse perspectives.

In conclusion, the research conducted in this thesis sheds light on the importance of promoting cultural competence and diversity in educational settings. The findings from the Jellybean activity offer valuable insights into participants' perceptions and attitudes toward diversity, highlighting the need for ongoing discussions and interventions to address biases among students. By emphasizing the significance and practicality of incorporating a culturally competent curriculum, this research contributes to creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments for students.

It is essential to continue exploring and implementing strategies to foster cultural competence, self-awareness, and inclusion in educational settings. By recognizing the complexities of biases and the nuances of cultural perceptions, educators and curriculum developers can work towards creating a more diverse and accepting academic environment. The unexpected findings and limitations of this study also underscore the need for further research and interventions to address biases and enhance cultural competency among students.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is to contribute to the ongoing efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education and society as a whole. By raising awareness, encouraging self-reflection, and fostering dialogue about cultural competence, we can strive towards building a more inclusive and understanding community for all individuals.

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