Intercultural Mindedness: Teachers Left Behind

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United States teacher education programs stand at an important transitional period within the context of a complex multicultural society. An increasingly diversifying student population contrasts with teaching professionals whose demographics haven't changed as rapidly. Preservice teachers from seven institutions in the State University System of Florida were surveyed to assess their current state of intercultural-mindedness. The results suggest that dominant groups exhibit lower intercultural sensitivity and global competence compared to the rest of the population.

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Globalization is a product of increased traffic and free movement of people, information technology, and markets beyond national borders and physical distance, all of which have made our world much more complex, interconnected, and diverse (Zhao, 2010). Learning environments in the United States (U.S.) are no different. Multicultural understanding efforts in the field of educationare inevitablebecause ofthe influenceson current students and consequently their immediate futures (Penbek&Şahin, 2012).

Evidence of globalizing influences can be observed in our local school communities (Roberts, 2007). The U.S. student population has become increasingly diverse, with each individual bringing their unique cultural and social background to school (Cushner, 2012a). American students' global awareness and skill development in the context of a rapidly globalizing workforce is extremely important (Penbek&Şahin, 2012; Zhao, 2010), with teachers playing a crucial role in building the necessary foundation (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Kirby & Crawford, 2012). Contemporary society therefore requires teachers to be adequately prepared for the needs of a diverse student body and the creation of positive learning environments for diverse individuals (Lunn, 2008). Preparing preservice teachers with global competencies is vital to generating sound knowledge of global issues and nurturing global citizens (Brodin, 2010).

Such statements raise crucial questions: are preservice teachers ready for multicultural challenges and are they adequately prepared for diverse learning environments? Where do these preservice teachers' perceptions of intercultural mindedness fall? The purpose of the present study is to assess Florida preservice teachers' perceptions of intercultural mindedness via two survey instruments based on different theoretical approaches.

Literature Review

A large number of postsecondary institutions recognize the importance of campus internationalization; however, such awareness is "very weak and tentative" (Kissock& Richardson, 2010, p. 92) with teacher education programs consistently lacking integration of global perspectives throughout curricula. Even within individual institutions, teacher education programs tend to be particularly independent from the rest of the campus because of the unique demands of localized educational policy (Goodwin, 2010), high-stake accountability and standardization requirements (Schoen &Fusarelli, 2008). Teacher education programs at each postsecondary institution must be aware of their responsibility to providing preparation, training, and education for preservice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Diversifying Student Population

The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012) reported that the U.S. student population has become much more diverse since the 1980s. A similar phenomenon has occurred within the State of Florida. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE, 2012) reported that minority student enrollment first exceeded white student enrollment in 2001 and that by 2011 nearly 35% of all school districts have minority enrollments of more than 50%. According to FDOE (2013),minority enrollment exceeds white enrollment for all grade levels in Fall 2013—the younger the students the more diversity is observed (e.g., 32% white and 68% minority in Kindergarten; 44% white and 56% minority in 12th grade). More precisely, racial demographics of PK–12 studentswere approximately 41% White, 30% Hispanic, 23% Black, less than 3% Asian and the rest (less than 3%) were either multiracial, Native Indian/Alaska native, or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. Clearly, the student population has becomemuch more diverse.

Stagnant Teacher Population

Despite such dramatic changes in student population, Cushner (2012b) reported that change within the teacher population has been much slower and described the teacher profile as "rather homogeneous" (p. 164). For example, a report from the State University System of Florida Board of Governors (2012) indicated that the racial demographics of preservice teachers consisted of approximately 63% White (N = 8,952), 20% Hispanic (N = 2,808), 13% Black (N = 1,817), less than 2% Asian (N = 247) and the rest (less than 4%) were either multiracial (N = 275), Native American Indian (N = 34), nonresident alien/international (N = 52), or did not report racial identity (N = 98). The female-to-male ratio was nearly 80:20. Viewed in the context of historical data, dramatic changes in education major enrollment do not appear to have occurred over the last 10 years.

Florida is not the only state in which such a homogeneous teacher population is observed. The American public school teacher population remains mostly composed of White middle-class females from rural or suburban communities despite a more racially and culturally diverse U.S. classroom environment (Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009); these teachers also tend to speak only one language: English (Cushner, 2012b). The current teacher workforce reflects the demographics of the U.S. general population less and less. A majority of teachers seem relatively disconnected from culturally diverse classroom realities and resistant to the changes happening within contemporary learning environments (Levine, 2010). Those teachers tend to have little exposure to intercultural and multicultural experiences (Cushner, 2012a). A deficiency of multicultural knowledge and experience can be a liability in current teaching and learning environments, as ignorance in issues of cultural sensitivity and recognition can lead to negative outcomes in discipline and classroom management (Mahon, 2006).

Dilemmas in Teacher Education Programs

The phenomenon of unchanging teacher population demographicsis likelynot just a result of teacher education programs attracting a narrow range of the population, but also due to a lack of change (Levine, 2010). Previous studies have indicated that mainstream teachers tend to lack not only multicultural experience (Cushner, 2012a) but also often fail to recognize that their own cultural backgrounds may be significantly different from those of their students (Goodwin, 2010; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Van Hook, 2000). A lack of White racial self-awareness can have a strong negative impact on multicultural understanding (Groff & Peters, 2012; Mahon, 2009). Therefore, the development of interpersonal dimensions in multicultural environments is a core element of global competency (Merrill, Braskamp, & Braskamp, 2012).

Despite slow changes in teacher demographics, the impact of standardization and accountability has changed the definition of teacher competency, expectations for teacher education programs, and, at some levels, the fundamental value of education itself; powerful accountability pressures from No Child Left Behind requirements have created tension in many educational contexts (Peck, Gallucci, & Sloan, 2010). With increasing pressure and strong inclinations toward standardization (Schoen &Fusarelli, 2008), teachers are expected to teach to the test to satisfy accountability demands (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gentry, 2006). In this type of environment, teacher effectiveness is measured via student achievement scores (Newton,

Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010). In preparing preservice teachers to cope with standardized knowledge-based policy demands, there is little incentive for teacher education to concentrate on learning and teaching internationalization but rather drives focus toward creating a "teacher preparation assembly-line" (Goodwin, 2010, p. 28).

In order to counter criticism of excessive focus on knowledge-based and theory-based learning activities, teacher education programs often include multiple field experiences (e.g. student teaching and service learning) in collaboration with local schools (Zeichner, 2010b). In environments where external demand encourages vocational preparation (Braskamp, 2008), curriculum often narrows to a one-size-fits-all experience, with teacher creativity and educational leadership having very little autonomy. The current educational environment is a result of a "politically charged, top-down, hostile take-over of America's schools" (Gentry, 2006, p. 24) generating great pressure in the educational environment that unconsciously casts aside global perspectives (Kissock& Richardson, 2010). Zeichner (2010a) argued thatsuch systematic and often superficial preparation provides little to no emphasis on working in multicultural environments. Chanock, Clerehan, Moore, and Prince (2004) also stated that accountability burdens certainly have narrowed much of the purpose of education training to development of test-taking skills.

Methodology

The present study employed two survey instruments developed by Olson and Kroeger (2001) based on two different approaches of cognitive development theory: cognitive development and human holistic development. The results of the descriptive statistics are expected to identify the average points for Florida preservice teachers' intercultural sensitivity and global competency in intercultural and global settings.

Conceptual Frameworks

Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1986) and King and Baxter Magolda's Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity (2005) are the guiding conceptual frameworks. Both are constructed based on Piaget's cognitive development theory but use two different approaches: developmental and holistic.

Bennett's model uses a continuum of intercultural sensitivity ranging from ethnocentricity to ethnorelativism. Mahon (2006) indicates that a majority of teachers are in the minimization stage, which is on the ethnocentric side. In theory, people in this group either fail to recognize their own cultural backgrounds or place their own cultural perspectives as superior or central. Bennett (1986) gives an example of this: a minimizer with a monotheistic background might say, "We are all God's children" (p.184). In this stage one's own religious and cultural worldview is taken as the only possible context. People in the minimization stage tend to ignore cultural differences and assume their cultural worldview is universally applicable.

King and Baxter Magolda's model (2005) identifies three dimensions of intercultural maturity: *cognitive*, *intrapersonal*, and *interpersonal*. These are linked to three levels of intercultural maturity: *initial*, *intermediate*, and *mature*. Developing intercultural maturity

requires shifts between equilibrium and disequilibrium via meaning-making experiences in the three dimensions. King and Baxter Magolda's "mature" level is associated with the final stage of ethnorelativism (integration) in Bennett's model.

Instrumentation

The instrument employed for this study was sourced from the Global Competency Index and Intercultural Sensitivity Index (Olson & Kroeger, 2001) developed based on cognitive development theory with two theoretical (developmental and holistic) approaches. The Global Competency and Intercultural Sensitivity Index contains two indices: a Global Competency Index (24 items) and an Intercultural Sensitivity Index (25 items). Both employ a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("*Doesn't describe me at all*") to 5 ("*Describes me extremely well*"). In general, the lower the Intercultural Sensitivity Index score (ISI) the less sensitive and the lower the Global Competency Index score (GCI) the less competent the participants are in intercultural and global contexts. Potential scores for the Global Competency Index range from 5 to 120. The Intercultural Sensitivity Index score ranges from 5 to 125. Examples of Global Competency Index items include: "I am linguistically and culturally competent in at least one language and culture other than my own," "I question my own prejudices as well as all national and cultural stereotypes," and "I believe the world become economically, environmentally, and politically interdependent," among others. Intercultural Sensitivity Index item examples include: "I understand that differences exist between people but believe that we should focus on similarities," "I think that cultural differences across societies result largely from basic differences in belief systems," "I believe that physical displays of human emotions are universally recognizable: A smile is a smile where you go." A longer list of instrument questions is available in Olson and Kroeger (2001).

In addition to the Global Competency and Intercultural Sensitivity Index (Olson & Kroeger, 2001), a list of individual-specific demographic items was constructed. Guided by existing literature, the list included gender, country of origin, ethnicity, university attended, academic class, language use and fluency, international travel experience, and religious affiliation. Bennett (1993) stated that strong religious preference would place an individual in the ethnocentric side, as this tends to lead people to view the world as if their perspectives are the center of cultural norms.

Procedures

The present study sampled preservice teachers from Florida public universities who were enrolled in Fall 2013. Seven out of ten universities agreed to participate in this project: University of South Florida, Florida Atlantic University, University of West Florida, University of Central Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University, University of North Florida, and University of Florida (approved chronologically). The facilitators at the seven institutions identified the appropriate population and sent a survey link to a student email list. In addition, an alternative data collection effort took place, with paper-and-pencil questionnaires administered in eight different classrooms on the University of West Florida main campus. Survey respondents voluntarily participated in the study.

Results

The results wereintended to help teacher education programs identify current preservice teachers' average intercultural sensitivity and global competency level. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient computed for the total Global Competency Index was .88 and for the Intercultural Sensitivity Index was.72.

Participant descriptions

The target population for this study was students from seven participating public universities in the state of Florida who are enrolled in teacher education programs in Fall 2013. The number of survey responses generated through two data collection approaches (online and paper-and-pencil surveys) totaled 428 valid responses from the seven institutions: Florida Atlantic University ($n = 19$ online), Florida Gulf Coast University ($n = 3$ online), University of Central Florida ($n = 132$ online), University of Florida ($n = 20$ online), University of North Florida ($n = 37$ online), University of South Florida ($n = 64$ online), and University of West Florida($n = 38$ online, $n = 115$ paper-and-pencil). Descriptive statistics for Florida Gulf Coast University were excluded because of the small number of responses, collected from one classroom of only 47 students. Levine's test for equality of variance indicated that the responses generated from the two survey approaches (paper-and-pencil versus online) showed no significant differences.

Demographic characteristics were as follows: 85% female, 14% male; 70% Caucasian/White ($n = 299$); 13% Hispanic/Latino ($n = 56$); 8% African American/Black ($n = 34$); 6% Biracial/Multiracial ($n = 27$); less than 2% Asian ($n = 7$); and less than 1% Native American/Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific, and others. Almost 75% of the participants indicated their religious affiliation as Christian. More than 90% of participants reported their first language to be English, and 66% of the participants self-reported as monolingual. Participants who had never traveled internationally ($n = 132$) were 30% of the total.

Descriptive Statistics

The Global Competency Index and Intercultural Sensitivity Index employed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Doesn't describe me at all*, 5 = *Describes me extremely well*). A higher score indicates greater competency in global contexts. The total possible score for the Global Competency Index was between 24 and 120 points; the sample average was 78.08 points (*SD* = 14.43). The participants ($n = 428$) in this study scored as low as 36 and as high as 110 points (Table 1).

Table 1
Variables Descriptive Statistics ($n = 428$)

Variables	Nr. of Items	Minimum	Maximum	*M*	*SD*
ISI	25	60	113	87.14	9.96
GCI Total	24	36	110	78.08	14.43

Note. Nr. = Number, ISI = Intercultural Sensitivity Index, GCI = Global Competency Index.

The Intercultural Sensitivity Index contained 25 items intended to estimate individuals' perceptions of intercultural sensitivity level along a continuum between ethnocentric and ethnorelative. The possible score range for the Intercultural Sensitivity Index was between 5 and 125. The participants' responses in the sample ($n = 428$) fell between 64 and 105 points, and the average was 87.14 points ($SD = 9.96$) on the continuum (Table 1). The following section discusses patterns in ISI and GCI scores across various groups.

Participants born in the U.S. Most participants were born in the U.S. ($n = 392$) and their average ISI and GCI scores were lower (ISI: $M = 86.55$, $SD = 9.92$; GCI: $M = 77.15$, $SD = 14.37$) than that of those born outside the U.S. (ISI: $M = 93.53$, $SD = 8.10$; GCI: $M = 88.19$, $SD = 11.01$).

Female participants. Comparison of the ISI and GCI average scores between female ($n = 368$) and male ($n = 60$) participants indicated that males scored higher (ISI: $M = 88.15$, $SD = 10.24$; GCI: $M = 82.55$, $SD = 15.59$) on both indices than females (ISI: $M = 86.97$, $SD = 9.92$; GCI: $M = 77.35$, $SD = 14.13$).

Caucasian/White participants. Caucasians ($n = 299$) scored an average of 85.78 ($SD = 9.91$) for the ISI and 76.33 ($SD = 14.11$) for the GCI, both of which were the lowest among all ethnic groups. Asian participants had the highest average ISI ($M = 92.57$, $SD = 13.10$) and GCI ($M = 84.86$, $SD = 16.94$) scores.

Christian participants. Among religious groups, Jewish participants had the highest average ISI score ($M = 95.10$, $SD = 9.06$), closely followed by Buddhists ($M = 95.00$, $SD = 10.58$). The Polytheist group exhibited the highest average GCI score ($M = 89.00$, $SD = 9.06$), with the Jewish group following ($M = 86.40$, $SD = 14.23$). The Christian group ($n = 319$) presented the lowest average ISI scores ($M = 86.14$, $SD = 9.60$) and lowest average GCI score of 76.57 ($SD = 14.08$). The only group displaying lower than average on both ISI and GCI scores was Christian. Those who did not indicate affiliation with a particular religious group had higher than average ISI and GCI scores.

Monolinguals, native English speakers, and non-international travelers. Native English speakers had lower ISI ($M = 86.72$, $SD = 9.90$) and GCI ($M = 77.27$, $SD = 14.33$) averages than those whose first language is something other than English. Similarly, participants who identified themselves as a monolingual indicated lower ISI ($M = 84.94$, $SD = 9.77$) and GCI ($M = 74.00$, $SD = 13.49$) averages. International travel experience responses indicated that the more people travel internationally, the higher the average GCI scores.

Participating universities. The overall average of the seven participating universities shows three schools (Florida Atlantic University, University of Central Florida, University of South Florida) scoring above average and three schools (University of Florida, University of North Florida, University of West Florida) scoring below average on both the Intercultural Sensitivity Index and Global Competency Index. More specifically, Florida Atlantic University indicated the highest ISI score ($M = 89.47$, $SD = 10.60$) followed by University of South Florida

($M = 88.80$, $SD = 9.21$) and then University of Central Florida ($M = 87.91$, $SD = 10.14$). The highest three GCI averages were again from these three universities: University of South Florida ($M = 82.47$, $SD = 11.96$), University of Central Florida ($M = 79.28$, $SD = 14.43$), and Florida Atlantic University ($M = 78.58$, $SD = 15.06$).

Age and academic career. Both ISI and GCI average scores for most age groups revealed an increase in average scores in relation to maturity except in the oldest age group ($n = 37$).Similarly, the more advanced in academic status a student was, the higher the GCI average; however, the ISI did not follow the same pattern. The graduate student group ($n = 30$) scored lower (ISI: $M = 86.60$, $SD = 8.71$; GCI: $M = 82.70$, $SD = 13.80$) than the average. The only group with a higher overall ISI score was the undergraduate senior group (ISI: $M = 88.06$, $SD = 10.00$).

In summary, the table below indicates that the monolingual White female Christian teacher archetype with little international experience was on average less sensitive and competent (Table 2).

Table 2
Various Groups Scored Below Average on Global Competency Index and Intercultural Sensitivity Index ($n = 428$)

Participant Group	< Average ISI	< Average GCI
Born in the U.S.	☐	☐
Female	☐	☐
Caucasian / White	☐	☐
Christian	☐	☐
Native English Speaker	☐	☐
Monolingual	☐	☐
International Travel Experience < 1	☐	☐
UF, UNF, and UWF	☐	☐
Age under 24	☐	☐
Freshman, Sophomore, Juniors	☐	☐
Graduate Students /Other	☐	

Note. ISI = Intercultural Sensitivity Index, GCI = Global Competency Index, UF = University of Florida, UNF = University of North Florida, UWF = University of West Florida.

Discussion

The results present a picture of Florida preservice teachers' perceptions of intercultural mindedness. As previous studies have stated, the school teacher population remains homogenously composed (Cushner, 2012b). Mainstream teachers tend to be lacking not only multicultural knowledge and experiences but also fail to recognize that their own cultural backgrounds differ from those of their students (Goodwin, 2010; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Sanderson, 2008; Van Hook, 2000). The results of the present study provide additional evidence for this issue. The majority group—White female Christian who are monolingual with little international experience—had average ISI and GCI scores lower than all othergroups.In other words, the descriptive statistics indicated that the monolingual White female Christian teacher

archetype with little international experience was on average less sensitive and competent in multicultural and global environments when compared to their counterparts.

Limitations of the Study

The present study used both an online and paper-and-pencil surveys. It should be noted that online surveys come with some limitations. Among the most prominent limitations are accurate response rate determination (Granello& Wheaton, 2004) and quality control of the data (Fowler, 2013). Moreover, the online survey requests were accepted by seven of the ten public universities in Florida. Therefore, the sample may not represent a complete picture of the State University System of Florida.In addition to uncertainty about response rates, data quality control may pose issues (Fowler, 2013).

The present study is intended to quantitatively measure Florida preservice teachers' perceptions; further research would likely benefit from a qualitative approach that could generate richer contextual data from preservice teachers. Future qualitative and multidimensional approaches could be advantageous because elements of competency and sensitivity perceived in intercultural contexts are fairly complex (Fantini, 2009; Straffon, 2003; Wright & Clarke, 2010).

Implications of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine Florida preservice teachers' perceptions of intercultural mindedness. The results support previous research that found ateacher population that has not changed in step withthe student population (Levine, 2010);the mainstream teacher prototype was less sensitive and competent in intercultural and global settings. This evidence alone should bea warning not only for individual teacher education programs but also for policy makers concerned withU.S. educational achievement.To improve perceptions and perspectives among the preservice teacher population, practical curriculum reform and support must be implementedto further development ofintercultural sensitivity and global competency.

As Deardorff and Jones (2012) argued, global competency involves "effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations" (p. 287). Although various studies examining study abroad programs have emphasized its effectiveness in providing meaningful intercultural experiences (Bhawuk&Brislin, 1992; Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, &Mcmillen, 2009; Colón-Muñiz, SooHoo, &Brignoni, 2010; Gullekson, Tucker, Coombs, & Wright, 2011; Williams, 2005; Wright & Clarke, 2010) and creating intrinsic motivation for learning about different cultures (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, &Pascarella, 2009), participation remains very limited. Though the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2012) reported the number of college students studying abroad nearly doubling between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of Education majors studying abroad decreasedslightly. Investing in and encouraging preservice teachers to explore outside of their comfort zones could be a successful and innovative strategy. Due to the IIE's new five-year initiative, called Generation Study Abroad (IIE, 2014), teacher education programs will have a newopportunity to improve this consistently lower study abroad participation (IIE, 2012).

Discovering and perceiving differences can widen students' perspectives via participation in intercultural programs such as studying or teaching abroad (Alfaro &Quzada, 2010; Bennett,

2004; Kissock& Richardson, 2010). However, such international experiences are difficult for preservice teachers to pursue because of financial constraints, class scheduling limitations, and degree requirements. It is important to keep in mind that these suggestions cannot be implemented without leadership support (Altbach, 2010). University administrations play significant roles in curriculum and policy implementations and more action geared toward accommodating and supporting intercultural sensitivity and global competency are needed (Childress, 2009). Teacher education programs in particular need innovative reform to adequately prepare those who will be teaching in rapidly diversifying and globalizing learning environments.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research may shed light on differences in various groups of Florida preservice teachers and their intercultural mindedness. For example, examination of institutional differences may reveal individual institutions' attitudes toward campus internationalization.In addition, the inconsistency of intercultural sensitivity development in the graduate student group indicated that there may be age and job experience effects. Graduate students who participated in the study were assumed to be current teachers or those with teaching experience who are going back to school to advance their education. It would be valuableto explore why their global competency level was much higher than the rest of the participants but their intercultural sensitivity was rather low.

Conclusion

The present study summarized Florida preservice teachers' perceptions of intercultural mindedness. The results of the descriptive analysis revealed that the perceptions of mainstream teachers demonstratedlower sensitivity and competency in intercultural and global settings. These results supportthe idea that acculturating teacher education programs should be a top priority to match diversifying learning environments (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Goodwin, 2010; Lunn, 2008). Along with rising awareness of the importance of teacher effectiveness (Acedo, 2012; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Nir&Bogler, 2008; Sieber& Mantel, 2012), improving preservice teachers' intercultural mindedness is increasingly seen as vital (Brodin, 2010; Cushner, 2007). Developing intercultural mindedness is a crucial element to understanding different worldviews in the dynamic and complex societies of the twenty-first century.

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