

# **An Emotional Rollercoaster: The Emotional and Pedagogical Impact of Cultural Experiences on Agricultural Education Undergraduate Students**

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## **Abstract**

*As classrooms become more diverse, having multicultural intelligence, or the ability to relate to diverse student populations, is imperative to be an effective classroom teacher (Conner & Roberts, 2013). To build cultural intelligence in a stand-alone course, examining self-perception and cultural engagement, as well as studying one's own history and interaction with others of diverse backgrounds is essential (Brown, 2004; Hains et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2014). This idea was the focus of the cultural experiences presented to pre-service teachers in a collegiate agricultural education course at a southern land grant university. Cultural experiences were used to introduce students to cultural diversity in a required agricultural education course for undergraduates. Students self-selected an experience outside of their cultural norm to observe, participate in, or volunteer for. Students then reflected on the experience and included their emotional response toward the stimulus as well as the implications of the experience upon pedagogy application. Reflections were coded and themes towards type of experiences emerged and included religious events, race/ethnicity events, public-service events, and socio-cultural events. From the total population (N=22) four student experiences were selected within each category and analyzed according to the components the Model of Cultural Experience and Evoked Emotion. Results concluded that students experienced fear as a primary emotion before and during the experience while having emotions of joy, surprise, fear, and sadness during the experience. Upon reflection, students also indicated positive implications of the experience upon their pedagogy as future agricultural educators.*

**Keywords:** cultural intelligence; cultural experiences; pre-service teachers; emotions; student reflection

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## **Introduction and Literature Review**

“Early involvement with minority children, youth and adults must be an important element in teacher preparation for students enrolled in agricultural education” (Schmitt & Bender, 1971, p. 282). This foundational statement was one of ten premises for preparing pre-service teachers to serve minority populations in agricultural education fifty years ago (Schmitt & Bender, 1971). Schmitt and Bender (1971) further articulated their novel vision by asserting, “Future vocational teachers in agriculture must become increasingly “person oriented” and “student centered” (p. 283). The idea of exposing pre-service students to diverse cultures, in an effort to enhance cultural awareness, was highly

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progressive for its time and set the stage for future teacher education programs to emulate cultural inclusion and student understanding. However, five decades later, this enlightening concept still has had limited application overall (Hains, Tubbs & Vincent, 2013; Warren & Alston, 2007). As such, it was the purpose of this study to examine the application of these concepts within a contemporary pre-service agricultural education program.

### **Cultural Competence: Training Pre-service Teachers for Multicultural Classrooms**

Multicultural intelligence, or the ability to relate to diverse student populations, is necessary to be an effective classroom teacher (Brown, 2004; Conner & Roberts, 2013; NCATE, 2008). Becoming a culturally intelligent educator includes developing skills that allow individuals to raise their understanding of and respect for diversity between, among, and within assorted nationalities, ethnicities, and races (Meaney et al., 2008). These skills become critical when educating a student population that continues to evolve and diversify. Unfortunately, research indicates the cultural gap between students and teachers is continually growing (Vincent et al., 2014).

One reason this gap continues to broaden is the limited cross-cultural training and/or cultural experiences received during pre-service teacher training (Asher, 2008; Rodriguez & Lamm, 2016). Due to limited cultural exposure in pre-service education programs, "...it is not surprising to find that many teachers do not attend to the differences in their students, because it is not something to which the teaching culture has socialized them to any great degree" (Mahon, 2006, p. 401). This lag in cultural exposure forces new teachers to rely upon preconceived notions and stereotypes in the classroom; creating educational environments not conducive to student learning and student inclusion (Asher, 2008; Shuyang et al., 2018).

Cultural implications within the classroom are not restricted to teachers with limited or no cultural experience. Even teachers with minimal cultural exposure, who facilitate instruction within multicultural environments, can implement poor inclusive pedagogical practices. Teachers who have great intentions toward implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, but have not been trained effectively, may exhibit behaviors which counteract their best intentions or limit their instructional effectiveness (McFadden et al., 1997; Vincent & Torres, 2015). Banks (1995) warned that educators often impose self-perspectives of culture, values, and ethics on the students around them, thus strongly influencing the development of their students. Whent (2003) identified this phenomenon as embedded bias. Beliefs surrounding diversity, prejudice and embedded biases are developed at an early age and often are maintained through the use of selective perception and avoidance. Therefore, it has become necessary to immerse pre-service teachers in culturally challenging situations that parallel the conditions they will be facing in the classroom (Bell, 2000; Brown, 2004; Hains et al., 2013; Webster & Hoover, 2006; Woods, 2004).

Meaney et al. (2008) pointed out that culturally relevant teaching allows students to identify and even prevail over the damaging effects that the dominant societal culture has had on their learning. Teachers who are trained in multicultural education are often able to develop their intercultural sensitivity and are able to align their teaching practices with student culture; resulting in positive outcomes in the classroom (Mahon, 2006; Vincent & Torres, 2015). This includes the ability to provide environments that authenticate diverse cultures, address individual needs, and emphasize equal opportunity for all students (Banks, 2008; Bell, 2000; Brown, 2004; Mahon, 2006; Schmitt & Bender, 1971; Webster & Hoover, 2006). As pre-service agricultural education teachers enter the industry, they must be prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly multifaceted society (Burriss et al., 2006).

Luft (1996) and Vincent et al. (2014) suggested multicultural education and competence is necessary in agricultural education for agriculture teachers are likely to be teaching in classrooms

populated by students from varying backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and ethnicity. These cultural shifts require agricultural educators to broaden their perspectives and meet the needs of this new population (Luft, 1996; Rodriguez & Lamm, 2016). Woods (2004) proposed that the path toward culturally competent practices is wide, thereby allowing room for agricultural education to contribute toward its development. In fact, challenges facing today's youth require that agricultural education not sit idle but embrace the future.

Bell (2000) and Webster and Hoover (2006) analyzed multicultural efforts made in agricultural education pre-service programs. Bell (2000) found the longitudinal impact of a cultural diversity teaching practicum positively influenced methods of teaching toward diverse cultures, knowledge of diverse cultures, and enhanced teacher-student relationships. Webster and Hoover (2006) indicated that immersing students in diverse settings allowed the participants to engage in "discussions on diversity and preconceived notions around race and culture among traditional agriculture students and minority students" (p. 98). This experience allowed students to examine stereotypes and myths surrounding specific communities and cultures, thus enhancing their multicultural awareness (Webster & Hoover, 2006). Similarly, Vincent and Torres (2015) found that a teacher's multicultural awareness and abilities were positively influenced by exposure to diverse students. Furthermore, students perceived their teachers to have greater multicultural awareness than the teachers themselves.

In contrast, Vincent et al., (2014) found that there was great concern among regional pre-service teachers regarding delivery and instruction of multicultural education within their educational programs. Talbert and Edwin (2008) conducted a national study determining the extent to which agricultural education programs were training pre-service teachers to work with diverse students. Results from this study were identified as being "less than desirable". Throughout their conclusions, Talbert and Edwin (2008) suggested cultural exposure and preparation transition from knowledge and comprehension and progress toward attitudinal and behavioral change. For as agricultural educators continue to lag in cross-cultural interactions and multicultural competency (Bell, 2000; Woods, 2004), the ideals, beliefs, embedded biases, and ethnocentric tendencies of our teachers will continue to be transmitted to the agriculture student population (Luft, 1996; Sutphin & Newsom-Stewart, 1995; Whent, 2003) – increasing the homogeneity and decreasing the diversity within the profession

In order to strengthen our understanding of others, opportunities for cultural exposure are necessary (Bell, 2000; Brown, 2004; Hains et al., 2013; Mahon, 2006; Webster & Hoover, 2006) for without interactive and stimulating experiences in culturally sensitive situations, multicultural awareness cannot be enhanced (Brown, 2004). However, training pre-service teachers for diverse classrooms needs to be facilitated effectively. Brown (2004) noted, many pre-service teachers enter and leave stand-alone cultural diversity classes unaffected and disturbingly enough, often times having their stereotypic perceptions reinforced in the process. This phenomenon could be the result of the resentment and resistance from students toward multicultural content, facilitation, application, interaction, and integration. To build impactful cultural intelligence in a stand-alone course, examining self-perception and concept when engaging with culture, as well as studying one's own history and interaction with others of diverse backgrounds is necessary (Brown, 2004; Hains et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2014). This idea was the focus of the cultural experiences presented to pre-service teachers in a collegiate agricultural education course at a southern land grant university.

### **Conceptual Framework**

As humans interact with the world, they evaluate events from the standpoint of its significance to their well-being and magnitude of emotions provoked as a result (Hains & Hains, 2020; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). This cognitive evaluation of the phenomenon and its correlating emotion is identified as appraisal. Appraisal theory is founded on the assumption that emotions are, "elicited and

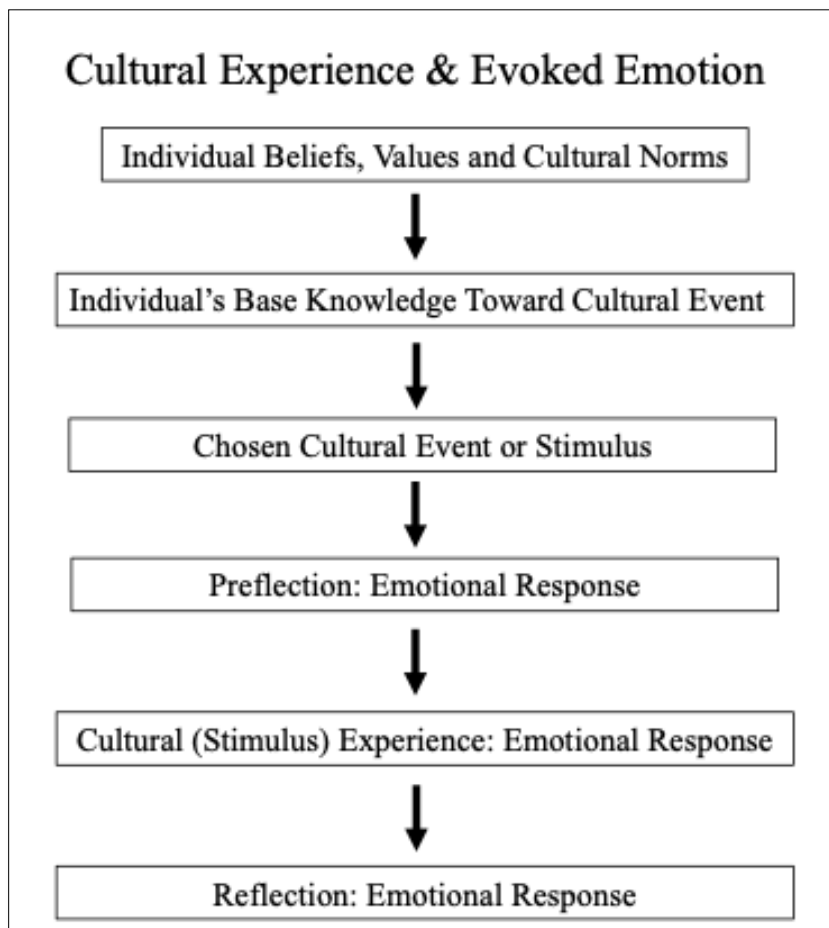
differentiated on the basis of a person's subjective evaluation or appraisal of the personal significance of a situation or event on a number of dimensions or criteria" (Scherer, 1999, p. 637). Criteria utilized to evaluate the emotional significance of experienced events can be categorized into four classes:

1. Intrinsic characteristics of objects, such as novelty or agreeableness.
2. The significance of the event for the individual's needs or goals.
3. The individual's ability to influence or cope with the consequences of the event, including the evaluation of "agency".
4. The compatibility of the event with social or personal standards, norms, or values (Scherer, 1999, p. 638).

This study focused on student appraisal toward a self-identified cultural experience within a pre-service education course. To fully examine the student process, the following conceptual model was developed blending fundamental components of Scherer's (1999) *Appraisal Theory* and Hains and Knobloch's (2013) *Model of Emotional Influence* which outlines the emotional and behavioral processes elicited with novel stimuli (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Model of Cultural Experience and Evoked Emotion*



Within the *Model of Cultural Experience and Evoked Emotion*, stages one and two align with Scherer's (1999) *Appraisal Theory* as described above. However, the stages that follow highlight the the emotional and behavioral responses toward a cultural experience prior to, during and after the event.

The model builds on Hains & Knobloch's (2013) emotional concepts focusing on individual stimuli by examining multiple stimuli through each stage of the experience. For instance, during "pre-flection" students use their cultural beliefs, norms, values and base knowledge to articulate their expectations and emotions toward their chosen cultural experience. They then document their "cultural experience" paying special attention to novel stimuli and evoked emotions. Finally, students "reflect" on their experiences and re-evaluate their initial thoughts, behaviors and expectations.

### Purpose and Objectives

Webster and Hoover (2006) stated "A one-time experience working together is the start to building relationships and preparing preservice teachers for the diversity they may encounter in their classes" (p. 99). Noting such, the overall goal of this research was to introduce pre-service teachers within the agricultural education program to situations that awaken their cultural awareness and encourage them to think about situational approaches to handling culturally diverse classrooms. This goal was established by challenging students to explore culturally diverse people, settings and/or events. The learner-centered assignment provided a mechanism for students to choose interactions with various communities while making it meaningful to them. The intent of our study was to first have students select culturally challenging situations that were unfamiliar to enhance their cultural understanding and intelligence. Second, we holistically measured the types of cultural situations that students put themselves in when given self-choice and their emotional response. Therefore, the objectives of this study were:

1. To examine student selected cultural experiences; and
2. To evaluate student experiential appraisal and emotions evoked during the experiences using the *Model of Cultural Experience and Evoked Emotion*.

### Methodology

Qualitative design was chosen in order to obtain a deeper understanding of student cultural choices and experiences. Students journaled about their development throughout the course; for the purpose of this study, the researchers focused specifically on journal entries pertaining to student pre-flection, or thoughts prior to the experience; the experience itself; and reflection. As part of the learner-centered design students self-selected cultural situations, according to their comfortability, in which they were either an active participant or third-party observer. Following the event, students reflected in terms of their own perceptions toward the occurrence and the impact the situation had upon them as future educators.

### Participants and Educational Setting

The study included participants from a junior level undergraduate Agricultural Education course ( $N = 22$ ). All participants were Caucasian hailing from rural communities with 60% being female. This course focused on assisting pre-service teachers in developing cultural awareness in the field of career and technical education, aligning with Hains et al., (2013) *Model for Cultural Identity Development and Practice*, as it focused on their first stage, *Cultural Exposure and Awareness*. Throughout the course, emphasis was placed on examining student identity as well as cultural development within an educational context. The assignment pertaining to this research challenged students to explore environments and experiences which may be unfamiliar to them both as a group and individually and enhance their cultural knowledge and understanding of future students. It is important to note that students could choose multiple cultural experiences as part of the assignment.

## **Data Collection**

Students maintained journals throughout the pre-service course to record their comprehensive experiences. This reflective practice allowed for tacit insights to come to the fore, while prompting the student to think more systematically about their day to day interactions and professional practice (Patton, 2015). For our study, researchers focused specifically on the chosen cultural events, rationale for the selection, the description of the cultural situations and analysis of experiences, and reflections as to how their experiences influenced them as a future teacher. The reflections were then gathered for data analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed utilizing first and second cycle coding techniques. Holistic coding was utilized for the first cycle. Saldaña (2015) described holistic coding as method of coding which evaluates a set of data and records or grasps emerging, and basic themes based upon the entire selection as a whole. Initial coding of data focused on specific cultural events selected by each student participant ( $N=22$ ).

The initial holistic coding process produced four thematic categories: religious events, race/ethnic events, public service events, and socio-cultural events. Following the initial coding process, student journals were purposefully random sampled within each thematic category (Patton, 2015). In other words, out of the participant population ( $N=22$ ), four specific journal reflections were purposely randomly selected ( $n=4$ ) to represent the four thematic categories identified in initial coding. Selected journals were then coded through second cycle emotion coding. Emotion coding is utilized to explore participant intra- and interpersonal experiences, providing deep insight into the student's experience, thought processes and emotions evoked (Saldaña, 2015). Student emotions were coded using Parrots (2001) classification of emotions.

## **Trustworthiness and Confirmability**

Two researchers, trained in qualitative analysis, independently coded the data with first and second cycle techniques, ultimately comparing results. The resulting themes and categories were analyzed and referenced back to the student participants for accuracy and confirmability as a form of member checking. These two steps enhanced inter-rater reliability as well as allowed for thematic credibility development (Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2015).

## **Limitations**

By design, our inquiry was intended to examine student selected cultural experiences and correlating emotions and reflections. As such, these results cannot be generalized; they are solely the perspectives of participating students during a specific time and place. However, the purpose of the study was not to generalize, but instead to provide depth and beginning insight highlighting practical instructional methods to develop cultural awareness in pre-service educators.

The primary researcher had extensive background in diverse cultural environments both in urban and rural settings. This background prompted the need for the educational intervention with students from less diverse backgrounds who can educate diverse students in their professional roles. The researcher's culturally diverse background influenced the design of the study, however, rather than being perceived as a detriment - it was viewed as a benefit to both the design and correlating analysis.

## Results

For research objective one, we sought to identify the student selected cultural experiences. It is important to note that students could choose multiple experiences as part of the assignment. Thematic results following initial coding are identified in Figure 2. From the analysis, four themes occurred within student selected cultural events: religious events, ethnic events, public service events, and socio-cultural events.

**Figure 2**

*Occurrence of Categorized Events*

Religious Events	Race/Ethnicity Events	Public Service Events	Socio-cultural Events
15	7	11	30

Figure 2 includes the numerical occurrence of each thematic category in the events chosen by the total population of participant students ( $N=22$ ). Each category represents types of self-selected cultural experiences chosen by the students. Definitions and examples of each category are outlined below:

**Religious Events** – encapsulates experiences that are directly linked to religious communities including religious services, religious contacts, and activities influenced by religious perceptions or ideals. Examples from the research population included visiting a Pentecostal church, Catholic Church, Holiness Church, an Islamic prayer service, Jesus prom, visiting the Creation Museum, and shadowing a Jehovah’s Witness.

**Race/Ethnicity Events** – events specifically focusing on racial or ethnic communities and social settings. Specific examples included visiting a Korean food market, a Chinese food market, and observing celebrations associated with the Latinx holiday Dia de los Muertos.

**Public Service Events** – students volunteered themselves and their time to serving a public function in some manner. Examples included volunteering at homeless shelters, coaching teams for the special Olympics, volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House for cancer patients, and working at food distribution centers for underserved communities.

**Socio-cultural Events** – categorized as events that indicated observation of or participation in a social aspect of society. Examples included attending the Rocky Horror Picture Show, visiting a hookah lounge, attending rock concerts, observing a special education course, going to an establishment for erotic dancing or an LGBTQIA bar, or simply picking up make-up for one’s wife.

For research objective two, we sought to evaluate student experiences using the *Model of Cultural Experience and Evoked Emotion*. Random purposefully selected participant reflections ( $n=4$ ) representing each thematic category (see Figure 2) were then taken through second cycle coding. Tables 1 through 4 outline the results of analysis of these participants regarding the fundamental components of appraisal (see Figure 1) and include the specific emotional experience in each component. Table 1 outlines the results of analysis for student one in reflection towards the religious exposure event of attending a Holiness Church service.

Table 1

*Student One Responses toward Religious Cultural Exposure Event*

Conceptual Component	Student One Quotes
Chosen Stimulus	“When I told my boyfriend about this assignment, he suggested we attend a Holiness Church.”
Base Knowledge	“I had never been to another denomination, partly because I have been taught that my church’s form of worship is to be quiet and solemn.” “I have been taught to be quiet; especially as a woman in church, sing only hymnals, and sit as close to the back as possible.”
Pre-reflective Thoughts & Emotional Response	“I was scared to death to experience anything else.” (Fear) “My first thought was screaming and snake handling.” “I knew I would feel out of place because my hair wasn’t touching my butt and I didn’t own a single skirt or dress that went to my ankles.” (Anxiety) “My biggest concern was the speaking in tongues.” (Apprehension)
Stimulus Experience Emotional Response	“I walked in and everyone was so friendly. They didn’t seem to mind that my hair wasn’t quite as long as theirs or my skirt was only past my knees. They were all very welcoming; it made me ashamed that I had passed judgment before I had even met them.” (Surprise, Remorse) “As the song part of the service wrapped up I found myself actually having a good time.” (Joy) “I watched as a woman got up out of her seat and started running around the building! What was going on?” (Surprise) “My first thought was seizure. Then she rolled her eyes back in her head and started talking gibberish. I had never seen anyone speak in tongues; I was fascinated.” (Astonishment)
Pedagogical Reflection and Post Emotional Response	“Never having been to another denomination before this was a good experience for me, one that I don’t intend to try again, but I’m glad I did it.” (Content, Pleasure) “I realize the importance of being able to connect with people and how much easier it is when you have experienced their culture firsthand.” “I will have students in the future that are holiness (members) and I now understand how they believe and worship.” (Optimism)

As can be seen, student one succinctly summarized their individual beliefs, values and norms having only experienced one religious denomination. They continued by articulating the cultural customs associated with their church, most of which were quite subdued. However, the student’s pre-lection included several cultural stereotypes and opinions associated with the Holiness Church, evoking feelings of *fear* and *anxiety*.

Yet, upon attending the event, the student quickly realized they may have had several cultural misconceptions, evoking feelings of *remorse*. In fact, while the student was *surprised* by several member’s actions, they began to *enjoy* an experience they had initially feared. Lastly, upon reflection, student one articulated *contentment* and *pleasure* in completing the experience was *optimistic* believing it to be beneficial to their personal and professional development when relating to future students.

Table 2 outlines the reflection of student two toward their chosen race/ethnic cultural experience. For this event, student two selected the Day of the Dead, a cultural holiday observed by several Latinx communities.



**Table 2***Student Two Responses toward Race/Ethnicity Cultural Exposure Event*

<b>Conceptual Component</b>	<b>Student Two Quotes</b>
Chosen Stimulus	“For my cultural experience I am going to spend the day at a friend’s house during their Day of the Dead.”
Base Knowledge	“During my two years of foreign language in high school I studied Spanish but we didn’t spend a lot of time on the Day of the Dead.” “I didn’t know if they stayed all day at the cemeteries or just have a Mexican party at their house.”
Pre-reflective Thoughts & Emotional Response	“So, going into this I was kind of nervous because I didn’t know what to expect and I am the kind of person that wants to know every little detail before doing something.” (Nervous) “Before I went over to my buddy’s house, I didn’t know what to expect.” (Apprehension)
Stimulus Experience Emotional Response	“When I was there, they had made a shrine for my friend’s aunt who had recently died. They had prepared some of her favorite food and had pictures of her up. Later that evening we went to her grave site which they had decorated the night before.” “It was a little weird at times, but I managed to get through it.” (Uneasiness, Relief, Triumph)
Pedagogical Reflection and Post Emotional Response	“I think this was a good experience for me on my way to becoming a teacher.” (Satisfaction) “Through this experience I can help make my classroom more diverse by being able to better relate to students like my friend who believe differently. This would make it where students wouldn’t be afraid of taking a course like agriculture just because they believe they will get picked on or made fun of.” (Enthusiasm, Optimism)

Student two chose a cultural experience that would help them better understand their friend’s culture. Going into the experience, the student professed little knowledge regarding Dia de Los Muertos, relying solely on his high school Spanish class for insight. As a result, the student discussed unknown presumptions based on their limited knowledge of the holiday. While pre-reflecting, student two expressed feelings of nervousness and apprehension citing individual personality traits as a cause for their emotions i.e. frustration with experiential ambiguity and cultural unknowns.

During the experience student two articulated feelings of *unease* while participating in cultural practices that were unique or different than their own, however, also expressed *relief* and *triumph* when they “worked through” the process and experience. Ultimately, student two was *satisfied* with their chosen experience and believed it helped them better understand diverse students citing their experience as being able to assist them in creating a more inclusive classroom than prior to the experience.

Table 3 outlines the cultural experience of student three in response to self-selected public service event. The experience included volunteering with the Special Olympics state bowling tournament.

**Table 3***Student Three Responses toward Public Service Cultural Exposure Event*

<b>Conceptual Component</b>	<b>Student Three Quotes</b>
Chosen Stimulus	"I chose to volunteer at the [state] Special Olympics State Bowling tournament."
Base Knowledge	"I do not have any experience dealing with those that have disabilities." "I felt that this event would give me excellent perspective on the thought process and actions of those that are disabled."
Pre-reflective Thoughts & Emotional Response	"When I decided to volunteer and participate in this event, I definitely had some reservations." (Apprehension) "Going into this event my initial thoughts and impressions were that these individuals would need all kinds of help bowling and would not be able to successfully bowl and compete." (Pity)
Stimulus Experience Emotional Response	"Within five minutes of walking into the bowling alley and registering as a volunteer all of my preconceived notions were shattered." (Surprise) "I was to make sure they bowled in the right order and to cheer them on. At first, I was extremely hesitant! I would have rather just been asked to clean something up or sell snacks." (Apprehensive, Dread) "The joy that I saw in their eyes when I placed that medal around their neck was truly amazing." (Joy)
Pedagogical Reflection and Post Emotional Response	"This cultural experience is one that truly touched me and put me out of my comfort zone. For the first time I was dealing with disabled students. This was excellent experience for the classroom." (Fondness, Enthusiasm, Contentment) "Doing this today honestly has made me want to reach out to disabled students in the school I will teach. Even to go as far to get them out of their regular classrooms and let them participate in agriculture activities." (Optimism, Eagerness) "It was an amazing feeling to be brought into their comfort zone and to become a friend of theirs." (Amazement)

Student three chose to assist a Special Olympics bowling tournament admitting having no experience among individuals with special needs. When pre-reflecting about the event, student two indicated feelings of *apprehension*. They also revealed preconceived notions that the Olympians would have difficulty with the sport and competition, emoting feelings of *pity*.

However, upon initiating the experience the student's preconceptions were challenged even though their first instinct was to flee due to their uncomfortability. Throughout the experience student three found that they thoroughly *enjoyed* working with the Olympians, so much so that they had a strong emotional connection to the participants. After the experience, student three found new motivation to engage with students with special needs and be more inclusive in their future agricultural classroom.

Table 4 outlines the responses of student four toward a socio-cultural experience. The specific event selected was attending the National FFA Convention.

**Table 4***Student Four Responses toward Socio-cultural Culture Exposure Event*

<b>Conceptual Component</b>	<b>Student Four Quotes</b>
Chosen Stimulus	“One-way AES helped me learn about agriculture education, specifically FFA, was by sponsoring a trip to the National FFA Convention.”
Base Knowledge	“Living in a small suburb of (an urban city), I did not know much at all about agriculture education, let alone Future Farmers of America. I knew some about agriculture as my father is an agronomist but not a lot.”  “I analyzed my passions and interests and came upon the agriculture education major. I love agriculture and have a passion for education and kids, so this major just made sense.”  “I did not know what went on at the National FFA Convention.”
Pre-reflective Thoughts & Emotional Response	“I truly did not know what to expect of the convention but am excited.” (Enthusiasm)
Stimulus Experience Emotional Response	“My mind was truly blown away by all that takes place at this convention and that it is all related to agriculture! I was shocked at how many students are involved with FFA and how organized this organization is.” (Amazement) “This saddens me now as I also know that many if not all current (name) high school students know nothing about the opportunities FFA provides them.” (Sadness, Disappointment) “Another thing at convention that was surprising but exciting to me was the career show and teacher world. The curriculum available to agriculture teachers is plentiful and this was nice to see and learn as a future educator.” (Surprise/Happiness)
Pedagogical Reflection and Post Emotional Response	“I was like a sore thumb sticking out in the agriculture education major by not owning boots or knowing much about FFA or agriculture.” (Alienation) “I have become more comfortable and knowledgeable about FFA, agriculture, and the culture related to it.” (Relief) “I can relate to future students who have agriculture backgrounds better now because of my FFA convention experience and my eagerness to learn about this type of living and culture.” (Pride, Eagerness, Optimism)

Student four was a pre-service student in Agricultural Education and had not yet been the National FFA Convention and knew very little about the field of Agriculture, despite having a father who was an agronomist. However, when choosing their experience, they were quite *enthusiastic*.

Upon attending the National FFA Convention, the student was *amazed* by the sheer number of students and agricultural representation. Yet student five expressed feelings of *sadness* and *disappointment* when realizing how many students from their prior high school had limited knowledge and exposure to the organization. Having limited knowledge about the organization and agriculture at large, student five expressed *surprise* and *happiness* when engaging with all the curriculum and resources offered to teachers during the convention.

Upon reflection, student five articulated feelings of *alienation* as she had not had the same cultural experiences as her peers had within her major. However, expressed being *relieved* that they

had now had similar cultural experiences upon attending the National FFA Convention. In fact, they articulated feelings of *pride* and continued *eagerness* to explore the major further, ultimately having deeper connections with their future students.

### Summary

This learner-centered cultural experience challenged students to step outside their comfort zone, think critically while self-reflecting and document their emotions. Prior to carrying out the assignment, students articulated limited knowledge of the diverse cultural experiences. When selecting their experiences many students conveyed pre-conceived notions and stereotypes associated with the unknown cultures and experiences.

Analysis of preliminary emotional responses for each of the four students revealed that all experienced a derivative of primal emotion “fear” prior to engaging in the cultural experience including anxiety, apprehension and nervousness. However, students expressed a plethora of emotions during the experience, including those associated with surprise, amazement, joy, sadness, and anxiety.

The last conceptual component of the *Model of Cultural Experience and Evoked Emotion* included a pedagogical reflection for the students to consider. This reflection allowed the students to consider implications of the cultural experience to teaching agriculture in the classroom in the future. All noted that the experience positively influenced their development and operationalization of future pedagogy toward culturally diverse students.

### Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

As mentioned, having multicultural intelligence in ever diversifying classrooms is imperative for future teachers to be effective within a classroom setting (Conner & Roberts, 2013). But how can this be integrated into current pre-service teacher training? By building cultural intelligence into current agricultural education courses; and by encouraging students to study their own history and interaction with diverse audiences, in addition to examining their self-perception and engagement related to culture (Hains et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2014). Within one specific agricultural education undergraduate course, cultural experiences were utilized as an experiential way to introduce students to cultural diversity.

The proposed conceptual model revealed how individuals utilize prior knowledge, experience and emotions to analyze information, either positively or negatively. This cognitive/emotional appraisal showcases how students either integrate new information or reject it depending on their initial assessment and comfortability. Within the context of culture, the likelihood that individuals will positively react to culturally challenging situations depends on their prior experiences (Brown, 2004). This concept is important for multicultural experiences within Agricultural Education as it has direct implications for student development. Towards the charge presented by Connor and Roberts (2013), as a profession, we should examine best practices for developing cultural intelligence and awareness for pre-service teachers.

Within our study, students were encouraged to choose cultural experiences that challenged them, without delegation from the instructor, allowing for student autonomy. As such, student participants chose experiences where they had limited knowledge. While this seemed to initially cause anxiety and apprehension, post reflections showed that the cultural experience yielded positive results, both emotionally and pedagogically. One explanation could be the learner-centered format. The instructor generated an educational environment that was welcoming of multicultural contexts and situations. By the instructor facilitating student choice, students did not exhibit resentment or resistance

toward the content, application, interaction, or integration, as indicated by Brown (2004) could be a limitation in courses focusing on cultural diversity.

One of the biggest benefits for learner-centered teaching during this process, is it allows the instructor to meet each student where they are culturally and cognitively. Within this context, the instructor's role shifts from directing the experience to scaffolding a process that is professionally and personally meaningful (Hains & Smith, 2012). In facilitating similar experiences, students should be encouraged to select a cultural experience that will push them out of their comfort zone yet not impose upon the self-selection process, creating enhanced anxiety. Additionally, the learner-centered format allows students to take micro and macro steps toward their cultural development and develop at their own pace rather than having it directed by instructors who may be unaware of student backgrounds and experiences. Finally, it is recommended that instructors themselves examine their own cultural history, perceptions and biases prior to teaching a course implementing cultural experiences. This will allow the instructor to be metacognitive about their own experiences while designing and implementing the educational experiences for their students.

In addition to learner-centered facilitation, it is important for instructors to guide students through a reflective process. Similar to what was established by Hains, Tubbs and Vincent (2013), our research indicated that it was beneficial for students to understand themselves (pre-reflection) prior to choosing or experiencing cultural or social experiences they were unfamiliar with. Thus, prior to the cultural experience it was beneficial for the students to spend time identifying their own history, perceptions, and biases. Upon completion of the experience students were asked to immediately reflect on their experiences. This allowed for instantaneous reflection, capturing the raw emotion and feelings associated with their experience(s). Finally, during the end of the semester, students were asked to reflect on their experiences in relation to their future profession. This allowed the initial emotions to subside and assisted students in thinking about their cultural development and impact of the experience on their future students.

Student participants also discussed positive professional implications of the experience as future agriculture educators. As Luft (1996) noted, multicultural awareness is essential in agricultural education in order for teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Study participants articulated an eagerness to meet the needs of future students as a result of their experience, "Doing this today honestly has made me want to reach out to disabled students in the school I will teach. Even to go as far to get them out of their regular classrooms and let them participate in agriculture activities" (Student 3). Student two expressed being more open to diverse students as a result of their experience by stating:

Through this experience I can help make my classroom more diverse by being able to better relate to students like my friend who believe differently. This would make it where students wouldn't be afraid of taking a course like agriculture just because they believe they will get picked on or made fun of.

Even after just one cultural experience, students indicated they not only gained cultural knowledge, but also wanted to use it in direct classroom application. Undoubtedly, more training will be necessary for students to reach an adequate level of multicultural knowledge. Yet, the first step in reaching this goal is to have a willingness to do explore diverse cultures. In order to accomplish this, we must create educational environment that encourage our students to do so.

To be a profession of culturally aware educators, cultural education should happen throughout the pre-service curriculum. However, its application must be effective in order to allow for diversity inclusion within Agricultural Education. A cultural experience may open up pre-service teacher to having diversity within their classroom, but this does not mean that applicable knowledge toward a diverse population exists. As aforementioned, teachers with the best of intentions can counteract the

intended results of multicultural teaching (McFadden et al., 1997). Further training must take place following initial exposure. Here it is recommended that this course or assignment be utilized only as an initial step in working towards training pre-service agricultural education students in multicultural competency. Further training for students should include additional cultural experiences of observation and then move into immersion experiences for students where they use role play and intense in-depth research toward a specific culture before immolating it in a public arena. Additionally, our research revealed that student personalities could play a key role in their cultural development, as such, further research examining student personalities and motivation for cultural engagement could add to our best practices.

As Agricultural Education continues to evolve within the contexts of diversity and inclusion, multicultural competency and intelligence, and learner-centered instruction, researchers must look to the past and examine the origin of these initiatives. Schmitt and Bender noted in their 1971 article that pre-service agriculture teachers must get experience working with diverse populations. Fifty years later the same discussion is taking place and diversity and inclusion is still a concern within the industry, so much so that it is integral to the American Association for Agricultural Education National Research Agenda (Roberts et al., 2016). Conceivably, through pre-service cultural experiences, Agricultural Education instructors can start to incorporate the elements of diversity and student-oriented instruction recommended to the profession almost half a decade ago.

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