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Changes in Undergraduate Students Orientation toward Cultural Differences

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Abstract

1. Research Aims

This study examined changes in the intercultural competency of undergraduate students. The research question was: What changes occur in undergraduate students' cultural competency after participating in an intentional, multicultural relations experience? Using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), researchers measured students' intercultural competency before and after the course. According to the baseline assessments, most of the undergraduates began the semesters in cultural orientations of Denial, Polarization, and Minimization. Statistical analysis showed no significant difference between the means when comparing the Developmental Orientation of the pre-instruction group and the post-instruction group for students in the course during Fall 2010 and Spring 2011. However, students in the course during Fall 2011 (with curriculum revisions) had statistically significant higher post-instruction mean Developmental Orientation scores than pre-instruction mean scores.

2. Theoretical Framework

Bennett, M. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10, 179 – 195.

3. Paradigm and Methods

The Intercultural Development Inventory was the main tool used to measure the goal of the study (Hammer and Bennett, 1998 and 2001). This measured cultural competency and cultural disengagement.

4. Ethical Considerations

Students began the semesters with low levels of Cultural Disengagement, meaning that they felt some lack of involvement in core aspects of being members of a cultural community.

5. Main Findings

The instructional revisions appear to have helped students improve their Developmental Orientation scores.

6. Implications for Practice and/or Policy

Student participation in intentional and intensive cultural relationships, with reflection, has an impact on student cultural competency.

Keyword1: cultural competency

Keyword2: intercultural development

Keyword3: multicultural awareness
