

# Cultivating Cultural Competence in Teacher Candidates

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## Background

“The responsibility rests with future and current educators to infuse their planning and instruction with culturally responsive teaching strategies that will meet the needs of all students in their classroom while embracing the cultural differences of the students” (Gollnick & Chinn, n.d.). Teacher preparation programs are being held to national standards which ensure future educators have been cultivated to be culturally competent.

Existing literature mainly describes the importance and urgency to prepare future teachers for the changing demographics with classrooms across the United States. “1 in every 3 students enrolled in elementary and secondary school is of racial or ethnic minority, and 1 in every 7 children between ages 5 and 17 speak a language other than English at home” (Villegas & Lucas, 2012). Despite these statistics, there is not significant literature on how Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies are being implemented or measured in teacher preparation programs.

## Objective

To evaluate if purposeful cultural instruction impacts candidate progression along the cultural proficient continuum from the beginning of their first semester in professional education to the end of that semester.

## Hypothesis:

Intentional cultural competence instruction can impact the growth of teacher candidates towards cultural competency.

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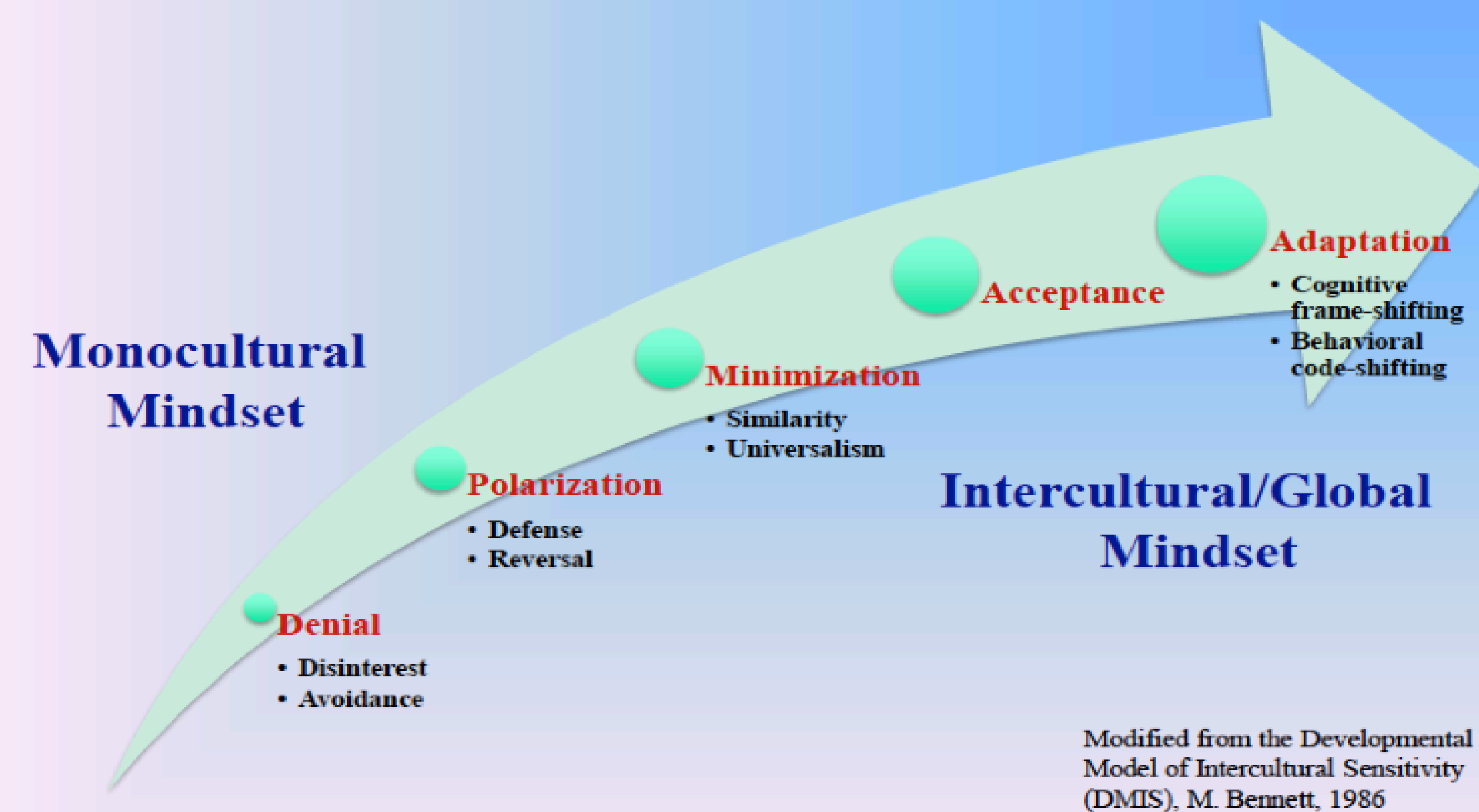
The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate teacher candidates’ cultural proficient growth during their first semester in professional education courses. Our central question is, what progression can be made along the Intercultural Development Continuum for teacher candidates from the beginning of their first semester in professional education, to the end of that semester, when given culturally responsive instruction and experiences. Quantitative data was collected from twenty-eight teacher candidates in a Midwest undergraduate teacher education program through participation in the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) during the Fall 2013 semester.

The IDI, according to Hammer (2011), “measures how a person or group thinks and feels about cultural difference stemming from any aspect of diversity, human identity, and cultural difference”. The validity and reliability results indicate a strong content and construct validity. The IDI places teacher candidates along the Intercultural Development Continuum, ranging from denial to adaptation. A faculty member embedded five identified variables into a literacy course and seminars to cultivate culturally proficient growth for teacher candidates, with the intention that teacher candidates can begin the journey towards an intercultural mindset. The following are the five identified variables:

- Pre-instruction IDI participation
- IDI focus group & personal goal setting
- Weekly culturally responsive videos with discussion and reflection
- AVID’s “Culturally Relevant Teaching” workshop
- Post-instruction IDI participation

## Methods

### Intercultural Development Continuum



## Results

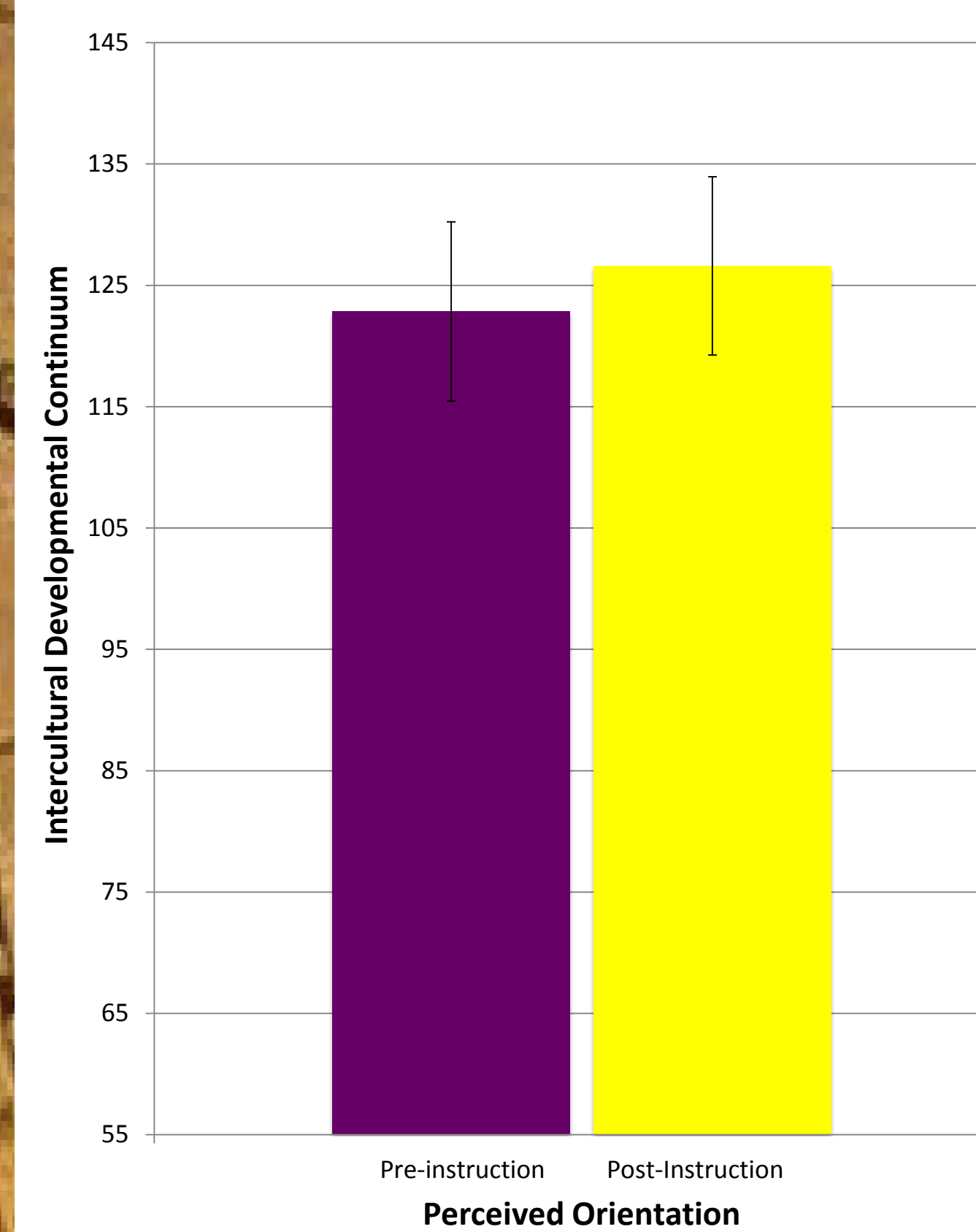
Paired samples t-tests were used to compare students’ Perceived Orientation and Developmental Orientation. Pre-instruction scores to post-instruction scores. The hypothesis of equal means is rejected if the *p*-value is less than 0.045.

According to the data, mean post-instruction scores were significantly larger than pre-instruction scores for **Perceived Orientation**. Mean scores are in red font. Significant *p*-values are highlighted in green. It is natural for a person’s Perceived Orientation to be higher than their Developmental Orientation, as is seen in our results.

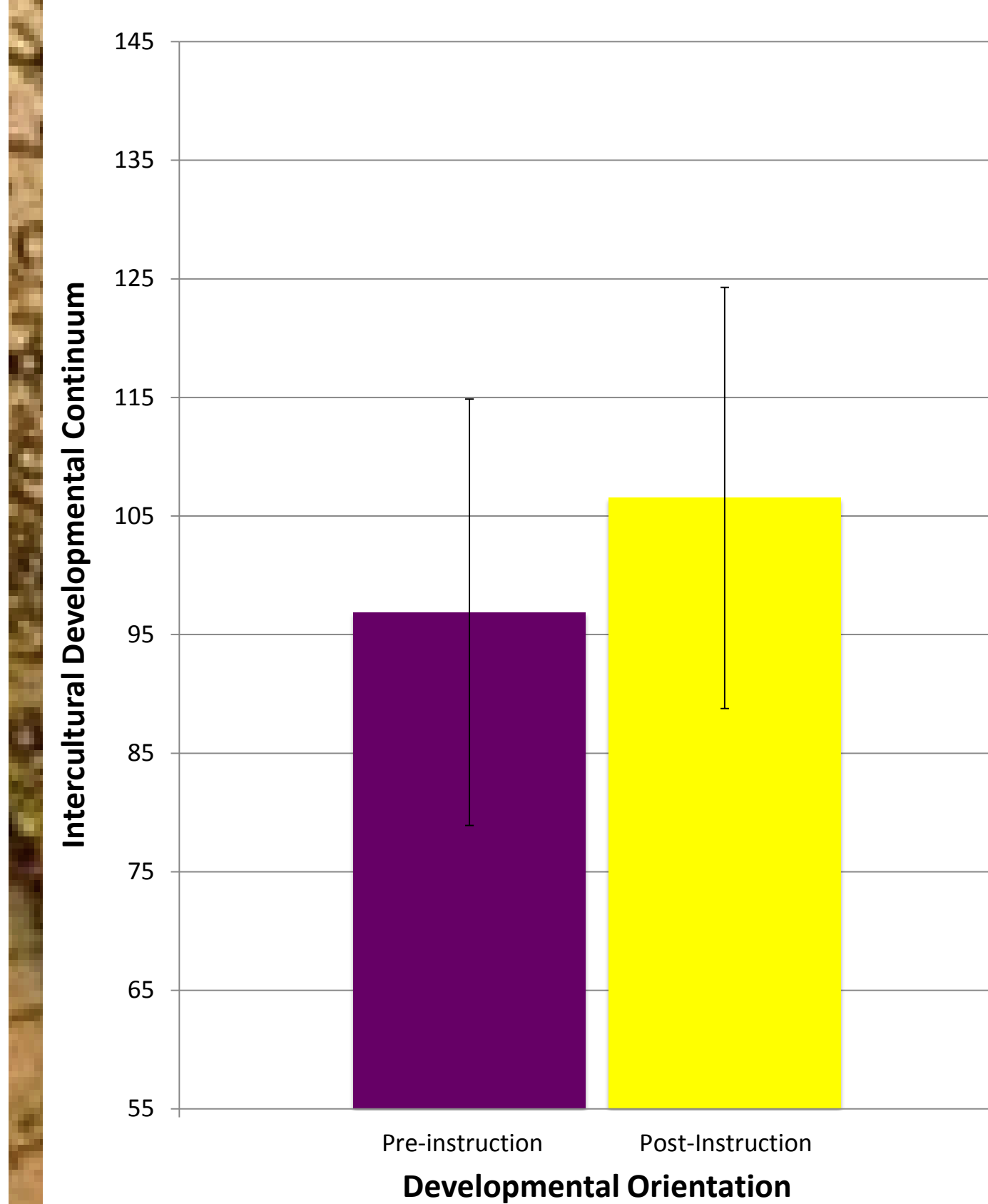
According to the data, mean post-instruction scores were significantly larger than mean pre-instruction scores for **Developmental Orientation**. Mean scores are in red font. Significant *p*-values are highlighted in green.

Note: A significance threshold of 0.045 (as opposed to the standard .05) was used to account for familywise error, which occurs as the result of running multiple t-tests.

Perceived Orientation in Teacher Candidates



Developmental Orientation in Teacher Candidates



Perceived Orientation Pre vs. Perceived Orientation Post

		Paired Samples Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair					Lower	Upper			
1	PO_Pre - PO_Post	3.757871	5.323271	1.109979	-6.059826	-1.455916	3.386	22	.003

Developmental Orientation Pre vs. Developmental Orientation Post

		Paired Samples Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair					Lower	Upper			
1	DO_pre - DO_post	9.649	9.684	2.065	-13.943	-5.356	4.673	21	.000

## Conclusion

A significant difference in the Developmental Orientation pre-instruction and post-instruction indicates that by embedding culturally proficient teaching practices in the teacher preparation program, teacher candidates can make significant advancement on the cultural proficient continuum in one semester.

Through the instructional methods, teacher candidates were challenged to reflect on their own cultures and how their values and beliefs influence their teaching practices which impacted their cultural competence growth.

This study creates a foundation for future research on culturally responsive teaching, by focusing on how to cultivate culturally responsive teachers through a teacher preparation program.

## Acknowledgements

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