Cultural Self-Identification Among Extension Educators' and Cultural Competence in Cooperative Extension

Ruddy Y. Benavides
University of Nebraska - Lincoln, ruddyyanez@gmail.com

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CULTURAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION AMONG EXTENSION EDUCATORS’ AND
CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

by

Ruddy Yanez Benavides

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CULTURAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION AMONG EXTENSION EDUCATORS’
AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Ruddy Y. Benavides, M.S.
University of Nebraska, 2017

Advisor: Julia Torquati

As immigration and globalization are increasing, the number of people in our country who speak more than one language is also increasing (Center for Public Education, 2012). These trends are creating needs for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and families in schools, specifically, the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally competent teachers. In addition to formal educational contexts, non-formal educational contexts such as Cooperative Extension need to adapt to cultural changes as well. The purpose of this study was to explore the personal beliefs and professional experiences of present Extension Educators (EEs), and the techniques they practice in outreach to CLD families and youth. Few studies have examined beliefs and practices related to cultural competence in Cooperative Extension professionals. A purposive sample of Kansas EEs ($n=10$) participated. Participants were 60% female (40% male) and represented counties from all over Kansas and all areas of Extension Education. Four major themes emerged across the interviews regarding the meaning of culture, the perceived cultural similarities and differences in the clients served by the participants, and specific practices that EEs utilize in their work with culturally diverse families and youth: (1) definitions of culture, (2) importance of families, (3) newcomers and norms, and (4) the concept of time. EEs also identified three areas that need to be met by Cooperative Extension in order to successfully engage CLD families and youth in
their counties: (1) the challenges for the EE when serving CLD clients; (2) the needs of the EEs to better serve their CLD clients; and the resources required to overcome these challenges and meet the needs of CLD clients.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Problem/Need

The United States is becoming more diverse. As immigration and globalization are increasing, the number of people in our country who speak more than one language is also increasing (Center for Public Education, 2012). More cultures are represented in our workplaces, our schools, our churches, and our communities. These trends are creating needs for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and families in schools particular. For instance, schools have a greater need for bilingual teachers and staff, as well as English Language Learning programming for students who do not speak English natively (Center for Public Education, 2012). These changes also require teachers to be able to engage in culturally responsive pedagogy, and to be prepared to promote a safe learning environment for all of their students (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). In culturally diverse classrooms, students need to be able to feel included, not alienated. Students’ home and school lives intersect, where behaviors, language, and other cultural practices may differ greatly, so they tend to have differing ways of learning (Richards et al., 2007). As a result, teachers are posed with the challenge to connect their students’ culture and home life with classroom learning (Richards et al., 2007).

Communities are changing where the historic majority population of non-Hispanic white people is becoming the minority (Center for Public Education, 2012). According to the Center for Public Education, the Hispanic population in the U.S. grew by 43% from 2000-2010 (2012). There is a growing need for professionals who have strong cultural competence, which is “the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities” (Intercultural
Development Inventory, 2016). To address the need for successful bilingual programs for culturally and linguistically diverse children, schools are incorporating trained faculty members who develop appropriate curriculum and instruction that aligns with the students’ needs (Center for Public Education, 2012).

**Context of Formal Education**

Schools across the United States are faced with the challenge of addressing diversity in classrooms. Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is a way for teachers to support their students’ successful and effective learning (Richards et al., 2007). CRP offers a learning environment where students can feel supported, where their culture is identified as a strength, and individual strengths are noted and nurtured (Richards et al., 2007).

Having culturally responsive pedagogy alone in the classroom is not enough to address the individual needs of culturally diverse students. Teachers themselves need to have a growth mindset, the belief that intelligence and character can fluctuate over the course of their lives based on intent and their experiences (Dweck, 2012). This allows them to be self-aware of their values in the classroom (Pang, 2004; Richards et al., 2007). It is crucial for teachers to gain cultural competence; they are responsible for forming relationships not only with their students, but their families as well (Herrera, 2016). Teachers have to address any negative feelings and beliefs they have towards any culturally diverse group in order to create a safe environment where students and their families can feel accepted (Richards et al., 2007). Becoming a culturally responsive teacher requires continuous learning that leads to an understanding of one’s own biases and experiences in order to best help students (Richards et al., 2007).
Culturally responsive education provides opportunities for all children of different ethnicities, gender identities, ability statuses, and cultural backgrounds to learn in ways that are relevant to them individually (Kozleski, 2010). This form of education “helps to bridge different ways of knowing and engages students from non-dominant cultures in demonstrating their proficiencies in language usage, grammar, mathematical knowledge and other tools they use to navigate their everyday lives” (Kozleski, 2010, p. 3). Teachers engaging their students in culturally responsive education need to recognize and understand their students’ backgrounds, family history and distinct cultural group identity as well as the challenges they may face as part of this group in society (Kozleski, 2010).

**Cooperative Extension**

In addition to formal educational contexts, non-formal educational contexts such as Cooperative Extension need to adapt to cultural changes as well. Cooperative Extension was created through land-grant colleges and universities across the country. The mission of Cooperative Extension is to deliver information acquired through the universities’ research efforts to families, businesses and consumers through non-formal education (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2017). Cooperative Extension programs address the needs of their communities, in any field related to agriculture, business, youth development, and health and wellness (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2017).

Cooperative Extension professionals are mindful of the ever-changing demographics in their states and individual counties. Of course, the demographics do not just refer to the growing Latino or other ethnic populations; they also encompass other diverse groups such as people of different ability statuses and people in the LGBTQ
community (Schauber & Castania, 2001). Addressing this wide range of diversity through Cooperative Extension requires highly trained professionals who can develop culturally responsive resources and programs. Extension professionals across the country are asking themselves how they can work more effectively with the diverse populations in a context of high need and shrinking resources (Shauber & Castania, 2001).

One of the main challenges for Cooperative Extension services in addressing identified needs for diversity programming and culturally competent professionals is where to find the individuals who will diversify their staff (Schauber & Castania, 2001). According to LaVergne (2013), having a culturally competent group of educators is important to encourage acceptance of the inclusion of all people in Cooperative Extension programs.

One particular program in Cooperative Extension is 4-H Youth Development. The mission of this program is to “empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults” (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2017). Through a series of principles laid out by the 4 “H’s” (Heart, Head, Health, and Hands), this youth development program has reached about 6 million youth in the United States (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2017). 4-H Youth Development programs serve children from the age of 5 to 19 years through year-long clubs, after-school programs, summer camps, and special interest groups (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2017).

Our country’s changing demographics in communities and schools have catalyzed a need and opportunity to develop innovative and effective ways to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, as well as to conduct outreach to families. The purpose of
this study is to explore the personal beliefs and professional experiences of present
Extension Educators, and the techniques they practice in outreach to CLD families and
youth. This study will explore the ways in which extension educators have been trained
or prepared in order to best work with diverse groups in their communities. Further, by
exploring the perceptions and beliefs of Extension Educators in relation to different
cultures and their culturally diverse families, this study can provide Extension
administrators and educators with valuable knowledge to inform their practice with CLD
families in their counties. The orientations that Extension Educators have in their
perceptions are critical to this research, as these will influence their abilities to engage in
cultural responsiveness.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Several approaches to culturally responsive education have been developed in formal education contexts, including multicultural education (Banks, 1993), Biography-Driven Instruction (Herrera, 2016), and culturally responsive teaching (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). There are also methods for assessing cultural competence like the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, 2012). Herein lies the problem: although there is a similar need to support cultural competence among Cooperative Extension professionals, a similar research base of conceptualization and measurement of cultural responsiveness has not been widely examined in this non-formal educational context. Because theory and research on cultural competence primarily originated from formal educational contexts, the current study will draw upon this knowledge base in order to consider how existing theory and research on cultural competence within formal educational contexts may be applicable to the non-formal educational context of Cooperative Extension. Approaches to culturally responsive education in formal educational contexts are summarized below, followed by current efforts to promote cultural competence among Cooperative Extension professionals. Next, some of the Cooperative Extension outreach efforts to culturally diverse audiences are described. Finally, the research questions for the current study are presented.

Culturally Responsive Education in Formal Educational Contexts

First, multicultural education includes any type of education, teaching, or pedagogy that utilizes the perceptions and different standpoints of other cultures (Banks, 1993; Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Any teacher who incorporates a lesson based on the particular diversity that his or her students reflect in the classroom is practicing
multicultural education (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Culture will encompass diversity in every form, not just ethnicity; for example, culture includes religion, socioeconomic class, gender identity, ability status, sexual orientation, among others. Multicultural education is based on social justice and the notion that all students have the right to a fair path to education, regardless of their cultural background (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

Secondly, Biography-Driven Instruction or BDI, is the mindset that every child has strengths, skills, and their own story that contributes to the classroom as a whole (Herrera, 2016). BDI maintains a student-centered model; it encompasses each individual student’s biography, which includes their sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic backgrounds into their instruction (Herrera, Holmes, & Kavimandan, 2012). Understanding the holistic background of a student allows for educators to be aware of the students’ family situation and assess what the student already knows and what they can contribute to the classroom (Herrera, 2016). By keeping the learners’ individual biographies in mind, educators are ensuring that each student sees themselves in their own learning development (Herrera et al., 2012). In turn, educators become culturally responsive in understanding and assessing CLD students’ needs. Educators help contribute to a safe environment where students can continue to share their personal stories and the dynamics that make them so individually unique (Herrera, 2016; Herrera et al., 2012).

Finally, culturally responsive teaching or CRT, a term established by educational researcher Geneva Gay (2010), proposes that teachers need to have a foundation and certain skills to understand diversity in their own classrooms. CRT explores teachers’
preparation prior to stepping into a classroom as a basis to become culturally competent and use their students’ cultural differences as an asset to learning (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). CRT suggests that teachers learn to self-reflect and understand the environment in which they are teaching, and challenging themselves to learn how the diversity in their classroom can help them develop a “cultural critical consciousness” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

While some preservice teachers may be capable of examining their personal cultural beliefs and how these affect their teaching style and instructional practices, they may still find it difficult to adapt and grow with ever-changing information (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). In other words, pre-conceived notions and personal opinions about particular racial and cultural groups can be challenging to set aside; this is why it is crucial for preservice teachers to gain experience working in diverse classrooms (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). For pre-service teachers to truly have a holistic experience and learn to effectively teach CLD students, their training should allow them to engage in multicultural educational practices and have a safe space to reflect on their thoughts, beliefs, and practices in order to develop a growth mindset (Dweck, 2012). This mindset allows them to continuously learn about diversity, to gain new knowledge and be aware of their personal beliefs, in order to become a sound culturally responsive teacher.

In Acar and Torquati (under review), pre-service teachers teaching in a culturally diverse preschool were interviewed to explore their perceptions of children’s cultural behavior. Pre-service teachers’ experiences in multicultural education were used to interpret how they view cultural behavior in the classroom. Participants had general,
superficial concepts about culture, but they also acknowledged how a child’s native culture influences behaviors in the classroom.

**Efforts to Promote Cultural Competence in Cooperative Extension**

Extension Educators, or EEs, have to be more than just aware of cultural differences to be culturally competent. Dr. Mitchell Hammer developed a tool that measures cultural competence called the Intercultural Development Inventory or IDI (2012). This inventory is a questionnaire given to any professional in any field who would like to understand where they lie on the intercultural development continuum. Having intercultural competence allows EEs the ability to “mold” and adapt their cultural perspectives in a variety of cultural settings (IDI, 2016). This continuum begins with Denial, a monoculture mindset that refers to a low ability to comprehend and properly respond to cultural differences (Hammer, 2012) (Figure 1). This continuum moves up into Polarization, Minimization, Acceptance, and finally Adaptation, the highest level on the cultural competence continuum, where the individual engages people of other cultures in significant ways, wants to build a connection, and adapts to a better understanding of the other person’s culture (Hammer, 2012). To reach the Adaptation level, Hammer suggests continuing “to build on one’s knowledge of cultural differences and to further develop skills for adapting to these differences” (2012, p. 124).
The ultimate goal of the IDI is for participants to reach an intercultural mindset, eventually reaching the stage of Adaptation. After an IDI is administered, a report is generated to indicate the individual’s personal results (IDI, 2016). The IDI will then develop a personalized plan with suggested steps that an individual can take to progress in their cultural competence and eventually reach their desired stage on the IDI continuum (IDI, 2016).

Professional Development in Cooperative Extension Related to Cultural Competence

Several states are working to promote cultural competence in Cooperative Extension. Kansas State Research and Extension (KSRE) has created training using the Intercultural Development Inventory in an effort to help Extension Educators become more aware of their own cultural beliefs and how these affect the clients they work with in their communities. The Extension Educators are able to indicate prior to taking the IDI...
what their desired level of cultural competence is on the continuum. After the IDI, they reflect on their results and have a follow-up conversation with the IDI administrator or consultant. This allows them the opportunity to talk through the steps they need to take to further develop their cultural awareness and work their way up on the intercultural development continuum.

Many Extension offices are implementing the Intercultural Development Inventory with their Extension Educators in an effort to increase their cultural awareness, and help them reflect on their own personal cultural identity and how this affects how they interact with their clients. Nebraska and Kansas, for example, each have a trained IDI administrator or consultant who oversees this inventory for Extension Educators in their state.

KSRE has also developed “new agent” diversity trainings, or workshops, that utilize case vignettes or real life situations in Extension that require cultural competence to navigate. One of these workshops is called Navigating Difference Training (Kansas State University, 2016). A group of Extension Educators will work through the case vignettes together, determine the appropriate response they would have towards the client, and develop a plan of action that best reflects cultural responsiveness. Some of the case vignettes used in these trainings include: awareness of cultural differences in order to adapt an Extension program to the Hispanic families in the county; understanding the needs of a transgender child at 4-H youth camp; and the importance of resources and cultural sensitivity when communicating with parents of a child who is hard-of-hearing.

What is Cooperative Extension doing to reach culturally diverse audiences?
In addition to preparing Cooperative Extension professionals to work with culturally diverse clients, it is also critical to reach out to culturally diverse audiences. Cooperative Extension programs across the United States are already building the foundation for and implementing activities that address the need for culturally responsive programming. Oregon State Extension Service has been one of the only states to successfully implement a long-term outreach model for Latino youth. The Oregon 4-H Latino Outreach Model started in 1997 and was developed by the 4-H Youth Development Program through Oregon State University Extension (OSU Extension Service, 2009). The program has received continuous funding since 1997 and has positively engaged Latino families in 18 of 36 counties in the state. The model works to simplify access to community programming and resources to families, and also trains Extension Educators to become culturally responsive and skilled in delivering these programs (OSU Extension Service, 2009). The components of this model include scholarships for 4-H students interested in going to college, 4-H educational soccer tournaments, a leadership institute that provides leadership skills to high school and college students, and summer international camps that provide holistic opportunities for 4-H students to learn about professional careers, gain academic and leadership skills, and engage in healthy physical activity.

Kansas State Research & Extension (KSRE) developed a pilot program that encouraged Hispanic youth and families to participate in Extension activities, particularly in 4-H youth development clubs. The southwest area of Kansas began to see an influx of diverse families in the years leading up to the program, and Extension agents saw a need for these newly-arrived families to access community resources and Extension services.
Many adults were interested in learning the English language and taking classes, and others wanted to complete their GEDs. In addition, parents within these new families were interested in activities for their children.

The KSRE pilot program set out to establish bilingual 4-H clubs in three southwest Kansas counties. These bilingual clubs held summer classes and activities following some of the traditional 4-H activities, but included programming that was culturally relevant to the children and their families. After successfully implementing three bilingual 4-H clubs, KSRE developed a statewide Extension position for a New Youth and Adult Audiences Specialist. This specialist developed research-based culturally responsive programming that was implemented across the state. Some of the work that followed the bilingual 4-H clubs included translation of 4-H and other Extension documents from English to Spanish as well as an expansion of resources for families in need in their local communities. KSRE is further developing training efforts and workshops for Extension agents to learn new skills on how to be culturally aware and responsive to their clients.

In summary, multicultural education is present in teacher preparation and is being implemented in classrooms in an attempt to address the needs of CLD students. Furthermore, Cooperative Extension is building and increasing outreach efforts to include diverse, non-traditional families. The purpose of this study is to explore the personal beliefs and professional experiences of present extension educators, and the techniques they practice in outreach to CLD families and youth. Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

a. *How do Extension Educators perceive cultural differences in their clients?*
b. *What are Extension Educators’ experiences working with culturally diverse clients?*

c. *What challenges, needs, and resources do Extension Educators describe related to their work with culturally diverse clients?*

Implication Question

a. How can knowledge generated from this research be applied to support cultural competence of Extension Educators?

Discussion Question

b. Considering reports of Extension Educators, can conceptualizations of cultural competence developed in formal educational contexts be applied and/or adapted for use in the non-formal context of Cooperative Extension?
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative ethnographic study using open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview that explores the cultural perceptions and beliefs of Extension Educators as well as the training they have received and the applicability of CRT for non-formal learning contexts. As described by Creswell (2009), this research approach looks at the lives and day-to-day experiences of the research participants. I selected this method because I wanted to give participants the ability to express their thoughts and beliefs in their own words. The purpose of this approach is to explore the shared “culture” of Extension through the perceptions and experiences that Educators have with the diverse families and youth with whom they work in their communities. This present study, including the protocol, tools, and methods, has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Participants

A purposive sample of Kansas Extension Educators were recruited through an e-mail listserv with a descriptive message regarding the present study. This e-mail was distributed to all Extension Educators across the state, through the Kansas State 4-H Office located on campus. Participants for the study were determined by those who responded to the invitation. Ten EEs representing counties from all over Kansas and all areas of Extension Education (e.g., 4-H Youth Development, Family and Consumer Sciences, Nutrition, Agriculture, etc.) were included in the sample. Sample size was pre-determined based on the budget for the study and as such, saturation did not drive the sample size. Participants were 60% female (40% male), ages 21 through 60. Ninety
percent of participants identified as White / Non-Hispanic, 10% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native.

**Measures**

The interview questions were adapted from those used by Acar and Torquati (under review) to study pre-service early childhood education teachers. While the overall content of the questions is mostly unchanged, the questions were adapted to fit the professional roles of Extension Educators. The interview consists of 14 open-ended questions that explore the cultural perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of EEs in interaction with the families and youth with whom they work. For example, EEs were asked, “How do you feel about working with youth and families of a different culture?” and “Have you ever felt unprepared or uncertain when working with youth and families of different cultures?” See Appendix A for the complete interview.

**Procedure**

Extension Educators were informed about the nature and purpose of the study and if they chose to participate, they signed an informed consent form (see Appendix B). Prior to the interview, I reminded participants that this was a safe environment, where their responses were completely confidential. I explained that they could share as much as they felt comfortable with. Educators were interviewed one-on-one in a semi-structured interview. All interviews were conducted on a video conferencing software called Zoom, and were recorded for transcription. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and each began with the researcher giving a brief introduction to the present study. The researcher transcribed the interview files by playing back the recorded videos at half-speed using a Macintosh application called, “Stringed 2.”
Data Analysis Plan

Analysis of the data for this ethnographic research study followed several steps. First, the researcher reviewed the setting and demographics in which the Extension Educators work. This allows for consistency in the data, ensuring that the researcher fully understood the context in which the participants work in order to better understand their responses (Creswell, 2008). Second, each question response was reviewed in the transcript individually, adding side notes for expected responses as well as surprising or unusual responses (Creswell, 2008). During this process in the analysis, the researcher makes note of any non-structured components or follow-ups that occurred during the interview.

Next, the interpretation of that data was reviewed as a whole; the goal was to gain an understanding of the big picture and how the interpretation addressed the research questions. Common themes were noted through the side notes made in the above step (Creswell, 2007). To gain consistency with the naming of these themes and how they directly addressed the research questions, the researcher then allowed another researcher to review the data, notes, and transcripts to reach consensus. During the entire process, the researcher engaged in reflexivity, or reflection on her own experiences and beliefs on the issue and how these beliefs may influence the data analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

To establish trustworthiness of the data, this study used a similar measure and procedure in its research method to that of analogous studies, such as Acar and Torquati (under review). Using an ethnographic approach helped me view the participants’ experiences and world-view through their cultural lens. Participants were given the
opportunity to refuse to participate in the study, and this enhances the trustworthiness of
the data as the participants were willing to be interviewed and were more likely to
provide genuine responses (Shenton, 2004).

I am a first-generation Mexican-American woman. My native language is
Spanish. As a member of a minority group, my positionality has potential to influence the
research, particularly when a participant belongs to the dominant culture. Some
participants may not have felt completely comfortable sharing certain feelings or
experiences, especially if they did not feel safe or comfortable with a person of my
cultural background, whether it be my gender or ethnicity. It is important to remember
that cultural differences can affect our responses to certain situations. My own personal
background may have influenced my own interpretation and analysis of the data, as I may
carry implicit biases that I am unconsciously aware of.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Four major themes emerged across the interviews regarding the meaning of culture, the perceived cultural similarities and differences in the clients served by the participants, the challenges, needs, resources and specific practices that Extension Educators utilize in their work with culturally diverse families and youth. These themes are described below organized according to the three research questions posed for this research. The implication and discussion questions are addressed in Chapter 5. In addition, four themes reflecting EE dispositions emerged from the analysis and are described below.

Perceptions of culture, similarities, and differences working with CLD families

Perceptions of culture in general. Overall, participants described nuanced and multifaceted understandings of culture. For example:

“When I think of culture, I just think of not necessarily what you look like it’s just how you act and who you are. I mean, I think of where I grew up and I’m white I come from a middle-class family in rural America, but there were people who came from Mexico and were Hispanic and they were kind of in a poorer middle class than we were. But they have the same culture as me. They were raised in the same place so I think culture is just more kind of your belief system and how you treat people and...how you act on a daily basis and what’s important to you.”

This participant demonstrated a complex understanding of culture. Culture is something you do on a daily basis and is seen as a belief system and a sense of being. In the next example, culture was viewed as the people around you:

“Culture I think means the area that you live and the, the people around you make up your culture. You might have a family culture, you might have a work culture, um, then you have the culture of the community that you live in, be it a small town in a rural area, be it a, um, urban area, that’s kind of the people that you surround yourself with I guess is kind of my definition of culture. Cuz’ your family culture can be different, um, depending on who your family is, some families are close, some families...
aren’t. Um, extension I consider to be a great work culture because you’re like family and so I think that’s the people and the things that you surround yourself with are your culture.”

This participant acknowledged that culture varies from person to person. Not only did this person address culture as a geographical location (rural vs. urban area), but also that culture was outside of the home at both the workplace and in the general community.

Lastly, the following participant viewed culture as a social environment:

“I would say culture is the environment, the social environment, that you’re immersed in, the practices, the social practices that surround you and influence your behavior.”

This participant addressed social practices, that culture comes with its own customs and traditional practices. A social practice cannot be hidden, as everyone shows a social practice every moment of every day.

**Perceptions of one’s own culture.** Participants also provided detailed descriptions of their own cultures, which reflected an understanding that culture is something you enact and experience every day. For example, participants mentioned place, family, religion, race, socioeconomic status, family, extended family, and community.

“Um, yeah, I come from a big um, farm family in rural southwest Kansas, and um, have been other places, been in the big cities, been in other states, I’ve not traveled internationally, but I kind of like it where I grew up and where I was raised. Um, it’s changed a lot um, living in southwest Kansas, it’s changed a lot, culture- culturally, since I was a young girl, but I, um, it makes us who we are and it makes the communities that I live in, work in, a great place to be, just because there are so many different people and I can learn so many things from them.”

This participant perceived their own culture as a place and noticed differences between rural southwest Kansas and big cities, as well as other states. There was an acknowledgement that learning occurs by living in an area that has many
different types of people. Participants were conscious of how culture plays a role in their perception of families’ cultural behavior:

“Oh, I think it plays a huge part. But I feel like for the most part I’m conscious of that, which I think is important. Um, because I always, I definitely would say out of my family and the culture that I was raised in, I’m way more liberal, than anybody that um, I was raised around. And I think part of that is, is because I am, tried to be conscious of, of that about myself, I know that yea, I was raised in a typical you know, white, catholic, conservative family, and that has influenced my thoughts about people, but um, that I can choose new thoughts and that I can, I know the right resources to look to expand my cultural horizon and um, so, but I know, it influences so much of what we do.”

This participant’s background (white, Catholic, conservative) influenced their thoughts about people, but there was an acknowledgement that they could choose to think differently by utilizing resources to increase their cultural competence.

When describing their cultural background, some participants did not mention heritage culture, rather just specific facets of culture:

“Um, I was raised in a very small, rural town. I was raised on a dairy farm, um predominately white community, mostly Catholics. I um, oh gosh, nobody’s ever asked me to describe your cultural background! Um, I’d say um, pretty conservative family, um conservative relatives.”

Culture was perceived as a location (dairy farm), an ethnicity (white community), a religion (Catholic), and a political ideology (conservative). Lastly, participants noted that 4-H Youth Development (an area of Extension programming) has it’s own culture as well:

“Um, we have a, a variety of, of different families, some from bigger towns, some from small towns, rural communities, some um, we have one of the first Hispanic 4-H clubs in the state of Kansas, was chartered in county, worked really hard with that um, really hard to help that group become a 4-H club and kind of integrate themselves within the 4-H culture in Ford County.”
This participant described one of the first Hispanic 4-H organizations in Kansas which is located in a small, rural town, and putting in the work to integrate this group within the established culture of 4-H in that county.

**A sense of place.** The responses in this section describe the participants’ responses about their own culture. Culture encompasses diversity in every way, not just ethnicity. Participants described their own culture as: a geographical location, socio-economic status, social involvement, values and morals, traditions, and ethnicity. Geographical location was described as being a rural or urban area or a region in a state. Participants described their upbringing and cultural background related to the place in which they were born or raised. For instance, participants mentioned quiet life in a rural town and the ways of life in southwest Kansas. One participant stated, “I would say I’m a Midwestern Kansas farm boy” and another mentioned, “I come from a big farm family in rural southwest Kansas.” This participant described how the location where she was raised “makes us who we are”:

“I come from a big um, farm family in rural southwest Kansas, and um, have been other places, been in the big cities, been in other states, I’ve not traveled internationally, but I kind of like it where I grew up and where I was raised. Um, it’s changed a lot um, living in southwest Kansas, it’s changed a lot, culturally. Um, since I was a young girl, but I, um, it makes us who we are and it makes the communities that I live in, work in, a great place to be, just because there are so many different people and I can learn so many things from them...”

**Social involvement.** Social involvement incorporates political views as well as religious affiliations and beliefs. For example, participants described living in Christian households and in predominately Catholic communities. For example, one participant mentioned, “I come from a German-Scandinavian background {with} Christian roots.”
**Importance of family.** Extension Educators described common similarities among their clients such as the importance of family. Participants noticed that the families with whom they work want the best for their children and will work hard to provide for their families. They described families as having similar work ethics. One participant who works as a nutrition EE described families’ concerns for their childrens’ health and well-being, while another noted how “parents love their children and want to do what’s best for them…” Another participant observed that “the Hispanic culture seems to be more family-oriented.” From their experiences, EEs described how parents can be really hands-on:

> “Um, I don’t know if it’s just our club, because the club that I’m working with is so new, but the adults are really hands-on. Whereas our other clubs, the kids kind of lead the way and lead their meetings. With the Spanish club, the adults are kind of on the forefront and the kids take more of a backseat and do as their parents say.”

There are cultural differences in how parents may perceive their own in a 4-H club. One participant also made specific observations about the Hispanic culture in 4-H:

> “Um, the Hispanic culture seems to be more of a family re- a family-oriented um, takes the true meaning of 4-H as a family, a family activity. Cuz’ they bring everybody to the meetings and everybody to the activities where, in some other cultures, your kind of a glorified baby sitter, and you don’t see the parents very often, you just see the kids.”

There are major differences in how the Hispanic culture is more family oriented, where 4-H is viewed as a family activity. Traditionally, children are dropped off by their parents to attend club activities, however in the Hispanic culture, the whole family joins.

**Newcomers and norms.** Extension Educators noted differences among their clients mainly as the separation between “traditional” extension families and “non-
“Whereas our more traditional 4-H families, are okay with that. That’s normal in our culture to get to have sleepovers and do that kind of thing. I guess that’s not a traditional thing in Hispanic families.”

Participants also described notable differences among their clients in terms of norms. One of these norms involved financial management habits and the personal value of money. EEs located in southwest Kansas, an area in which there are several cities where the majority population consists of historically underrepresented groups, described how their Hispanic families work hard to send money back to relatives in their home countries. For example, one participant said, “{They} are very spend-thrift, I would say, they don’t spend a lot of money on themselves. I have heard that they send a lot of money home to their families wherever that may be…” Traditional clients are generally not as involved in heavily supporting their extended families financially.

Time. Extension Educators explained that the concept of time is a cultural difference, specifically time management during 4-H club meetings or other Extension activities. One Extension Educator talked about her newfound awareness that her Hispanic families may sometimes be late to a class or an activity. She explained,

“Where you schedule events, you know that people are going to come in, most people will come in beforehand or on time, but some of the Hispanic culture might come in a little bit later. And you have to learn to adapt to that, and not let it bother you and not panic when 15 minutes into the
meeting there’s only 2 people in the chairs. The room will be fill, but you have to give it some time.”

According to Sue and Sue (2013), Hispanic families place less importance on timeliness, instead prioritizing relationships. This EE realized that working with CLD families involved adaptation of her programming and a shift in her cultural perceptions of the families she serves.

**Challenges, needs, and resources related to CLD clients**

Extension Educators identified three areas that need to be met by Cooperative Extension in order to successfully engage CLD families and youth in their counties: the challenges for the EE when serving CLD clients; the needs of the EEs to better serve their CLD clients; and the resources required to overcome these challenges and meet the needs of CLD clients.

Extension Educators identified one major challenge when working with CLD families and youth: the language barrier. Being unable to communicate with the families they serve has posed a big challenge for Extension Educators. It is difficult to effectively deliver a program when the language in which it is provided is not the native language of the families being served.

The need accompanying this challenge for Extension Educators is having the appropriately translated materials in the native language of CLD families. In some instances, a translator is an even larger need. One Extension Educator recalled a time she was contacted by parents in the deaf and hard-of-hearing community who expressed their desire for their child to attend 4-H summer camp. The initial communication between the EE and the parents was through e-mail, and posed its own challenges: differences in tone and extreme caution on the EEs part to avoid sounding culturally insensitive in their
written conversation. The need emerged for the child to be provided an American Sign Language (ASL) translator, to accompany the child on all their camp activities, and to provide support in communicating important information between the EE and the parents.

This is not the only example of the need for a translator. Another Extension Educator described the hardship experienced by families in southwest Kansas during some wildfires in 2017. The County Extension Services were equipped to provide assistance through both manual labor and monetary support. The EE helping Spanish-speaking ranchers in the county described the difficult task of trying to communicate with the families about the assistance she was there to provide after their homes had been destroyed. She reached out in need of a translator to help facilitate a session where the ranchers’ questions could be answered, and the EE could explain the support her office was prepared to provide.

These needs have pushed EEs to extend their networks beyond county lines and reach out to the state Extension office for resources. When they determined the need for a translator, the state office provided connections either through other organizations or through the Extension network to address their needs. Another resource that the state office provided these EEs was translated materials.

**Specific Practices Related to Diversity**

In conjunction with describing challenges of working with diverse youth and families, participants described sometimes feeling uncomfortable or nervous about something like speaking English to non-native English speakers, or being worried about saying or doing something that might make clients feel uncomfortable. Two strategies
were described for addressing this challenge. The first strategy is “just getting in there and doing it”:

“I say jump right in with both feet. Don’t be scared, don’t think you have to do a lot of preparation, kids are very forgiving. And they’re gonna’ accept you no matter what. Um, don’t, don’t let that hold you back.”

These participants were willing to take risks (e.g., trying to communicate) and also recognized the importance of trying to help diverse families feel comfortable:

“I feel silly getting up and speaking English in front of a group that speaks Spanish because I’m the minority there but they understand most of what I’m saying. There’s a few things that are probably lost in translation. But it makes, I think it makes them feel more comfortable too if I’m not tiptoeing around, you know? If I’m just willing to get out there and approach them.”

A second practice participants used to help them be more effective in their work with diverse families, and also to feel more comfortable themselves, was to consult with professionals who had worked with a specific culture (e.g., deaf culture) or who were members of that culture. For example, after explaining that he/she learned more about deaf culture from a colleague, one participant stated, “I think finding the people that know more about that culture is really important to, you know talk about things that then, and talk about you know, common reactions and how we can change some of those if they put a negative perception in our heads.” This participant engaged in critical reflection about negative perceptions, and drew upon the expertise of a colleague to better understand a family with whom he/she worked.

**Dispositions**

In addition to themes aligned with the research questions, several themes emerged that reflect EE’s attitudes, beliefs, and habits of mind that are collectively considered
dispositions, including: valuing diversity; curiosity and openness to learning about other cultures; critical self-reflection; and compassion for diverse families and youth.

Valuing diversity. Participants generally expressed positive attitudes toward increasing diversity in their communities. One participant remarked, “there’s more diversity in the classrooms, which is a good thing, and so, I feel as we continue to expand, we’re gonna’ be, become more and more diverse.” The following participant explained that increasing diversity in communities makes them “a great place to be” (emphasis added):

“...living in southwest Kansas, it’s changed a lot, culture- culturally. Um, since I was a young girl, but I, um, it makes us who we are and it makes the communities that I live in, work in, a great place to be, just because there are so many different people and I can learn so many things from them...”

Curiosity and openness to learning about other cultures. Several participants described how they enjoyed learning about other cultures, and their approaches to doing so. For example, one participant stated:

“It’s just reminding myself that they do come from a different culture and that there’s a lot of conversations... I ask a lot of questions. They probably get tired of me asking them “well how do you do this?”, “what does that mean?”, but it’s having a lot of open communication with them.”

Another participant remarked, “I’ve learned so much and grown so much and, as a professional, by working with them {culturally diverse families}.” These comments reflect a growth mindset, which is the implicit value and belief in lifelong learning and development.

Critical self-reflection. Another participant expressed curiosity and openness, and in addition, critical self-reflection: “... it’s kind of an eye-opening experience and makes you think, “oh we should all think about that a little bit more.” And so I think it’s helped
me grow as a professional, it’s definitely made me more aware...” Similarly, a participant stated, “you can’t presume that somebody is a certain way before knowing what they’re background is and more about what their cultu-... what that culture is like.”

Critical self-reflection involves awareness of one’s own thoughts, feelings, and implicit biases: “...you really have to catch yourself sometimes when you start thinking a certain way based on you know, the way you were raised and your assumptions about this group of people and so...”

**Compassion for diverse families and youth.** Participants expressed compassion for diverse families and youth when they described situations in which they wanted to help them feel comfortable, when they wanted to be able to help, and when they respected the essential human dignity of the families and youth with whom they worked. For example, one participant stated:

“...it doesn’t matter to me um, what language they speak um, they, that they believe in things a little bit different than I do or do things different than I do, because that’s their right, and I think that makes us all individuals.”

This participant affirmed the rights of culturally diverse individuals to speak and do things differently from the participant and, presumably, differently from the majority culture. Similarly, a participant described working with parents who were deaf, and his/her concern about respecting their dignity and helping them to feel comfortable:

“...it was an eye-opening experiences, as you know, the resources that I needed to use, and I thought, how am I going to communicate with them, because the parents are deaf, and I, I often thought about, I don’t want to say anything that’s disrespectful, and I don’t, I don’t want them to make, I don’t want them you know, sometimes I think, like when you’re speaking to them, they, I just didn’t want them to
ever feel like I was, like they were idiots or something like that, because of the way that I was speaking to them, or tone that I was using, even though they can’t even really hear the tone, but you know, should I talk slower, should I not? Will they find that disrespectful, can you they read lips really fast, um, do I need to write things down, or will they think that’s disrespectful, if I can’t understand, they don’t understand what I’m saying. You know, all these things ran through my mind and like I just want them to feel you know, respected and, and you know, appreciated.”

Another aspect of compassion is having empathy for others, which is reflected in this comment:

“...working with that were affected by this fire...and when we were there helping to clean up their um, animals that they had lost in this fire, and they didn’t mind working right alongside me to do it, because those were their animals and to watch a grown man have tears running down his cheeks because you’re loading his livelihood into the, a dump truck to go bury them...”

This participant expressed empathy and caring for someone who experienced a tragedy, and also expressed frustration about not being able to do more for him at the time:

“...it affected me for the fact that I felt like I couldn’t really do more in my, in my current role, I couldn’t do more for him except provide him resources, and that bothered me, it really, really bothered me. It felt like I wasn’t doing my job because I was not helping him. But that, you know at the time, my job was just animal removal and burial, and so that bothered me, and so now I’m working, working um, through other avenues and other organizations to get him the assistance that he needs because um, because it just is. I feel like I need to do more...”

Empathy and compassion served as motivators for this participant to go beyond his/her basic responsibilities to seek further avenues to assist this particular client.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purposes of this study were to explore the personal beliefs and professional experiences of present Extension Educators, and the techniques they practice in outreach to culturally and linguistically diverse families and youth. This study found four major themes related to participants’ definition of culture, experiences working with CLD families and youth, and the challenges and needs related to work in this area of Extension. Each of these themes is described below. In addition, two research questions related to implications and applications of the knowledge from this research are discussed.

Definitions of Culture

Participants appear to have a more complex and nuanced understanding of what defines culture. These definitions are described through places, socioeconomic status, religions, ethnicity, and family and extended family. Participants in this study had a general understanding that culture is something that is done every day. This differs from Acar & Torquati (under review), who reported that most of the participants in their study described their heritage culture as their own cultural background, but demonstrated little understanding that culture is enacted in everyday experiences. Participants in Acar and Torquati (under review) also voiced the difficulty coming up with an example of what culture meant to them. Participants in the current study remarked on the difficulty of describing culture, but for the most part provided detailed descriptions of culture, and their own cultures in particular. A possible reason for the differences in findings between the two studies could be that participants in Acar and Torquati (under review) were pre-service teachers in their early 20’s, and participants in the current study ranged in age
from early to middle adulthood, but were significantly older than participants in the previous study and likely had more professional and personal experience with diverse individuals and families. Participants in both studies seemed to also correlate between being from a small, rural town and being less exposed to “diversity” or even grasping an understanding of what cultural differences might look like.

**Importance of Families** CLD families involved their whole family in Cooperative Extension activities such as 4-H; in other words, activities and resources were shared to the entire family. Research shows that the two-generation approach provides for the needs of both the parents and their children (Moodie & Ramos, 2014). In this way, the family moves towards progress and stability together and much faster. For instance, a parent who is helped with completing college classes will then be able to dedicate more time to their children’s needs (Moodie & Ramos, 2014). In Extension, this is why entire families will join meetings and activities meant for one age-group. It is a collaborative community that wants to grow together, share knowledge, and exchange ideas.

**Newcomers and norms** Participants noticed huge differences between the Hispanic youth and families that they served and their traditional clients. Extension Educators realized that their Hispanic families may not do things the way the “traditional” community might, and their norms may be perceived differently. Acar & Torquati (under review) also discussed norms and that participants viewed these at a superficial level, sometimes in terms of a “heroes and holidays” approach (Banks, 1993). For example, people may see large hand gestures, loud voices, or certain mannerisms. Sometimes it could be the way someone is dressed or how they eat certain foods. Within
the two studies, participants described a concept of “traditional” vs. “non-traditional” norms. “Traditional” appears to be used to describe the majority culture, in this case White-Caucasian American (Acar & Torquati, under review). Traditional then serves as a word to describe what might be considered “normal” to a particular community.

**Time.** Many countries around the world view time as an important tool that is followed very strictly. For some of the CLD families described in this study, however, time was flexible and some events did not have a set beginning or end time, they simply happen (Levine, 2017). Time is such an unassuming concept that we may not think it should be something to worry about, but how we view time can actually create cultural misunderstandings. By understanding how people in a particular culture view time, EEs are better equipped to navigate programming logistics that involve planning ahead.

**Challenges**

Some of the challenges that Extension Educators described when serving CLD clients were the language barrier and the lack of translator services and translated materials. Schauer and Castania (2001) found that diversifying their staff (which may include having people who speak different languages), addressed these challenges. The major challenge found in this study is the language barrier between Extension Educators and families. In Acar and Torquati (under review), pre-service teachers perceived a language barrier as a challenge that may hinder a child’s ability to learn.

**Specific Practices**

Extension Educators described feeling uncomfortable or nervous about working with non-native English speakers because of the language barrier. They were worried about saying or doing something that could make their clients feel uncomfortable. EEs
mentioned a couple of strategies that addressed this challenge: simply try to communicate; and consult with professionals who have previous experience working with the underrepresented group.

**Dispositions**

Participants in this study had a curiosity and openness to learn about other cultures, they provided examples of their compassion for diverse families and youth, and through self-awareness demonstrated that they have a growth mindset. In the current study and in Acar and Torquati’s study (under review), there was evidence of curiosity in the participants, an openness to learn about other cultures, and a value for diversity. One difference between the two studies however, was that Extension Educators provided several examples of critical self-reflection (Howard, 2003); however, the pre-service teachers in the previous study provided little evidence of self-awareness of their own biases in the classroom (Acar & Torquati, under review). Participants in the current sample also appeared to express greater compassion for diverse families and youth than was reported for a sample of pre-service teachers (Acar & Torquati, under review).

**Potential Bias**

An important variable to note in the study is the potential influence of my own cultural background. I identify as a heterosexual, Mexican-American woman. I am first-generation in the United States and my native language is Spanish. My cultural identity is important to the study as it can have an effect on participants’ responses. I have no accurate way of knowing where the participants are on the intercultural development continuum, so I cannot assume that some are more culturally competent than the others. However, each participant in my interview had their own set of values, misconceptions,
notions, and opinions about certain cultural groups. As part of a minority group, in more ways than one, my intersectionality may have made a participant uncomfortable or uncertain when sharing their story or experiences with diverse populations. The question therein is, if a person of the dominant culture would have conducted the interviews, would the findings have been more honest or open?

It is also worth mentioning the potential for selection bias. The sample in the present study may not be completely representative of the analyzed population or the EEs in the state of Kansas. There are EEs who might be more likely to volunteer for this particular study. For instance, participants who have higher cultural competence or are farther along in the intercultural continuum, may have felt more comfortable or relaxed being open about their experiences with diverse populations.

*Application Question: Considering reports of Extension Educators, can conceptualizations of cultural competence developed in formal educational contexts be applied and/or adapted for use in the non-formal context of Cooperative Extension?*

With the understanding that Extension Educators in this study had little to no formal education related to cultural responsiveness in their undergraduate and graduate careers, the question remains if conceptualizations like culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) can be applied or adapted for use in non-formal settings like Cooperative Extension programs and activities. CRP gives teachers a way to support their students’ successful learning, while providing an educational environment where students feel supported and their culture is seen as a strength (Richards et al., 2007). With this in mind, Extension Educators may not be certified teachers, but they are still providing knowledge through their activities to youth and adults. As teachers in this sense, they have the same
responsibility to create educational environments conducive to successful learning for their learners as formal teachers do in their schools and classrooms. Just like CRP, Extension Educators can utilize similar strategies and pedagogy to develop their own cultural responsiveness in the context of Extension, adapting it to fit the needs of their clients.

CRP addresses the individual needs of CLD students as well as teachers. Teachers need to have an adaptable mind and a growth mindset that may stem from their life experiences having been in a variety of cultural settings (Dweck, 2012). While some Extension Educators in this study felt an excitement when being placed in challenging or uncomfortable situations when working with CLD clients, others shared experiences and feelings of uncertainty. Just as teachers need to be prepared to work with different students who learn in very unique ways, so does an Extension Educator need to be equipped with confidence and the tools necessary to outreach to CLD clients in the most effective ways possible. Howard (2003) expressed concern with teachers’ abilities to reflect upon their own cultural identities. He explained that we need to better equip teachers going into the classroom with the capability to reflect upon their own moral, political, and ethical contexts of teaching (Howards, 2003). By practicing critical self-reflection, EEs go into the classroom prepared to set biases aside and view every student through a culturally responsive lens.

This ability to adapt and mold oneself to cultural differences and surroundings is characteristic of the Adaptation level of intercultural competence on the IDI (Hammer, 2012). With Adaptation as the outcome goal in mind, EEs set themselves up for success
in preparing to work with CLD clients in any capacity. Using the IDI is a positive first step to understanding both and individual and group-wide cultural competence levels.

Additional preparation for Extension Educators can be beneficial, as noted in interview responses. The training called “Navigating Difference” was mentioned as the main professional development encountered as EEs that most informed and supported self-awareness of cultural differences. This training, however, is not currently mandatory at Kansas State University, allowing some Extension Educators to “fall through the cracks” and not take advantage of the workshop. With the influx of CLD families into different areas of the state, there is an increasing need for culturally responsive programming in Cooperative Extension. To ensure that Cooperative Extension continues its mission to outreach to and serve all families, cultural responsiveness in all Extension Educators is imperative.

Implications

How can knowledge generated from this research be applied to support cultural competence of Extension Educators?

At the time of these interviews, Kansas State University was creating an initiative to implement the IDI at the administration level. The Kansas State Research and Extension New Youth and Adult Audiences Specialist will be consulting with administrators at the university after the IDI has been administered to review their results. The next step will involve administrators creating their own cultural competence goals and developing a plan to further their awareness of cultural differences. While this is a huge step towards university-wide professional development, another implication of this research on Extension Educators’ cultural competence is the current positive impact from
cultural training workshops and new employee trainings, and the need for their continuation and expansion.

The knowledge generated from this research sheds light on the challenges that current Extension Educators face when outreaching to CLD families and youth. These challenges may include translation resources, interpreter assistance, no transportation available for youth and families to attend programming, and access to consultants who have knowledge about specific cultures (e.g., deaf culture, different ethnicities, etc.). Meeting these challenges may lead to a better understanding of the needs of both the EEs and their clients, which creates momentum for a solution and plan of action. It is evident that EEs utilize their networks in Extension wisely. They connect and stay connected to other EEs across county and state lines, to avoid “re-inventing the wheel” per say, when another county or state has an understanding of the same need and shares their solutions for it. Using this network as an advantage, the amount of knowledge to be shared is vast. Extension has the capacity to reach more Educators through potential trainings and other preparation for their development of cultural competence.

As I look ahead into opportunities to further analyze the data collected for this study, I plan to look into the intersectionalities of gender and age to address questions such as: Does age play a factor in the interview responses? Are there generational differences among Extension Educators? Does gender play a role in participants’ comfort level when discussing sensitive topics about culture?
REFERENCES


Figure 1. Intercultural Development Continuum Model from the *Intercultural Development Inventory* by {}
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does culture mean to you? (Prompt: where you’re from, color of skin, your roots, etc.?)

2. Tell me a little bit about the culture of youth and families with whom you work.

3. What kind of similarities do you see among your youth and families, even though they are from different cultures?

4. Can you specifically describe behaviors you have observed?

5. Do you think that your youth’s family background influences their cultural behavior in your programs and extension activities?

6. Can you describe your own cultural background?

7. How do you think that your own cultural background plays a role in your perception of your youth and families’ cultural behavior?

8. Tell me about your educational background. What type of preparation did you receive that helped you work with youth and families of different cultures?

9. How does this influence your perception of your youth and families’ cultural behavior?

10. Tell me about a person of a different culture with whom you have worked professionally. (Prompt: Describe your interactions with that person.)

11. How do you feel about working with youth and families of a different culture?

12. Have you ever felt unprepared or uncertain when working with youth and families of different cultures? (Follow-up: If so, what kind of preparation or resources would be helpful?)
13. How do you think extension educators can best outreach to youth and families of other cultures?

14. What type of support does Cooperative Extension currently offer to culturally diverse families?
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Participant Informed Consent Form

Cooperative Extension Professionals’ Perceptions of Cultural Diversity

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe Cooperative Extension professionals’ perceptions of cultural diversity among their clients. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a professional in Cooperative Extension.

Procedures:

You will be asked to participate in an interview about your experiences working with culturally diverse clients. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted via zoom videoconferencing and will be scheduled at your convenience. The interview will be transcribed for analysis. You will also be asked to provide demographic information so that we can describe our research sample.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you as a research participant.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study that could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Recordings of the interviews will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be deleted after transcription. The transcripts will not contain any identifying information and instead will have an ID number not linked to your name. Demographic information will be entered into an electronic database for analysis but will also only be identified by ID number. Your name will not appear on any of the data or research documents except the informed consent form, which will be locked in a file cabinet in the secondary investigator’s office. The data will only be accessible to the researchers during the study. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group data only; no individuals will ever be identified in publications of this study.

Compensation:
You will receive $25 (cash) for participating in this research.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator at the phone number below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation to study will not harm your relationship with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or the investigators.

**Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Signature of Participant:**

_________________________  ______________________
Signature of Research Participant  Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Ruddy Yanez Benavides  972-589-4580  ruddyyanez@gmail.com

Julia C. Torquati, PhD, Secondary Investigator (402) 472-1674  jtorquati1@unl.edu
1. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
   - Other (please specify) _____________________

2. What is your age?
   - 18-20
   - 21-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60 or older

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - Some high school, no diploma
   - High school diploma or equivalent (i.e. GED)
   - Some college but no degree
   - Trade/Technical/Vocational training
   - Associate degree
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Master’s degree
   - Professional degree
   - Doctorate degree

4. What is your race/ethnicity?
   - American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - Asian
   - Black or African American
   - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic or Latino
   - White – Non-Hispanic
   - Multiracial
   - Other (please specify) _____________________
5. Please indicate your native language(s).
   □ English
   □ Spanish
   □ Chinese
   □ Vietnamese
   □ German
   □ French
   □ Other (please specify) __________________________

6. What second language skills do you possess, if any?
   □ English
   □ Spanish
   □ Chinese
   □ Vietnamese
   □ German
   □ French
   □ Other (please specify) __________________________

7. How long have you worked in Extension in any professional role?
   ______________________