Exploring the Impact of Diversity Training on the Development and Application of Cultural Competence Skills In Higher Education Professionals

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Abstract

This study explores how higher education professionals develop and demonstrate cultural competence in their professional roles. Through a mixed methods case-study approach, the study investigates how perceived levels of cultural competence in higher education professionals are shaped by participation in an extended diversity training program. Additionally, this study explores implications for individual career trajectories as a result of program completion and implementation of new learning. Study findings indicate that participants anticipate lasting effects from the training experience. The training introduced and ignited a reconfiguration of what it means to engage and work in spaces where institutional and organizational commitments are aligned with personal commitments. Following training, all participants expressed deep commitment to intentionally and actively cultivating a sense of belonging and inclusion in the workplace through shared language, shifts in policy, and more thoughtful interpersonal interactions with colleagues and peers.

Keywords: higher education, cultural competence, diversity training, professional development, diversity in the workplace, inclusion in organizations

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Introduction

In recent years, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become a significant focus across industries and fields of study. Within the field of education broadly, and higher education, in particular, a shifting student demographic can be seen across the country (Pew Research Center). Furthermore, racial equity issues have become central for present-day educational strategists, and organizations committed to cultivating a culture of inclusion must do so with intentionality. There has been a great deal of research concerning the development of cultural competence in traditional-aged college students, but far fewer studies address development in higher education professionals. This study investigates higher education professionals' individual professional development, personal capacity to engage in inclusive practices, and ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from different cultures or belief systems after having completed extensive cultural competency training. This study attempts to address this gap while adding value to the field and expanding the body of work investigating cultural competence.

Rapid growth and demographic shifts have become a defining feature of higher education (Gur-Rosenbilt et al., 2007). Such changes are evident amongst student populations, while the diversification of higher education professionals is moving at a much slower pace (NCES). The diversification of college and university campuses has led to a proliferation of high-priority diversity and inclusion initiatives. However, "diversification by itself does not suffice for providing equality of opportunity in higher education" (Guri-Rosenbilt et al., 2007, p. 20). If equity is the goal, newly developed diversity initiatives must be grounded in institutional strategy and commitment. Higher education institutions must assume an inclusive excellence stance, as evidenced by the restructuring of institutional policy, procedures, and practice, to account for the varied needs of community members. Notably, these structural changes are often only possible due to a more enhanced individual understanding of the roles racial equity and inclusion play in a diverse community's success, career satisfaction, and institutional evolution.

Historically, diversity initiatives more broadly have focused on affirmative action and race. Likewise, diversity training has consistently focused on aspects of race and gender and their implications for recruitment, hiring, and promotion [within businesses and corporations] (Kulik et al., 2007). However, present-day conceptualizations of diversity training are often expanded, considering various dimensions of diversity and emphasizing individual development as a result of the training experience (Kulik et al., 2007). Still, within individual institutions, the practicality and value of diversity programming are often framed through the lens of institutional culture and climate rather than the impact on individual community members. As a result, the effects and implications of these developmental opportunities for higher education professionals are not heavily reflected in higher education literature. (Hayat & Walton, 2013, p. 304). University

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faculty, staff, and administrators are positioned to impact the institution at every level; thus, their development in areas of cultural competence can reach far and wide.

Roughly 67% of U.S. organizations have instituted diversity training as a core component of their diversity initiatives (Esen, 2005). Yet, a gap in the research literature still requires thoughtful exploration of this population. "Despite the priority higher education institutions have given to multicultural initiatives, little attention has been given to examining the multicultural experiences and other life events that influence those charged with developing and facilitating these initiatives" (Landreman et al., 2007, p. 275). Regarding higher education, university faculty, staff, and administration are charged with developing and equipping students with the tools necessary to engage diversity. In essence, Landreman et al. (2007) highlight that research on diversity programs in higher education is primarily focused on solutions and student experience, rarely addressing the faculty, staff, and administrators involved in program development, facilitation, or even participation.

This study addresses the intersection of career and professional identity with developing cultural competence skills to enhance institutional culture. The present study explores how diversity training influences individual development and interpersonal interactions among higher education professionals. More specifically, this study explores the experiences of higher education professionals through their participation in a thirteen-month "train-the-trainer" diversity training program. As a result, this study focused on participant application of skills or performance based on new knowledge. Utilizing the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework, the researchers explored participants' perceived, self-reported accounts of self-actualization in application and their careers. The research questions which guided this study include: (a) How are perceived levels of cultural competence in higher education professionals impacted by participation in an extended diversity training program; (b) How has participation in extended diversity training affected participants' efforts to engage in inclusive practices and behaviors; (c) How do participants utilize the skills and tools developed through extended diversity training in their roles as higher education professionals; and (d) How do participants anticipate the skills and tools developed through extended diversity training will impact their career paths and career progression?

Study Setting and Ethical Considerations

A cultural awareness building (CAB) training program was conducted at a large, urban, four-year research institution. The CAB training program consisted of training modules and activities that instructed participants on how to communicate effectively across differences, identify unconscious biases and misinformation in themselves, others, and organizations, and recognize personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural barriers to inclusion. The training also explored

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the effects of historical and contemporary exclusion and oppression and examined group identity development and its impacts on cross-cultural interactions. In addition, participants could develop and practice facilitation skills and intervention strategies throughout the training. The CAB was designed in response to student protests surrounding perceived shortcomings in applying cultural competence skills displayed by university faculty, staff, and administrators. The CAB was established to build a cadre of university professionals who could lead diversity training workshops at the institution. The program was the first of its kind at the institution and served as part of a greater effort toward institutional change. Program participants included a cohort of 26 faculty, staff, and administrators from across the university. The cohort participated in a 13-month "train the trainer" program to enhance their ability to engage in matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workplaces. Candidates applied and were interviewed to participate in the initial cohort; they were ultimately selected by a team of university leaders. After completing the training, participants then served as facilitators conducting cultural competency workshops at the institution. However, within a year after the CAB training program was completed, there was a change in leadership at the institution, and the program was terminated.

Theoretical Framework

The framework of the current study is situated within the confines of Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (2002) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The three basic building blocks of the general social cognitive theory are self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals (Lent et al., 2002). Each building block creates the foundation from which individuals build their professional identities. As defined by Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is most often developed through four primary sources: personal performance and accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and one's physiological and affective states. That is to say, an individual's past experiences and current understanding of those experiences give shape to their beliefs about their potential for success. These building blocks provide context for individual interests, the decision to pursue said interests, and ultimately the individual's performance or application of whatever skills have been developed.

SCCT is a tri-part model that reviews an individual's progression through interest development, choices, and performance as it relates to their career. The SCCT model encompasses the participant's experiences in a cultural awareness building program (CAB) in their entirety. It considers participants' initial interests or introduction to diversity within the context of their profession, their choice or decision to pursue professional development in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion more intentionally, and ultimately their application of skills or performance based on new knowledge.

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The framework of the current study is based on three assumptions. The first assumption is an assumed desire of cohort members to develop some level of cultural competence based on previously identified interest development. The second assumption is that cohort members chose to pursue cultural awareness building as the vehicle through which they would pursue cultural competence. The third and final assumption is that cohort members intend to implement new learning within the workplace, thereby performing new skills.

SCCT Models

The Interest Model

The Interest Model, as shown in Figure 1, focuses on individual interests' role in motivating behavior and skill acquisition choices. This model fits a more general understanding of self-efficacy and outcome expectations. For instance, it could be assumed that diversity training participants each possessed some interest in learning more about diversity and inclusion before program participation. Further, participants likely held an interest in developing the skills necessary to converse with their peers about matters of diversity and inclusion. "SCCT asserts that people form enduring interest in an activity when they view themselves as competent and when they anticipate performing it will produce valued outcomes" (Lent et al., 2002, p. 265). These interests potentially influenced participants' decisions or choices to pursue participation in the diversity training program. As it relates to the present study, Figure 2 depicts an adapted Interest Model that explores the development of diversity and inclusion interests and commitments that ultimately lead to participation in diversity training.

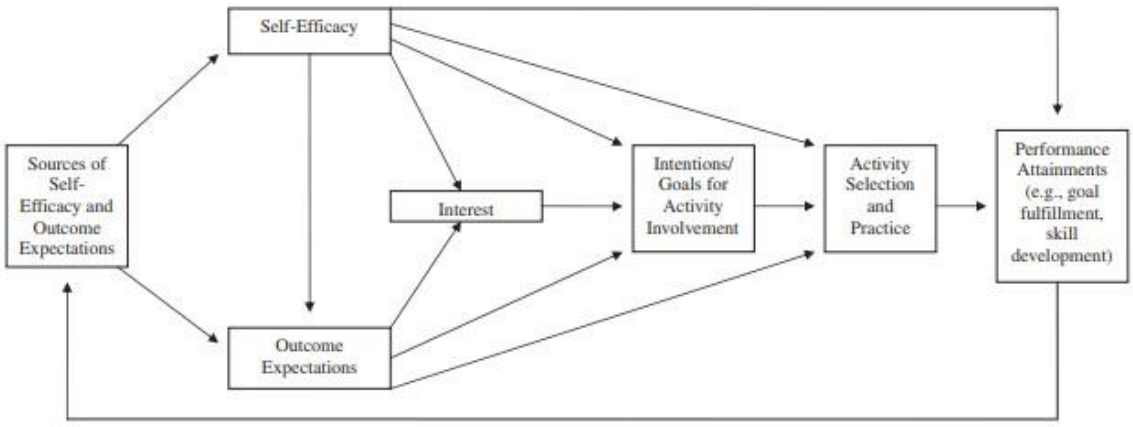

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FIGURE 1. Interest development model reprinted from Lent et al. (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory.

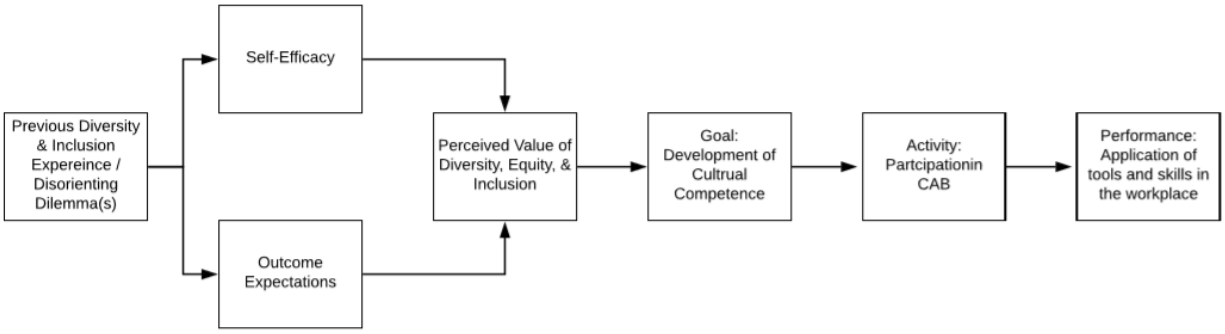

FIGURE 2. CAB Interest Model.

The Choice Model

In Figure 3, The Choice Model depicts individual goals and the actions required to achieve them. Since personal interests influence behaviors and decision-making within the context of this study, participation in diversity training results from an individual choice to pursue a desired goal. "SCCT's model of career choice holds that interests are typically related to the choices that people make and to the action they take to implement their choices" (Lent et al., 2002, p. 276).

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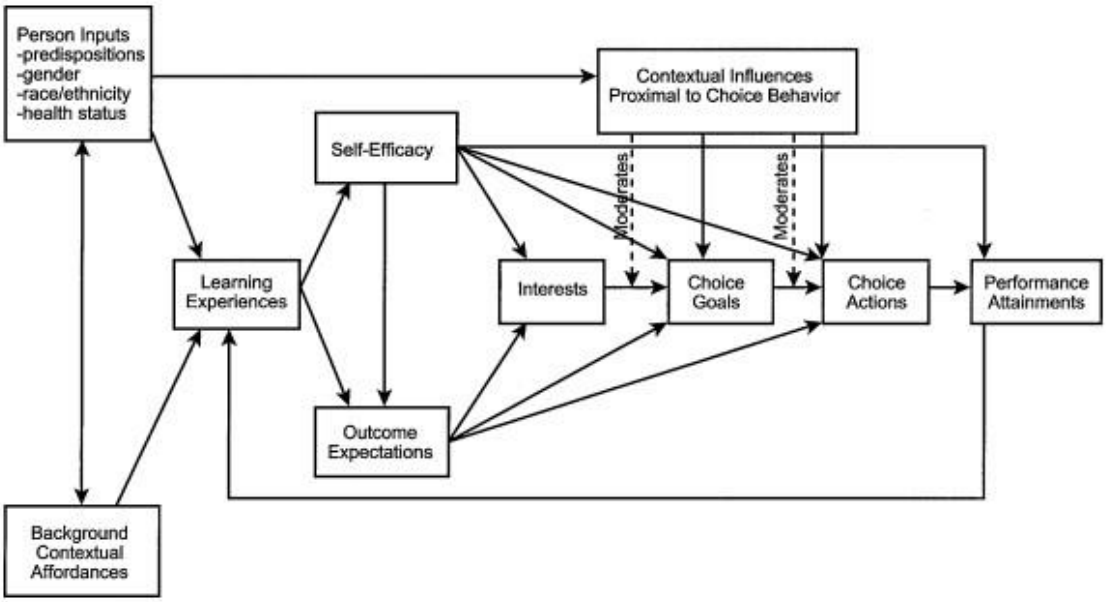

FIGURE 3. Reprinted from Lent et al. (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory Choice Model.

As it relates to career, individual goals must, at times, be configured or reconfigured within the norms and guidelines of the larger organization or institution. For professionals committed to equity and inclusion, participation in diversity training as professional development is a conscious choice (within the context of this study). Similarly, some professionals may forego professional development in exchange for alternative opportunities for skill development. Acknowledging that choice may, at times, require the negotiation of barriers is a critical component of this model. Although diversity training is common practice within many colleges and universities, some institutions may opt for alternatives, providing different or additional choices for development. As it relates to the present study, the participant's decision to pursue professional development through CAB is depicted in the adapted Choice Model in Figure 4.

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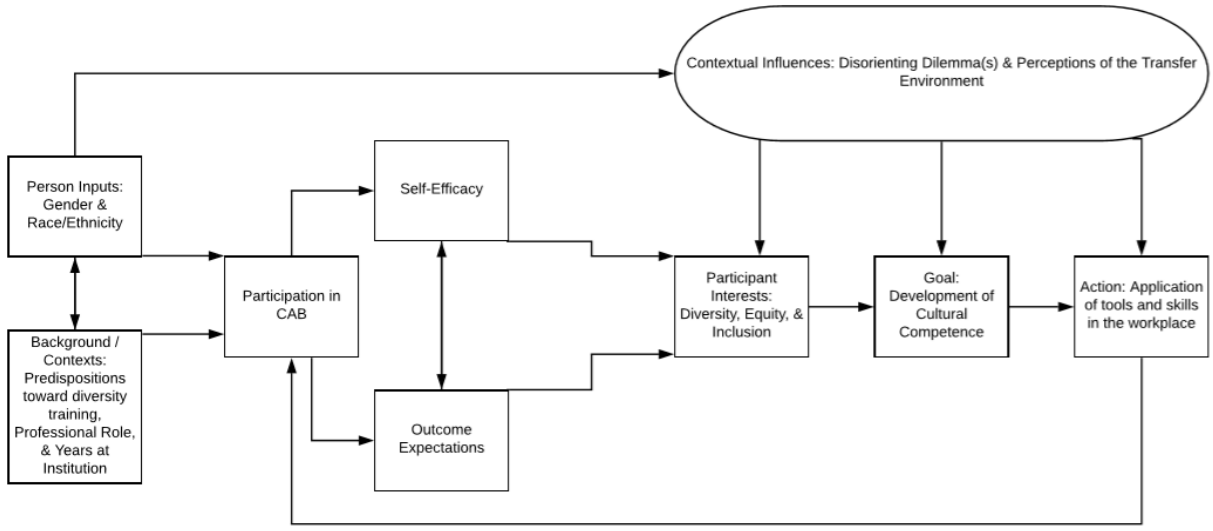

FIGURE 4. CAB Choice Model.

The Performance Model

The Performance Model (Figure 5) is concerned with the persistent pursuit of individual accomplishments. Within the bounds of this study, the mere completion of an extended diversity training program could be considered a factor in personal performance. However, the application of skills and new knowledge after program completion is more critical to participants' individual development. These factors more adequately reflect individual performance. For instance, the performance model can understand participants' perceptions of their ability to better engage peers or colleagues as a result of program completion.

The creation and implementation of transfer strategies (Roberson et al., 2009; Noe et al., 1990), though employed at the individual level, are primarily influenced by external factors or what Burke and Baldwin (1999) referred to as transfer climates (Roberson et al., 2009). Transfer climates are reflected in the work environments program participants re-enter at the program's close. These environments may or may not mirror the larger atmosphere of a particular campus or university. Individual interpretation of experiences within a given climate could influence the implementation of a transfer strategy or an opportunity for program participants to put new learning to use.

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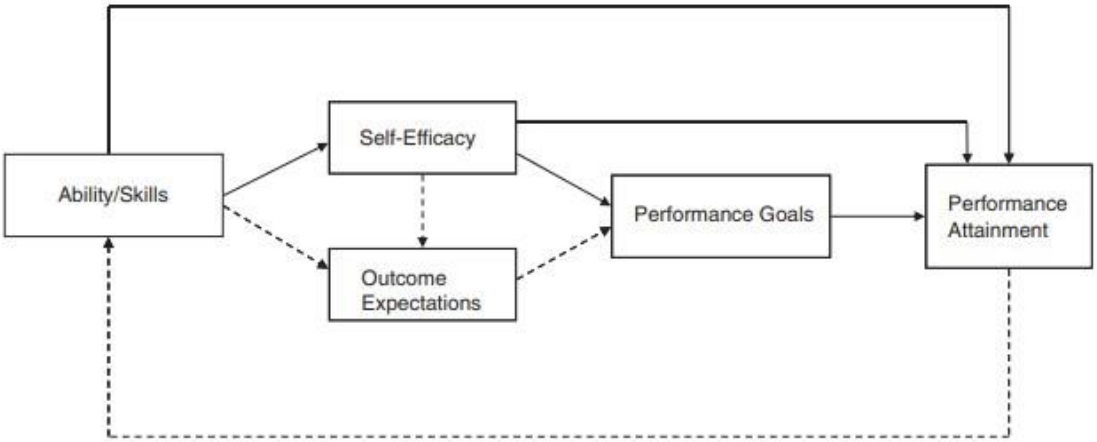

FIGURE 5. Reprinted from S.D. Brown et al. (2011).

Figure 6 presents an adapted Performance Model for the present study; it represents opportunities for application among CAB program participants. Although this process is rooted in individual transformation, it is essential to note that learning cannot be genuinely transformative in isolation, much like career progression. In essence, diversity training can act as a mode of capacity building. An institution's capacity to engage its community and its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity simultaneously encourage individual community members' joint development (Taylor et al., 2013).

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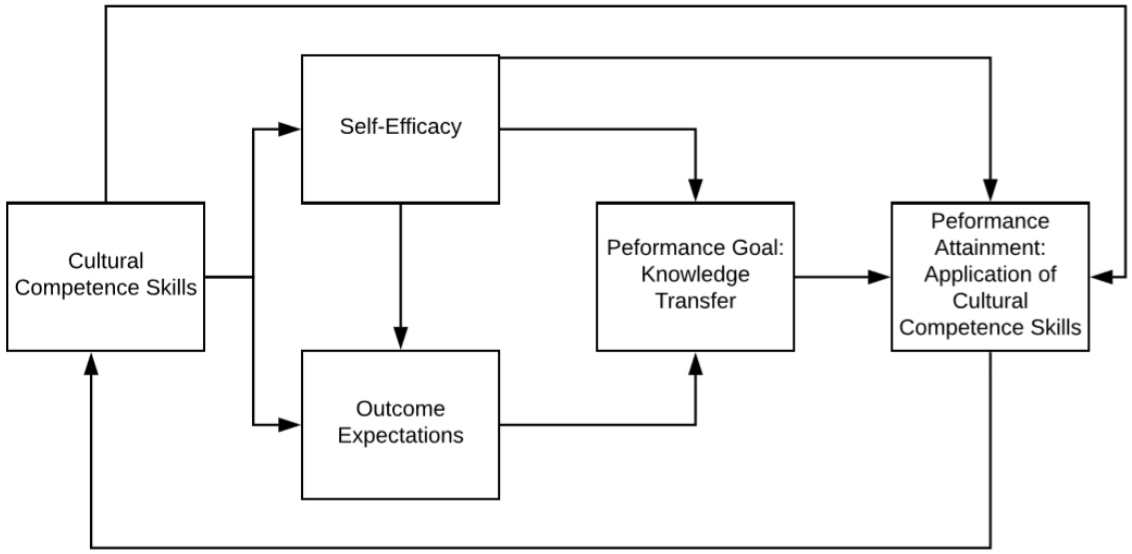

FIGURE 6. CAB Performance Model.

Methodology

A case study design was the most appropriate methodology for this study. The program of interest was bounded; therefore, a finite number of possible study participants were available for data collection. Specifically, this study followed a mixed methods, convergent case study design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) conducted in two phases, as outlined in Figure 7. The first phase employed qualitative methods, collecting data through one-on-one interviews of CAB training program participants. The second phase included a secondary analysis of quantitative data collected via self-assessment before, during, and after participation in CAB. Quantitative evidence gathered from self-assessments allowed the researcher to understand better how CAB program participants perceive their levels of cultural competence as a result of the training program, while qualitative evidence explained the feasibility of applying newly developed skills in the long term and the inherent impact of such applications. Notably, the qualitative data component was the primary focus of this study.

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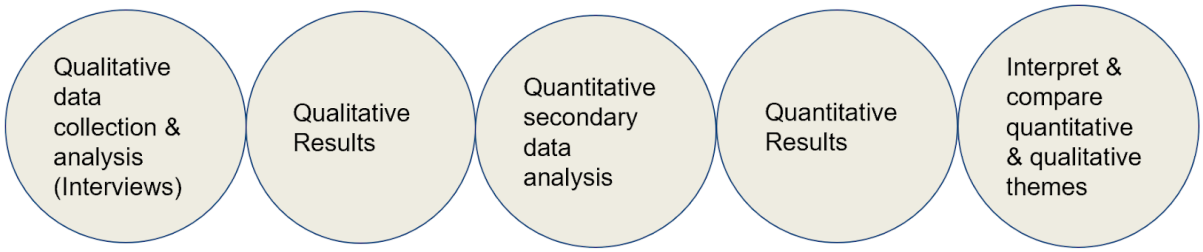

FIGURE 7. Research Design of the Study: Convergent Mixed Methods Design.

Through secondary data analysis, the researchers were positioned to explore factors impacting the development and application of skills throughout the training experience. Further exploration of the impact of CAB training on professional identity development and career is best accounted for through participant narrative; hence, the selection of a mixed methods research design. As a pragmatic research inquiry, the present study is framed through a theoretical and practical lens (Paul, 2005). As a result, exploring participants' personal beliefs and constructing, questioning, refining, and reframing those beliefs are vital components in developing new knowledge and understanding cultural competence.

Phase 1: Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

Purposive sampling was used in the recruitment of interview participants. Twenty-six potential interviewees were invited to participate in the study via email (one of the researchers was a cohort member and therefore left out of the invitations). A total of 11 participants opted to participate in the interview portion of the study, representing 44% of the total cohort. Self-identified participant demographics are as follows: Six White women, two White men, two Black women, and one Black man. Participants represent various roles across the institution, including faculty, staff, and administrators.

The semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix A, but it is important to note that five goals (and corresponding Research Questions) shaped this protocol (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Study Goals and Corresponding Research Questions

Goal	Corresponding Research Question
Goal 1. To understand how participation in Cultural Awareness Building (CAB) training has impacted participants' professional identity and career paths	Research Question (d)
Goal 2. To understand from the participant's perspective their experience (from a social-	Research Question (b)

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interpersonal perspective) navigating workspaces before and after CAB program participation)	
Goal 3. To understand perceived levels of self-efficacy amongst participants	Research Questions (b) and (c)
Goal 4. To understand whether or not the skills taught within the CAB program transferred to the workplace	Research Question (c)
Goal 5. To understand the connection between self-reported levels of cultural competence and participation in CAB	Research Question (a)

To improve the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, participants were notified at the end of each interview of an opportunity to review the interview transcript (Merriam, 2009); however, all participants declined. As a result, the researchers moved forward with the coding process using *Atlas.ti* software. One interview transcript was selected for initial coding using five a priori codes based on the study's research questions: (a) perceived level of cultural competence, (b) inclusive engagement, (c) skill application, (d) professional identity, and (e) career progression. Before data collection for this study began, CAB program participants were notified of the immediate termination of the CAB training program and any pending training experiences. Interview questions for the study were not adjusted as a result of program termination; however, all study participants discussed the impact of the abrupt conclusion of the program on their skill application and willingness to engage in future programs. This shift facilitated what emerged as in vivo codes and thematic areas for analysis, revealing seven additional codes: (a) community seeking, (b) a desire for structured learning/training, (c) the training experience, (d) conflict resolution, (e) ending of the CAB program, (f) trust/institutional commitment, and (g) language. As themes emerged, they were added to a comprehensive coding guide that listed each code, its associated definition, and decision trees for assigning codes. The remaining transcripts were coded using the guide.

As codes and themes emerged, they were subsequently categorized and grouped according to their relevance to the interest, choice, or performance model of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 2002). This study's research questions provided direction for codes and models most closely aligned. During analysis, some codes were combined to give a more well-rounded depiction of the participant experience. Table 2 provides a snapshot of qualitative findings explored within the context of SCCT (Lent et al., 2002), and a thorough explanation can be found in the following sections.

Phase 2: Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

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CAB participants were asked to complete a 34-item multicultural skills self-assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of the 13-month training experience (see Appendix B). The assessment was selected for use through the collaborative efforts of the university and external consultants brought in to facilitate the train-the-trainer program. The assessment was intended to gauge participants' perceived proficiency level involving many skills related to multiculturalism and cultural competence. Notably, the developers of the self-assessment tool acknowledge the use of the Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986), as well as elements of established organizational environment scales for assessment of attitude change over time, as influencers in the development of this tool. As a result, many of the items were specifically derived from and linked to the goals of the training. Assessment items addressed elements of learning, communication, application of skills, and comfort in receiving feedback. The interval-scaled, Likert-type assessment captured a wide range of ability levels.

Items for the tool were crafted and developed based on expertise. Still, neither instrument items nor pilot test scores were analyzed for validity or reliability as part of the developmental process. Likewise, while this tool was not developed for use as a pre-post assessment, the first and final self-evaluations taken at the beginning and end of CAB training were included in secondary data analysis. Therefore, this method was chosen as the data pairing provided the most relevant information for the present study. Specifically, secondary data analysis was conducted using self-evaluation data completed by CAB participants on the first and last day of the 13-month training program.

The university granted the researchers access to de-identified self-assessment data per the direction of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Though data for secondary analysis was de-identified, the researchers requested that evaluations be paired using numerical sequencing before receiving the data so that each participant's responses could be compared over time. This allowed the researchers to maximize data usage and adhere to anonymity requirements.

At the time of the conclusion of the training, there were 21 participants, all of whom completed the final self-assessment. The data set was cleaned and reviewed for missing values and invalid responses; as a result, some cases were removed pairwise during analysis via SPSS software. Only 18 surveys were used in secondary data analysis based on completing the twelve items analyzed. Due to the de-identification of the data, there was no way to remove the one involved researcher's self-assessments from the group. This did not negatively impact data analysis, as it allowed for a richer understanding of all participants' perceptions.

The researchers analyzed data using SPSS software. Quantitative data analysis consisted of descriptive statistical analyses of the data, exploratory factor analysis to assess the internal structure of the instrument and measurement validity, and a series of paired sample t-tests. Due

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to the nature of the research questions and the small sample size, inferential statistics were not appropriate. The self-assessment was a pre-established tool, and all items were not relevant for this study; thus, specific items from the self-assessment were selected based on their alignment with the SCCT model and this study for further review. Selected items address skills and outcomes that focus on interpersonal interactions, as opposed to personal attitudes and beliefs concerning equity and inclusion, in support of the researchers' interest in participants' perceptions of skill development over time. These items were grouped into the following categories (factors) for exploratory factor analysis: opportunities for exposure, opportunities for engagement, and opportunities for implementation.

Merging the Data

In preparation for data merging, the researchers considered threats to internal validity in qualitative and quantitative analyses. Threats of maturation, social desirability, instrumentation, and researcher bias were possible during the qualitative data collection phase, just as statistical regression and pretesting were potential threats to internal validity related to secondary data analysis. Maturation was considered as participants are all employed by a single institution; new jobs, relocation, etc. may cause participants to leave the institution, making them ineligible for study participation. The researchers engaged in reflective journaling to bracket assumptions and biases (Merriam, 2009).

During this final stage of analysis, the merging of the two forms of data, interview transcript data and self-assessment data, were triangulated using factors associated with SCCT to explore participants' perceptions and experiences through parallel databases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Two strategies were implemented to merge the data. The first strategy was to identify themes in both quantitative and qualitative findings and compare, contrast, and synthesize results. The second strategy focused on shared themes by conducting further analyses to relate the data. Upon completion, the merged results are explored in the discussion to address differences, similarities, and ultimately a more thorough understanding of study implications.

Results

Throughout the interview process, the cyclical nature of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 2002) and participant progression through each phase of the model was revealed. The SCCT framework focuses on the interest, choice, and performance models. Within the context of this study, the application of this framework is intended to shape participants' interest in cultural competence, their decision to pursue development in this area, and the opportunity to apply and perform new skills as a result of their learning. Applied in this way, the SCCT model encompasses the participant's experiences in a cultural awareness building program (CAB) in

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their entirety. It considers participants' initial interests or introduction to diversity within the context of their profession, their choice or decision to pursue professional development in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion more intentionally, and ultimately their application of skills or performance based on new knowledge. Therefore, the results presented in Table 2 and the following sub-sections reflect participants' journeys through initial interest development, decision making, and performance and then back into more refined interest development with shifted focus and commitment.

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TABLE 2. Snapshot of Qualitative Thematic Results

SCCT Model	Analytic Code/Thematic Area	Influencers
The Interest Model	Perceived Cultural competence	• Personal Commitments • Personal Experience • Isolated Strengths • Previous Exposure
	Community Seeking	• Long-term Commitment • Connection to the Institution • Connection to Peers
	Structured Learning	• Traditional Learning Opportunities • Perceived Added Value to the Institution
The Choice Model	Professional Identity	• External Perceptions • Visibility as a CAB cohort Member • Sense of Responsibility
	Career Progression	• Reconsider, Reconfigure, Reframe Career Options • Use of Voice/Acting as an Advocate • Behavior Shifts • Stronger Connections with Students and Peers • More Intentional Job Searches
The Performance Model	Skill Application/Inclusive Engagement/ Language	• Day-to-Day Unit/Departmental Function • Modeling • Shared Language
	Termination of CAB	• Feelings of Abandonment • Feelings of Powerlessness • Lack of Clarity for Next Steps • New Opportunities
	Institutional Commitment	• Lack of Trust • Shifted Personal and Professional Investments

The Interest Model

The Interest Model focuses on the role of individual interests and motivations affecting specific choices intended to enhance inclusive behavior and skill acquisition. Within the context of participant interviews, these interests are explored through the lens of three codes: Perceived cultural competence, community seeking, and a desire for structured learning experiences and opportunities related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their perceived level of cultural

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competence influenced participants' desire for a community experience through structured learning opportunities.

Participants' Perceived Cultural Competence

CAB program participants entered the training program with varied experiences and levels of expertise. Participants reporting higher levels of cultural competence opted to participate in CAB to enhance pre-existing skills. Participants who reported lower levels of cultural competence were drawn to CAB primarily by personal experience, family structure, and professional exposure. Chloe stated,

> Everything that I had run into up to that point felt like I needed to be an expert, and it felt like I had to have this deep content knowledge and expertise. I knew that there were only pieces of my identity where I could offer that from a different perspective, so I didn't feel skilled enough, and I didn't feel like I had enough of an access point to generally go into that and be accepted and be valuable. (personal communication, November 2018)

For some participants, their perceived levels of competence can be understood as an outcome of their commitments to diversity and inclusion. They described these commitments as ongoing and blossoming elements of their core worldview, developed from personal experiences. However, a clear sense of isolated strengths was evident among many participants. Moreover, these perceived strengths were often tied to some aspect of identity; race, gender, ability status, sexual orientation, and lived experiences more broadly.

Community Seeking

A vested interest in becoming part of something greater emerged throughout the interview. What followed the development of initial participant interests in diversity, equity, and inclusion for some was a desire for camaraderie as an element of their learning. An opportunity to engage in long-term development with a defined group of people played a fundamental role in their decision to pursue CAB. This was especially important for participants who pursued CAB partly due to their lack of familiarity with the institution. For participants who had recently joined the university, the perceived institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion influenced their decision to pursue CAB to understand better and become more connected to the institution.

> "Having been new, [The institution] obviously challenges and values, the diversity and inclusion aspect of identity, and being new, I figured one of the best ways to understand the whole organization is to get involved with something that's quick to heart..." (Veronica, personal communication, November 2018)

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Desire for Structured Learning

Individual interests often led participants to more isolated learning through the informal pursuit of knowledge, without the added benefits of more formal or traditional learning methods. Equally valued among participants was the prospect of an opportunity to engage in leadership and skill-building opportunities recognized by the institution.

> "I was kind of flying by the seat of my pants in a lot of instances...it would be nice to be able to say I've been trained in a method…" (Alexis, personal communication, November 2018). Still, the structure of the experience and their interest in CAB was less critical for participants than their perceived level of cultural competence before the training experience and their desire to identify a community of practice within the campus community.

The Choice Model

The Choice Model focuses on individual goals and the actions required to achieve them. Participants' decisions or choices to pursue CAB training to achieve their goals of increased and demonstrable cultural competence are explored through the lens of two themes: Professional identity and career progression. These themes examine elements of the training experience and participants' voices. Participants' perceived and labeled professional identities served as indicators for engagement and interaction with peers and career progression and transition.

Professional Identity

Individual perceptions and labels proposed and espoused by supervisors and colleagues were critical components of participants' sense of self and embodied their roles as learners and practitioners of diversity, equity, and inclusion. At varying degrees, each participant shared keen insights regarding how they viewed themselves before, during, and after the training experience and how those perceptions were propelled and impacted by those around them. As a result, the impact of external influencers was experienced at multiple levels of professional identity. These experiences include revelations of increased visibility and an impending responsibility as a result, as well as the unanticipated development of an institutional subculture of ownership.

The visibility that accompanied membership in the CAB training cohort impacted not only the experiences of participants during the training program but continued to play a vital role in their identity upon reentry to the workplace following program completion and its eventual termination. Overall, participants expressed an emboldened willingness and desire to "ask the tough questions", to "get the group to think…to reconsider." This sense of self and repositioning

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of identity carried weight for many participants. Assuming the role of CAB facilitator came with a responsibility and an acknowledgment that cultivating an inclusive and equitable culture was everyone's job. The intersection of personal and institutional responsibility became increasingly apparent. Active responsibility required more than a passive understanding of this concept. It required participants to perform the responsibility through skill application and intentional engagement. For example, Dianna (personal communication, November 2018) shared the following: "It's put me out there as somebody who does that work…" and "When you put yourself into a role, and you're doing the thing, then you're putting yourself out there as a person who does that work and who others could come to if they had a question. And so, when others see you a certain way, then you start to see yourself that way, too…"

Owning the space and the notion of cultivating a culture of ownership emerged as participants reflected on their experiences and the work they've been able to do as a result of CAB program participation. For many participants, the aforementioned merging of personal and institutional responsibility in creating a deep-rooted culture that values, promotes, and actively pursues equity and inclusion was taken on as an added element of professional identity. For many participants, an urge to become more intentionally engaged across the university surfaced during the program.

Career Progression

Reconsidering, reconfiguring, and reframing professional identity and engagement were consistently highlighted as participants reflected on how CAB has impacted their day-to-day professional experience and where they may look to go in the future. For Anne, CAB provided an opportunity for development as a facilitator and workshop designer, a career path she hopes to return to at some point. For others, the process restored and, in some instances, helped them find their voice, modeling and normalizing for peers and colleagues.

Many participants attributed a newfound voice or willingness to speak up in public and private spaces to the training experience. The openness of a training experience that did not allow for expressions of blame and shame empowered participants to learn out loud by way of personal and authentic engagement. Noticeable differences in behavior and engagement were everyday experiences for many participants. Whether or not participants intend to remain at the university, their choice to participate in CAB has already impacted how they view themselves as professionals and the role they will hold in moving their workplaces toward inclusion and equity.

> "My supervisor says it all the time... "Ever since you started that process, I've noticed a difference in the way that you approach the work and in the way that you talk to other people." (Chloe, personal communication, November 2018)

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The Performance Model

The Performance Model is concerned with the persistent pursuit of individual accomplishments. Critical to the personal development of participants is the application of skills and new knowledge following program completion. Participants' pursuit of professional achievements is explored through; skill application and inclusive engagement, language, perceptions of institutional commitment, and the eventual termination of the CAB program. As participants' interests and commitments increased, CAB skills were applied more intentionally. Likewise, as participants' perceptions of institutional commitment shifted with the ending of the CAB training program, so did their professional obligations to the institution.

Skill Application, Inclusive Engagement, and Language

Participants have chosen to enact newly developed skills in many ways. For some, elements of the CAB training experience have been implemented in the routine functioning of their unit or department. Conversely, some participants remain in a state of personal development, continuing to be mindful of patience with others and themselves.

Interview data revealed new levels of understanding regarding the nuance of identity, both personal and professional, in the interactions of CAB program participants and their peers who had not gone through the training experience. What emerged was the critical value of a shared language, the importance of modeling espoused behaviors in real-time, and shifted perspective concerning the conflict in the workplace.

Participants' awareness of their levels of cultural competence continued to influence their comfort level in engaging with peers on matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As their perceived levels of cultural competence continued to develop, so did their comfort level. Notably, participants overall were more comfortable engaging with other CAB participants, partially due to the development of a shared language and an established level of trust within the cohort.

Following the CAB experience, no participants perceived themselves as an expert. Instead, many participants conceived of the most effective application of their abilities through the lens of a normalizer.

> "...When I model those behaviors that [CAB]taught me, from all the questioning, the noticing, the appreciating, and all of that, that it can help ... It will help normalize that for other people who maybe look like me or belong to a similar category to me." (Dianna, personal communication, November 2018)

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Participants view themselves as learners and practitioners simultaneously, influencing the culture by modeling behavior that will ideally become normalized and, therefore, accessible to their colleagues and peers. For many participants, these strategies have facilitated career advancement and opportunities to reconsider, reconfigure, and reframe their self-identified and perceived professional identity.

Shifted thought processes had led many participants to be more mindful of the impact of language. Language is one of the most common tools participants have been able to apply to expand personal, professional, and institutional commitments. As a cohort, participants share a common language, the result of which has been an intentional integration of this shared language within the workplace.

Termination of CAB

A change in leadership and vision led to the abrupt termination of the program. This unplanned shift meant that many participants had not considered what their next steps might be toward these efforts. Participants entered into the CAB program under the premise of a three-year institutional commitment. Now comfortable to begin engaging the campus community through training and facilitation, some expressed concern about their newly developed skills. “I do feel like, I feel a little more emboldened to speak up., But I don’t think I sit in a place of power. So I don’t know if I’m really able to do as much as I would like at a big university level” (Alexis, personal communication, November 2018).

Institutional Commitment

With fewer opportunities to engage in the same kinds of work on the same grand scale at the university, many participants have chosen to disengage and seek opportunities to do the work elsewhere. The institution’s forward-facing commitments to equity and inclusion were in question for many participants, largely due to the experience of program termination. Though perceptions of institutional commitment shifted for many participants, their commitment to actively engaging issues of equity and inclusion remained intact.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Results from the quantitative data analysis represented participants’ perceptions of their abilities, knowledge, and skills during the CAB training experience.

Program Entry Self-assessment

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Items from the self-evaluation were grouped into the following categories for factor analysis: opportunities for exposure, engagement, and implementation opportunities. These factors are framed within the context of SCCT to highlight the interest model (exposure), the choice model (engagement), and the performance model (implementation) (Table 3). Cronbach's alpha was selected as the most appropriate measure of scale reliability to assess internal consistency. Alpha scores indicate high levels of reliability and a strong internal structure concerning the instrument items selected for analysis.

The interval-scaled, 5-point Likert-type assessment captured a wide range of ability levels from inexperienced (0) to expert (5) (Appendix B). Descriptive statistics were gathered for program entry data. Overall, items classified as opportunities for exposure (M = 3.6) were scored highest, followed by opportunities for engagement (M = 3.3) and then opportunities for implementation (M = 3). Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 3. Mean scores suggest that, on average, upon entry to the training experience, participants ranked their ability to respond to encounters with or recognize opportunities for exposure to matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion as intermediate or advanced. Coming into the training experience, participants' greatest strength was in "Asking questions to increase my understanding of another person's experience and point of view." Participants struggled to conceptualize large-scale, institutional responses to bias and exclusion. This is not surprising, as many participants point to CAB as their first entry point into formal diversity training, particularly as an element of professional development.

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Table 3. SNAPSHOT OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

			First Day Descriptive Statistics			Last Day Descriptive Statistics	
SCCT Model Application	Item		Mean	Std. Deviation		Mean	Std. Deviation
Interest Model (Exposure)	Listening for information about other's experiences and truths	Cronbach's alpha = .91	3.72	1.018	Cronbach's alpha = .73	4.44	.511
	Asking questions to increase my understanding of another person's experience and point of view		3.94	.639		4.44	.616
	Affirming other people's experiences even though they are different from my experiences		3.61	.979		4.44	.511
	Gaining perspective on other people's interpretations of their experiences, even though their interpretation may differ from my interpretation of them		3.39	1.037		4.22	.428
Choice Model (Engagement)	Noticing what could be, or are, cultural differences between myself and others	Cronbach's alpha = .92	3.50	1.249	Cronbach's alpha = .54	4.50	.514
	Using feelings as data to influence my thoughts and behaviors		3.39	1.145		4.17	.618
	Exploring and admitting my cultural mistakes		3.33	1.085		4.44	.511
	Exploring and admitting my prejudices		3.28	1.127		4.39	.608
Performance Model (Implementation)	Receiving feedback on my behavior that others experience as insensitive or oppressive	Cronbach's alpha = .94	3.39	1.243	Cronbach's alpha = .78	4.39	.778
	Asking for feedback on my behavior to learn if others experience it as insensitive or oppressive		3.39	1.335		4.39	.608
	Exploring potential institutional responses to oppression and the ISM		2.72	1.364		4.06	.725
	Using the personal and institutional power I have to challenge institutionalized oppression and the ISMS		2.83	1.465		4.28	.669

Program Exit Self-assessment

Conversely, descriptive statistics for the final self-evaluation (Table 3) highlight growth among participants in *all* areas. Overall ability levels for items classified as opportunities for exposure (M = 4.4) were equal to opportunities for engagement (M = 4.4), and opportunities for implementation (M = 4.3) were similar. These mean scores suggest that, on average, upon reentry to the workplace, participants' perceived ability to respond to and recognize opportunities for exposure, engagement, and skill implementation are consistently elevated compared to participant perceptions entering the training experience. An analysis of internal consistency was repeated with the post-training data set. Notably, alpha levels decreased significantly (Table 3). Cronbach's alpha level scores for the interest and performance models were moderate, but the alpha score for the choice model was of concern. Scores indicate a more varied range of participant responses in their final evaluation, likely leading to lower reliability measures. Entering the training experience, many participants did not have a baseline of comparison. They were unaccustomed to considering their cultural competence level or ability to apply skills that reflect any of the competencies being assessed in the evaluation tool.

Furthermore, participants may have a more nuanced understanding of the questions after completing the training. Additionally, the use of a single instrument three times throughout the

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training experience likely may have resulted in participant fatigue. Descriptive statistics from post-training data reveal mean increases compared to pre-training mean scores, an indicator that participants' perceived level of competence in these areas increased, despite a wider range of scores.

Comparative Quantitative Analysis

A series of paired-samples *t*-Tests were run to analyze changes in reported ability levels from the beginning to the end of the CAB training program (Table 3). Notably, however, the paired samples correlation reveals small to medium effect sizes for each item pair. Third variables may influence these results, as other measured or unmeasured variables affect participants' responses. Additionally, limitations of instrumentation may be in effect. Increased self-evaluation scores from the first to the final evaluation indicate a positive shift in perceived ability among participants. For both pre and post-training data, participants perceived their skills to be lower in the performance model, especially regarding their ability to respond to institutional challenges. Quantitative data results are aligned with participant reports throughout the interview process. Of note is the time element; self-evaluation data was collected during the training experience, while interviews were conducted one year after training concluded. This separation suggests that participants experienced increased skill development within the training process and could sustain that development through an application over time, one year later.

Review of Findings

Study findings indicate that participants anticipate lasting effects from the CAB training experience. They routinely highlight how they can incorporate new learning into their current professional role and pursue new opportunities. For some participants, the training experience introduced new professional opportunities and organizational expectations. For participants, CAB introduced a reconfiguration of what it means to engage and work in spaces where institutional and organizational commitments are aligned with personal commitments. CAB participants sought tangible evidence of this through policy, procedure, and practice.

The second goal of this study was to understand from the participant's perspective their experience (through a social-interpersonal lens) navigating workspaces before and after CAB program participation. In response to the research question (b), How has participation in extended diversity training affected participants' efforts to engage in inclusive practices and behaviors? Findings revealed that participants practiced varied levels of engagement before CAB training. Simply by virtue of their professional role, some participants were more actively engaged in discussions and change-making. For others, conversations on equity and inclusion were isolated and infrequent; despite professed institutional commitments. Participants with roles

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requiring consistent interaction with students at any level were more accustomed to the traditional diversity dialogue than those who did not engage with students regularly.

Following CAB training, all participants expressed deep commitment to intentionally and actively cultivating a sense of belonging and inclusion in the workplace through shared language, shifts in policy, and more thoughtful interpersonal interactions with colleagues and peers. Inherent to this shift are opportunities to clarify commitments and expectations. In alignment with this study's third goal: to understand perceived levels of self-efficacy amongst participants and research question (c), How do participants utilize the skills and tools developed through extended diversity training in their roles as higher education professionals? Participants' perceived level of self-efficacy increased as a result of the training program. Self-evaluation data further supports changes in participants' perceptions and skills as they develop throughout the training experience.

Participants reported opportunities for skill application in a multitude of ways, the most critical and frequent of which being matters of conflict resolution. Though not anticipated as a critical outcome for participants, conflict resolution was repeatedly labeled as one of the greatest areas for skill application. Participants pointed to their ability to recognize the intersection of personal identity and working relationships as a critical component in their ability to consider what factors are at play in workplace disputes; and, more importantly, their ability to consider various and sometimes conflicting perspectives to reach resolve.

The fourth goal of the study was to understand whether the skills taught within the CAB training program transferred to the workplace; it was also aligned with the research question (c). Participant results indicated that skills taught within the program were easily transferred to the workplace, and their implementation has had a noticeable impact. Many participants highlighted the guidelines used to facilitate their interaction within the training as their baseline for workplace interaction. Some participants keep the guidelines visible in their office space; others have shared them with friends and colleagues.

The final goal of this study was to understand the connection between self-reported levels of cultural competence and participation in CAB, in collaboration with the research question (a) How are perceived levels of cultural competence in higher education professionals impacted by participation in an extended diversity training program? The personal nature of their decision to pursue the CAB training program emerged most clearly from participant data. When asked to describe their commitment to diversity and inclusion, participants described deeply rooted hurt and personal commitments to friends, family, and self as influencers. Access to resources and a community of peers engaged in this work has enhanced and increased perceived levels of competence among all participants. As indicated in self-evaluation data, participants' matched

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responses revealed elevated levels of skill and understanding. All participants point to CAB as a key part of that development.

Ultimately, the study findings revealed critical opportunities for application and understanding. A continuously evolving student demographic and even the slowest diversification of university professionals should lead institutions to anticipate increases in engagement. Institutions can anticipate a desire for increased opportunities to engage in diversity-related work and elevated expectations of institutional commitment as the campus community diversifies. For study participants, access to resources and a community of peers engaged in this work enhanced and increased perceived levels of competence. As a result, institutions looking to cultivate a sense of belonging must recognize the value of a multi-dimensional, equity-based skill set in their endeavors. When professionals are more attuned to the perspectives and worldviews of those around them, they are better equipped to respond to the unique needs of peers and colleagues.

What Does This Mean for Higher Education?

As frequently identified intended outcomes of diversity training, especially within professional development, skill development and application are critical in establishing sustainable shifts in campus climate and culture. As a result, institutions anticipate a desire for increased opportunities to engage in the work and elevated expectations of institutional commitment. Though that expectation was not met through the experience of study participants, the desire for follow-up and follow-through was apparent. When professionals commit to engaging in matters of diversity on their campus, they assume that the university will match that commitment and leverage their efforts through institutional change.

A secondary intended outcome of many diversity training is to assist in cultivating a sense of belonging. In applying their newly developed skills, participants realized the multi-dimensional nature of their equity-focused skill set. For instance, though a participant may have set out to be more inclusive in their language, the dual outcome of this skill implementation is that it can be used to resolve conflict while simultaneously cultivating a sense of belonging. Study results suggest that the most frequently reported opportunity for skill application was in matters of conflict resolution. Participants' newly developed or enhanced equity-based skill set further equipped them to respond and provide feedback in a way that colleagues and peers received well because it was connected to the essence of who they are, personally and professionally.

Furthermore, a new lens and perspective on what it means to give and receive feedback within a workplace setting meant that participants were better equipped with the tools to engage in diversity and inclusion and more intentionally engage the core needs and requirements of basic communication. As a result, a skill set developed with equity and inclusion reflected and responded to broader requirements of effective communication and leadership. Participant

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reflections of interactions with supervisors and peers following the CAB training experience support this notion.

The tools acquired through participation in diversity training can enhance engagement with matters of equity and inclusion in support of more authentic interpersonal interaction. This is particularly important as university demographics become more reflective of a global campus community. These tools should represent the core of professional development experiences moving forward. Study results point to the effects of diversity training as a holistic professional development experience by addressing the humanistic nature of higher education and the work of professionals engaging and navigating the campus communities of which they are a part. In this study, whether cultural competence is developed and demonstrated in professional roles via CAB participation is not functionally examined. Therefore, this could be an area of future research encouraged by this study's results.

Limitations

Five significant limitations impacted this study: Generalizability, instrumentation, participant bias/fatigue, researcher bias, and reliability. The generalizability of the study is low given the very small and non-replicable sample; however, it is anticipated that general study findings can be applied to various educational institutions. Limitations on instrumentation were present, as the self-evaluation used in secondary data analysis was not analyzed for validity or reliability before its use with the sample. Further, participant bias and fatigue were likely, as participants were asked to complete the self-evaluation three times following long training experiences. The validity and reliability of qualitative data were impacted by participants' decision not to review their transcripts. As a result, transcripts were reviewed by a single researcher. Though efforts were taken to bracket researcher bias, it is possible that the researcher's relationship with participants impacted what they were and were not willing to share in the interview process. Likewise, as the single reviewer of interview data, it is possible that the researcher analyzed and evaluated data with added knowledge and context despite bracketing attempts. As a member of the CAB training cohort, the researcher possessed a network of established connections and a nuanced understanding of contextual experiences.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe your personal commitment to diversity and inclusion?
2. What led you to get involved with diversity and inclusion efforts on campus?
    a. With BIC specifically?
3. Describe what was it like walking into that first day of the BIC training process
4. How do you see issues of equity and inclusion related to your professional role?
5. How has your participation in BIC impacted the way you engage and interact with colleagues?
6. How would you describe your level of knowledge or skills in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion prior to the BIC workshop?
7. How has the program impacted your knowledge or skills related to areas of diversity, equity and inclusion?
8. Describe a time when you experienced or witnessed mistreatment VCU related to some aspect of diversity and inclusion since getting involved in BIC.
    a. What role did BIC play in your response to that scenario?
9. How has participating in BIC impacted how you view your role at VCU?
    a. Describe a time when you've incorporated the skills and tools you've learned in your professional role.
10. How would you describe the overall impact BIC has had on you as an individual?
11. How do you see the skills and tools you developed from BIC impacting your career in the long term?

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APPENDIX B

Multicultural Skills Self-Assessment

Based on the VISIONS Inc. Multicultural Skills Self-Assessment by Cooper Thompson & Angela Bryant, VISIONS Inc.

The following assessment is to gauge your perceived proficiency level of the following skills. We recognize that some terminology used in the assessment may not be familiar, but please answer to the best of your ability. We also recognize that people have multiple and intersecting identities[1]; thus, when answering these questions, it may help if you consider the identities you believe are relevant.

We are asking that you share your name on this survey so that we can return it to you later, allowing you to reflect on your pre-training answers as you progress through the Building Inclusive Communities VISIONS training. Please note these surveys will only be viewed/reviewed by VISIONS staff and the [Redacted] Division for Inclusive Excellence BIC training staff. Aggregate data of the survey results will be presented to the Division for Inclusive Excellence leadership.

Please use the following scale in this self-assessment. The scale captures a wide range of ability levels from no awareness to expert.

0 - Inexperienced - No awareness or understanding about this concept, skill or technique
1 - Awareness –basic knowledge of these skills and techniques
2 - Novice –basic knowledge plus limited experience with using these skills and techniques
3 - Intermediate - have used these skills occasionally or able to perform these techniques in various settings on occasion
4 - Advanced – regularly use these skills or able to perform these techniques in various settings
5 - Expert –recognized as an authority in the use of these skills and techniques in a myriad of situations or settings

_____1. Learning about the impact of oppression on members of historically -**excluded** groups

_____2. Learning about the impact of oppression on members of historically- **included** groups

_____3. Listening for information about other's experiences and truths

_____4. Asking questions to increase my understanding of another person's experience and point of view

[1] Identities can be a variety of things: profession, socioeconomic status, race, gender, class, orientation, status, generation/age, religion, etc.

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_____5. (a) Affirming other people's experiences even though they are different from my experiences

_____5. (b) Gaining perspective on other people's interpretations of their experiences, even though their interpretation may differ from my interpretation of them

_____6. Moving at another person's pace

_____7. Recognizing the presence of institutional barriers that prevent members of historically-**excluded** groups from having equal access to power and authority

_____8. Recognizing how institutional barriers maintain the power of members of historically-**included** groups

_____9. Appreciating my contributions to the culture and climate at VCU

_____10. Appreciating others' contributions to the culture and climate at VCU

_____11. Noticing what could be, or are, cultural differences between myself and others

_____12. Valuing the culturally different ways that other people express themselves

_____13. Possessing the capacity to identify, understand and respond to emotions in myself in a healthy manner

_____14. Possessing the capacity to identify, understand and respond to emotions in others in a healthy manner

_____15. Using feelings as data to influence my thoughts and behaviors

_____16. Exploring and admitting my cultural mistakes

_____17. Exploring and admitting my prejudices

_____18. Identifying and exploring the meaning of my historically-**excluded** group memberships

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_____19. Identifying and exploring the meaning of my historically-**included** group memberships

_____20. Exploring the impact of oppression on the historically- **excluded** group(s) to which I belong

_____21. Exploring the impact of oppression on the historically- **included** group(s) to which I belong

_____22. (a) Examining the messages I learned as a child about my own and other cultural groups

_____22. (b) Updating these cultural messages from my childhood based on new information.

_____23. (a) Supporting members of my own historically-**excluded** group(s) to overcome ISMS[2]

_____23. (b) Challenging members of my own historically-**excluded** group(s) to overcome ISMS

_____23. (c) Engaging members of my own historically-**excluded** group(s) in inclusive and equitable alternatives

_____24. (a) Supporting members of my own historically-**included** group(s) to overcome ISMS

_____24. (b) Challenging members of my own historically-**included** group(s) to overcome ISMS

_____24. (c) Engaging members of my own historically-**included** group(s) in inclusive and equitable alternatives

_____25. As a member of an historically-**excluded** group, knowing and saying what I want and need from members of the corresponding historically- **included** group

_____26. As a member of an historically-**included** group, supporting members of the corresponding historically-**excluded** group, based on the type of support they have explicitly asked of me, not what I think they need

_____27. Supporting members of historically-**excluded** groups in meeting with and getting support from others in their historically-**excluded** groups

[2] The term "ISMS" used in this context encompasses doctrines, practices, behaviors, philosophies, theories, etc. that are typically oppressive, biased, or exclusive; for example racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, classism, etc.

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_____28. Accepting explicit, formal leadership from members of historically-**excluded** group(s) when I am in the corresponding historically-**included** group(s)

_____29. (a) Accepting and supporting explicit, formal leadership from members of the historically--**excluded** group(s) to which I belong

_____29. (b)Confronting formal leadership of historically-**excluded** group(s) to which I belong when differences emerge and problem solving to address these differences

_____30. Supporting leaders from historically-**excluded** group(s) when they are challenged by members of an historically-**included** group to which I belong

_____31. Receiving feedback on my behavior that others experience as insensitive or oppressive

_____32. Asking for feedback on my behavior to learn if others experience it as insensitive or oppressive

_____33. Exploring potential institutional responses to oppression and the ISM

_____34. Using the personal and institutional power I have to challenge institutionalized oppression and the ISMS

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