

A Systemic Review of Queer Representation and Critical Paradigms Within the *Journal of Agricultural Education*

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Introduction and Objective

There is currently a vast deficit of scholarship surrounding queer identities and experiences in agricultural education (Murray et al., 2020). However, there have been several multicultural education (ME) studies published in the *Journal of Agricultural Education* (JAE), which may encompass queer identities. Banks (2016) describes the core philosophy of ME as, “the idea that all students—regardless of their gender; sexual orientation; social class; and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (p. 2). ME assumes certain students or groups have better opportunities to learn because of identities that are privileged in society (Banks, 2016). Therefore, one of the goals of ME is liberatory educational reform (Banks, 2016). Critical paradigms support this goal of ME as they acknowledge the power relations of knowledge creation, and work to emancipate oppressed groups (Tracy, 2020). It is imperative that ME studies utilize critical theories and paradigms to question institutional norms and power dynamics in education. This systemic review analyzed the current representation of queer identities and critical paradigms in ME scholarship published in the JAE.

Theoretical Framework

Queer theory guided this study as it is a critical theory that focuses on deconstructing identity categories privileging some identities over others (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Studies that include queerness allow researchers to critique institutional barriers to inclusion based upon identities (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Additionally, *queer* is utilized in this framework as an inclusive term to signify nonnormative sexual orientations and gender identities (Henderson, 2019).

Methodology

A systemic review was conducted among JAE articles published with an emphasis on multicultural education. Inclusion criteria for the systemic review were: (a) empirical research studies, (b) ME focus, and (c) explicit identification of theoretical or conceptual frameworks. The initial search on the JAE database resulted in 21 articles. From this search, three articles did not focus on ME, two articles did not specify a framework, and one article was not an empirical study. After assessing inclusion and exclusion criteria, fifteen ($N = 15$) articles were included in the review. Articles were read and categorized based upon methodology, study population, and presence of critical paradigms, sexual orientations, and gender identities. Representation of sexual orientation was categorized by level of emphasis in the study, with *primary* = focus of study; *secondary* = included, but not central focus; *tertiary* = emerged in findings. Similarly, gender identity representation was analyzed for presence of binary (i.e., male or female) or non-binary/queer gender identities.

Findings

From the 15 articles reviewed, the majority encompassed a population of undergraduate post-secondary students ($n = 7$), followed by secondary students ($n = 3$), in-service teachers ($n = 3$), graduate students ($n = 1$), and post-secondary institutions ($n = 1$). Every study included racial and ethnic minorities as a primary research focus, with only three including sexual orientations. Further findings are described in Table 1.

Table 1

Presence of Queer Representation and Critical Paradigms

Study #	Methodology	Theoretical/Conceptual Framework	Critical Paradigm	Representation	
				Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity
Study 1	Quantitative (survey)	Theory of Homophily	Y	Secondary	
Study 2	Qualitative (case study)	Critical Race Theory	Y		
Study 3	Qualitative (content analysis)	Transformative Learning Theory	Y		
Study 4	Experimental	Social Identity Wheel, Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity	N	Secondary	Binary
Study 5	Qualitative (content analysis)	Appraisal Theory, Model of Cultural Experience & Evoked Emotion	N		
Study 6	Qualitative (case study)	Theory of Identity Development, Racial Identity Model	N	Tertiary	
Study 7	Quantitative (survey)	Diversity Inclusive Program Model	N		Binary
Study 8	Quantitative (survey)	Diversity Inclusive Program Model	N		Binary
Study 9	Quantitative (survey)	Social Cognitive Theory	N		
Study 10	Quantitative (survey)	Cross-Cultural Education	N		Binary
Study 11	Quantitative (survey)	Social Identity Theory	Y	Secondary	
Study 12	Quantitative (survey)	Multicultural Competence	N		
Study 13	Quantitative (survey)	Teaching Concern Model	N		Binary
Study 14	Quantitative (survey)	Cultural Critical Consciousness & Self-Reflection	Y		
Study 15	Quantitative (survey)	Inclusion	N		Binary

Note. A missing descriptor indicates lack of representation in the study.

Discussion, Conclusions, & Recommendations

From the systemic review, there were three findings that warranted discussion. First, the deficit of qualitative studies found excludes opportunities of marginalized individuals to share lived experiences that could help MEs goal of educational reform (Banks, 2016). Second, current ME studies published in JAE display heteronormativity through exclusion of queer identities. However, it is important to note that awareness of diverse gender identities may not have been as widespread when some of the older studies were conducted. This conclusion supports work from Murray et al. (2020) that acknowledges the deficit of queer representation. Finally, there was little representation of critical frameworks found. Without the ability of critical theories to critique and deconstruct oppressive systems, ME cannot be fully achieved (Banks, 2016). From the findings, authors recommend an expansion of queer identities and critical theory into JAE research. Additionally, qualitative methodologies should be utilized to learn about lived experiences of marginalized individuals in agricultural education. These lived experiences, in combination with queer and critical theories, can help inform best practices for scholars and educators focused on multicultural education practices.

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