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## Embracing Diversity and Inclusion: An Organizational Change Model to Increase Intercultural Competence

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## **Embracing Diversity and Inclusion: An Organizational Change Model to Increase Intercultural Competence**

### **Abstract**

Professionals in Extension who develop intercultural competence are better prepared to meet the needs of multicultural populations. This article addresses University of California Extension's formation of an intercultural competence professional development initiative. We describe our use of an integrated conceptual framework that includes Hammer's Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and Kotter's eight-step organizational change process to institutionalize the initiative. IDI pretest and posttest results indicate that California 4-H professionals are more culturally competent. The impact of the initiative also is reflected in the significant growth (151% increase) in Latino youth participation in 4-H. We provide recommendations for replicating our effort.

**Keywords:** [intercultural communication](#), [professional development](#), [organizational change](#), [diverse youths](#)

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## **Introduction**

In 2013, California 4-H Youth Development Program (4-H YDP) enrollment data indicated that 25% of enrolled youths were Latino, yet Latino youths comprised over 50% of the state's youth population aged 5–19 (California Department of Education, 2013). To address challenges of working effectively across cultures, a group of seven Extension administrators and agents, including our author team, developed a model to increase the engagement of diverse youths in 4-H through increasing individual and organizational intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence is defined as a "set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, 2008, p. 97). Definitions of other common terms are provided in Table 1. Intercultural competence involves the capacity to shift cultural perspective, adapt to cultural similarities and differences, and navigate and bridge cultural differences (Hammer, 2012a). This capacity is developmental and is conceptualized as a continuum that includes a range of orientations from a monocultural mind-set—a perspective whereby one judges and views others through his or her own cultural lens—to an intercultural mind-set—the ability to recognize and

positively view cultural differences and adapt behavior and judgments appropriately (Hammer, 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

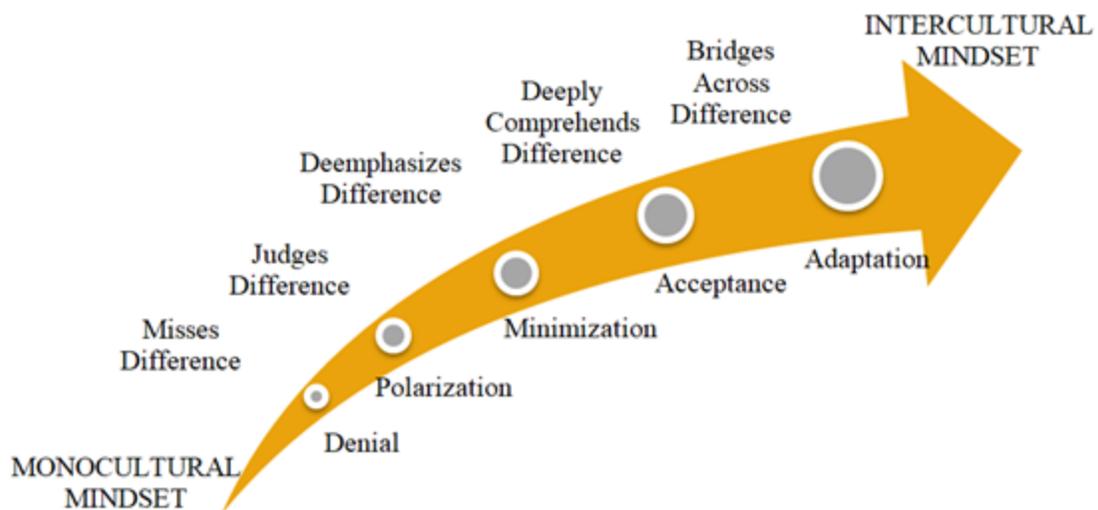
**Table 1.**  
Definitions of Terms

Term	Definition
Diversity	Different identities such as age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical and mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual practices, employment status, geographic location, and other characteristics
Equity	Reduction or elimination of barriers to participation through provision of unique resources and opportunities
Inclusivity	Creation of a space where each person is authentically valued, respected, and supported
Culture	The shared experience of people, including their languages, values, customs, and worldviews

*Note.* Adapted from "Increasing cultural awareness and equity in extension programs" by N. Fields, 2018. Retrieved from <https://access-equity-belonging.extension.org/terms-definitions/>. Adapted with permission.

To facilitate intercultural competence development and assessment, Hammer created the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a 50-item questionnaire that measures intercultural competence along an intercultural development continuum (see Figure 1) and is cross-culturally generalizable, valid, and reliable (Hammer, 2011; Hammer et al., 2003; Paige, 2004; Stuart, 2009). The IDI generates an organizational or "group" profile that provides a snapshot of a group's orientation on the continuum. Additionally, those who take the IDI are provided their individual orientations on the continuum as measured by the IDI.

**Figure 1.**  
Intercultural Development Continuum



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Building intercultural competence among youth development professionals is critical to supporting the development and well-being of diverse youths (Diversi & Mecham, 2005; Erbstein, 2013; Hobbs & Sawer, 2009; Walter, Grant, & Center for Youth Development, University of Minnesota Extension, 2011). The skill of interacting effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds and building long-term relationships with diverse communities is identified as a core competency of 4-H professionals in the 4-H Professional Research, Knowledge, and Competency framework (National 4-H Headquarters, 2017). Yet most efforts to build intercultural competence have limitations because they (a) are one-time workshops that offer one-size-fits-all content and are not tailored to an individual's knowledge and skill level; (b) involve passive as opposed to active learning; (c) take place outside the context of authentic settings and experiences where participants are able to collaboratively identify issues, apply learning, and reflect on learning; and (d) occur in isolation rather than in connection with broader organizational and systemic goals (Bennett, 1986, 2008; Guskey, 2003).

To increase the capacity of the California 4-H YDP to engage more diverse youths in programming, we used an integrated conceptual framework to develop and institutionalize the intercultural competence professional development initiative described in this article. Within that framework, we used Hammer's (2012b) IDI to assess initial intercultural competences and changes over time and applied Kotter's (2012) eight-step process for achieving organizational change (Cochran, Ferrari, & Arnett, 2014). The eight steps articulated by Kotter (2012) are as follows: create a sense of urgency; build a guiding coalition; form a strategic vision and initiatives; enlist a volunteer army; enable action by removing barriers; generate short-term wins; sustain acceleration; and institute change.

## **Eight Steps for Increasing Organization-Wide Intercultural Competence**

We designed an intentional 3-year professional development model to strengthen the intercultural competence of 4-H agents, specialists, and other professionals (referred to collectively as 4-H professionals). The initiative began in 2014, with an initial cohort of 89 individuals.

### **Creating a Sense of Urgency**

We created a sense of urgency by highlighting the growing Latino youth population in California (52% in 2012) and its underrepresentation in the 4-H YDP (25% in 2012). As a result, key players throughout the organization became involved and provided funding to support the long-term professional development model to increase intercultural competence among 4-H professionals. Serving as the project leads, authors Moncloa and Horrillo enlisted 4-H YDP personnel and senior leadership to develop wider support for a paradigm shift that would better engage diverse populations in the California 4-H YDP and Cooperative Extension overall.

### **Building a Guiding Coalition**

We assembled a 12-person interdisciplinary team to support implementation of the IDI. The members of the team obtained certification as qualified administrators (QAs) of the IDI through a process that included in-depth learning of the intercultural development continuum and IDI administration and implementation. They agreed to administer the IDI and provide one-on-one feedback and coaching to 4-H professionals. A subset of the team was responsible for guiding, coordinating, and communicating activities of the intercultural competence professional development initiative.

## Forming a Strategic Vision and Initiatives

Organizational change efforts tend to be successful when they build on existing organizational structures and cultures (Senge, 2006). Our project leads developed a multipronged plan, recognizing increasing intercultural competence as one of six intentional strategies to better engage diverse and underrepresented audiences in 4-H. The remaining strategies are hiring bicultural and bilingual professionals at all levels, identifying barriers to and strategies for diverse youth participation, devising new club models, using bilingual and culturally relevant materials, and developing a targeted marketing and recruitment plan (see Figure 2). Identification of these strategies helped colleagues understand that intercultural competence was part of a sustained initiative to achieve goals of diversity and inclusion in 4-H.

**Figure 2.**

Diversity and Inclusion Strategies of the California 4-H Youth Development Program



## Enlisting a Volunteer Army

We addressed the need for volunteers by stating that participation in the intercultural competence professional development effort was voluntary and in support of the 4-H program's vision, core values, and goals. We embedded frequent invitations to participate in the effort into existing communication structures, such as monthly statewide staff meetings, newsletters, individual conversations, and announcements. The initiative was communicated to the county directors at two meetings and to 4-H professionals over a span of 6 months. During the 2014–2015 year, our project leads provided progress updates during monthly statewide staff meetings.

## Enabling Action by Removing Barriers

Our project leads removed two organizational barriers to implementing individual and organizational change efforts to increase intercultural competence: (a) inefficient short-term diversity workshops and (b) personnel's apprehension about completing the IDI and participating in dialogue about their intercultural competences. The project leads communicated to 4-H professionals that investing in an intentional self-reflection effort of at least 30 hr per year was needed to show a measurable gain in intercultural competence (Hammer, 2012a) and achieve organizational goals to reach more diverse youths and engage them in 4-H. We engaged in one-on-one conversations with those personnel who initially resisted participation to hear their concerns, remind them of the urgency of the issue, describe the vision and specific initiatives, remind them that the survey results would be anonymous, and reiterate that participation was voluntary. With the stage set, the IDI QA team began administering a pretest IDI to 4-H personnel and empowering them to participate in the group intercultural competence feedback sessions. The University of California, Davis Institutional Review Board approved use of the IDI and research protocol.

Individuals who were invited to participate in the pretest survey included all county-based 4-H staff responsible for the day-to-day management of 4-H ( $n = 58$ ), all 4-H/youth, families, and communities agents ( $n = 19$ ), all Extension specialists working closely with 4-H ( $n = 4$ ), and all state 4-H office staff with programmatic responsibilities ( $n = 8$ ). An astonishing 99% of 4-H professionals (88 individuals) took the pretest IDI. This completion rate indicates that the implementation resulted in buy-in and support. No incentives were provided for participation.

## Generating Short-Term Wins

Our project leads shared and celebrated the 99% completion rate for the pretest IDI. Active and sustained participation of 4-H personnel in the effort was another short-term win. As a team, the IDI QAs celebrated signs of progress throughout the implementation of the project through monthly calls. The team's efforts were recognized by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy and U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture with receipt of the 2016 National Extension Diversity Award (Team Award) (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, 2016). The project leads recognized and communicated all these short-term wins to energize continued participation and help 4-H professionals feel a sense of belonging to the effort and the larger organizational goals of 4-H.

## Sustaining Acceleration

In this step, we consolidated short-term wins to change the structure for providing intercultural competence professional development. In the place of one-time workshops, we put into effect a systematic professional development model, as illustrated in Figure 3.

### Figure 3.

Intercultural Competence Development Educational Intervention



Those who completed the pretest IDI were invited to participate in a series of feedback sessions with an IDI QA. The initial session focused on helping participants interpret their individual IDI profile results, connect the results to their experiences, and gain insight into understanding cultural differences. Subsequent sessions focused on supporting each participant in implementation of the Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) customized to the individual's profile results. Eighty-one (92%) of the 88 4-H professionals who took the IDI pretest participated in at least one feedback session. Specifically, 40 individuals participated in only one feedback session, nine in two feedback sessions, and 32 in all three feedback sessions offered.

Those who participated in at least one feedback session were invited to join communities of practice (CoPs) organized by the IDI QA team. CoPs are "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). In our case, the CoPs had the following goals:

- Build individual intercultural competence to achieve diversity and inclusion goals and outcomes in 4-H.
- Determine whether program development or adaptation is needed by considering the question "Does the 4-H club model work for diverse cultural groups?"
- Provide positive youth development opportunities to underrepresented youths to help them thrive.
- Engage and serve diverse youths and families of California.

Important aspects of the CoP model are that ownership resides with the group and that learning occurs "within the context of social relationships with other members of the community who have similar, if not identical, issues and concerns from the realm of practice" (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003, p. 267). Consequently, there was variability across group experiences, group members' foci, and information learned. Each CoP comprised seven or eight 4-H professionals who met for 1.5 hr approximately monthly over 9 months. Sixty-three (84%) of the 75 eligible 4-H professionals (those who had participated in at least one post-IDI-pretest feedback session) participated in the CoPs, and each articulated his or her intercultural development goal and efforts toward meeting it. Individuals first learned to recognize how their own cultures

influenced their behaviors. Next, they explored how different cultural groups influence the behaviors of others and how to bridge these differences. For example, in one discussion, individuals recognized that they shared a White middle class culture with most 4-H families who trusted the 4-H program and sent their children to overnight events. In the engagement of diverse families, 4-H professionals had observed that many new 4-H families expected to attend overnight events with their children. A deeper understanding of cultural differences resulted in the creation of alternative housing so that diverse families could accompany their children at overnight events.

One IDI QA was assigned to each CoP to (a) facilitate members' learning and ensure that the conversation was developmental along the intercultural development continuum, (b) foster community belonging, (c) identify and address important issues in intercultural communication, (d) link community members informally and broker knowledge assets members had to offer, and (e) help build the application of knowledge and skills into practice in the field.

Finally, individuals who had participated in at least one post-IDI-pretest feedback session were invited to attend a 2-day statewide Intercultural Development Conference. Of the 75 individuals eligible to attend, 69 (85%) participated in the conference. Our project leads identified the desired goals for attendees and experts from conference content developed and delivered in alignment with the IDI. The IDI experts customized the content around the group's intercultural profile to help group members achieve the following goals:

- Understand core intercultural development concepts.
- Identify and increase understanding of general and specific cultural markers relevant to the work of 4-H.
- Increase understanding of intercultural communication and conflict styles of self and others.
- Identify strategies for effectively bridging different communication and conflict styles.
- Build intercultural skills to support 4-H in reaching more diverse audiences.

## **Instituting Change**

Our project leads leveraged short-term wins and cultivated the value of a systematic intercultural competence professional development model as a means of reaching organizational goals. As a result, the model has been institutionalized within the California 4-H YDP. Each group of new 4-H personnel enters a cohort and is invited to participate in the 3-year professional development model to increase intercultural competence.

### **Increased Intercultural Competence**

At the conclusion of all educational interventions, 4-H professionals completed the IDI survey a second time ( $n = 65$ ). We used this posttest to assess whether an increase in intercultural competence had occurred. Correlations among all the study variables are shown in Table 2. Importantly, there are significant correlations (a) between pretest and posttest intercultural competence, (b) between self-reported motivation to increase intercultural competence and intercultural competence at posttest, and (c) between self-reported number of hours per month spent building intercultural competence and intercultural competence at posttest.

**Table 2.**  
Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Pre-ICC	—								
2. Post-ICC	.72**	—							
3. Feedback	.11	.12	—						
4. CoP	.04	.05	.35**	—					
5. Conference	.16	-.03	.36**	.35**	—				
6. Motivation	.43**	.43**	-.02	.16	.02	—			
7. Spend time	.01	.21	.18	.38**	.14	.27*	—		
8. Hours	.25*	.25*	.22	.55**	.42**	.47**	.30*	—	
9. IDP	.23	.24	.18	.36**	.30*	.19	.37**	.58**	—

*Note.* Pre-ICC = pretest intercultural competence score. Post-ICC = posttest intercultural competence score. Feedback = number of feedback sessions received. CoP = number of communities of practice sessions attended. Conference = attendance at the statewide conference. Motivation = motivation to increase intercultural competence. Spend time = self-perception of having spent more time directed at building intercultural competence than before administration of the pretest. Hours = average number of hours per month spent building intercultural competence using a self-reflective, intentional process since taking the pretest; IDP = implementation of the Intercultural Development Plan.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Matched pre- and posttest IDI assessment scores were available for 65 4-H professionals from Cohort 1. A paired-samples  $t$ -test indicated a significant mean increase in intercultural competence from pretest to posttest,  $t(64) = -4.21, p < .001$ . Specifically, as an organization, there was movement on the continuum from a mind-set of minimization ( $M = 104.33, SD = 17.07$ ) to the cusp of acceptance ( $M = 111.18, SD = 17.84$ ). This finding demonstrates that as an organization the California 4-H YDP is more culturally competent and has moved from minimization (focusing on similarities across diverse people that can mask deeper recognition of cultural differences) to acceptance (recognizing the complexity of diversity and appreciation of cultural similarities and differences). Through a repeated measures analysis of variance, we found that increases in intercultural competence from pre- to posttest did not depend on individuals' initial levels of intercultural competence,  $F(4, 61) = 1.52, p = .21$ . The importance of acknowledging cultural differences and recognizing the desire to be understood by the cultural "other" are skills that facilitate adaptation to and acceptance of cultural differences, thereby advancing the organizational goals of 4-H.

To determine whether the two significant correlates of intercultural competence at posttest mediated the relationship between pre- and posttest intercultural competence, we used the Baron and Kenny (1986) method for testing mediation hypotheses. As shown in Table 3, pretest levels of intercultural competence predicted intercultural competence at posttest, motivation, and number of hours spent monthly building intercultural competence. However, neither motivation nor hours spent monthly developing intercultural competence predicted intercultural competence in a multiple regression with baseline levels of intercultural

competence included in the model. This set of results indicates that mediation is not present.

**Table 3.**  
Test of Mediation Analyses

Step	$\beta$	SE	<i>b</i>
Step 1			
Pre-ICC à Post-ICC	.75	.09	.72***
Step 2			
Pre-ICC à Motivation	.02	.00	.43***
Pre-ICC à Hours	.02	.01	.25*
Step 3			
Pre-ICC à Post-ICC	.64	.10	.64***
Motivation à Post-ICC	4.54	2.94	.17
Hours à Post-ICC	.14	1.71	.01

*Note.* Pre-ICC = pretest intercultural competence score. Post-ICC = posttest intercultural competence score. Motivation = motivation to increase intercultural competence. Hours = average number of hours per month spent building intercultural competence using a self-reflective, intentional process since taking the pretest.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Taken together, these findings align with expectations that ongoing, intentional self-reflection results in increased intercultural competence, independent of the type of activities highlighted in the IDP (Hammer, 2012a). It was unexpected to find that self-reported hours per month spent building intercultural competence did not explain increases in intercultural competence. However, there were limitations to this measure. This measure of self-reflection was reported at the conclusion of the intervention—2 years after initiation. Additionally, participants did not report what was done, how they reflected on what they experienced, and what they learned. Therefore, the reliability and validity of this measure are uncertain.

## Discussion

The California 4-H YDP's intercultural competence professional development efforts progressed from the delivery of random workshops on diversity awareness to an intentional and systematic model. This improvement, embedded within an organizational paradigm shift from dominant culture values to pluralistic culture values, increased 4-H professionals' intercultural competence. As a result, 4-H professionals moved along the intercultural development continuum from a minimization mind-set to the cusp of acceptance. The skills and characteristics developed are those that lead to an organizational culture that incorporates mutual respect, acceptance, teamwork, and productivity among diverse people. These are the skills 4-H and other Extension professionals need to achieve our shared goal of reaching diverse audiences.

The impact of our work is reflected in the significant growth of diverse youth participation in the California 4-H YDP. For example, enrollment increased 39% during 2014–2017 to nearly 102,000 youths. Latino youth

participation increased by 151% (to 45,528 youths). Parity was reached for Latino, African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander youths. Research has indicated that cultural competency is the foundation for achieving diversity and inclusion goals (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992), so it is reasonable to assume that the effort we employed, in part, underlies 4-H's success in better serving diverse audiences. Other strategies for engaging diverse audiences were underway as well and likely contributed to this success. Notably, although more diverse 4-H professionals were hired and entered Cohort 2 of this intervention, they did not have significantly higher baseline levels of intercultural competence than individuals in Cohort 1.

## Implications for Extension

Professionals in Extension organizations who develop intercultural competence will be better prepared to address the needs of multicultural populations and create learning environments that are characterized by belonging and inclusion. Extension professionals need to consider the following factors when applying the intercultural development continuum to professional development efforts:

- The development of intercultural competence is complex, and all efforts should be designed and led by trained individuals with high levels of intercultural competence.
- Professional development must be targeted to an individual's orientation to support movement along the developmental continuum; otherwise, it will be ineffective.
- Hammer (2012a) asserted that 30–50 hr of intentional, self-reflective efforts are needed to show a measurable gain in intercultural competence.

On the basis of our experience, we recommend that Extension organizations consider replicating our intentional professional development approach and embrace Kotter's (2012) eight-step model as the organizational change strategy framing the work. In summary, our recommendations include

- identifying transformative leaders who share a vision for organizational change and have the ability to motivate others to action (Kotter, 2012),
- recruiting and building an interdisciplinary team of IDI QAs to serve as the power coalition and partners in the initiative,
- developing an inspiring vision that builds on organizational culture and communicating it often,
- identifying and removing barriers along the way and encouraging risk taking among participants for the purpose of changing the program or organization,
- creating and celebrating short-term wins, and
- anchoring change in the organizational culture.

Given the intensive intervention needed to operationalize an effort such as the one we implemented, Extension administrators should consider hiring individuals with higher levels of intercultural competence. This

can be accomplished by requiring inclusion of this attribute in position descriptions, ensuring that interview panels include individuals with higher levels of intercultural competence and represent the diversity of the community, and asking interview questions that allow candidates to demonstrate their intercultural knowledge and skills.

### Author Note

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