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Developing Cultural Competence among 4-H Leaders

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Developing Cultural Competence among 4-H Leaders

Cover Page Footnote

Breanna Lewis Wade is a May 2021 graduate with a major in Human Development and Family Sciences in the School of Human Environmental Sciences. Devin Boggs Riley is a May 2021 graduate with a major in Human Development and Family Sciences in the School of Human Environmental Sciences. Jacquelyn D. Wiersma-Mosley, a faculty mentor, is a Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences in the School of Human Environmental Sciences. Betsy Garrison, a faculty mentor, is a Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences in the School of Human Environmental Sciences.

Developing Cultural Competence Among 4-H Leaders

Meet the Student-Authors



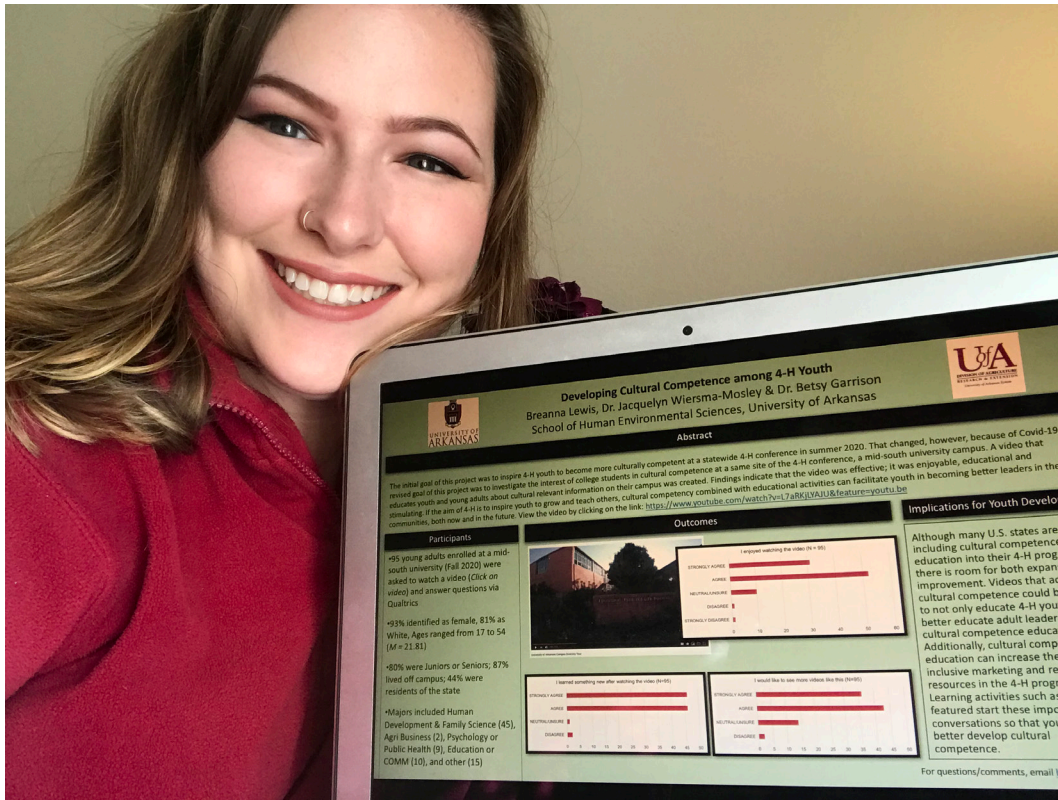
Breanna Lewis Wade

I have always had an immense passion for 4-H. As a young child in Southern Arkansas, living on a farm, it was obvious that I should be involved. After 10 years of membership and current alumni participation, I can say that it has made me who I am today. As a first-generation student and transfer student from the University of Arkansas at Rich Mountain, I have had to fight hard for where I am today. I am glad to have had the resources and abilities that 4-H has equipped me with and hope to bestow the kind of passion I have towards other youth. As I have spent more time in academia, I have realized that it is my passion to find and gain resources for those who are underserved, as I have seen and understood the struggle that comes alongside certain disadvantages. During my time here, I have learned how to embrace my identity and have gained priceless insight on how to make that possible for others. I strive to bring cultural competence and opportunities specifically to youth development programs, with an emphasis on 4-H because I have seen the life-changing difference it can make for youth, and I want to make that a reality for many more going forward. Thank you to Dr. Jacquelyn Mosley for inspiring and supporting me every step of the way, to Dr. Betsy Garrison for making this opportunity a reality, and to my husband for loving and encouraging me in everything I do.



Devin Boggs Riley

I am a first-generation college graduate in the Human Environmental Science Program at the University of Arkansas, finishing my degree in Human Development and Family Science (HDFS). Thanks to the many incredible educators I have had along this journey, I realized I wanted to give back as they have given to me. One of the big topics I have studied and have grown close to during this last year as an undergraduate is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). My research mentor Dr. Jacquelyn Mosley has expanded my knowledge and helped me continue to develop my critical thinking skills to become a more culturally competent scholar. This has enhanced my skill set to work with all different cultures and backgrounds and help people on their DEI journey. Being a partner with Breanna Lewis Wade on her research in youth development regarding developing cultural competency among 4-H leaders has been an exceptional experience. I hope that the DEI efforts put in today will have a lasting effect on generations to come in our country.



Breanna presenting research at the 2020 National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Professionals Conference.

Research at a Glance

- This research focused on identifying the need for increased cultural competence education among 4-H leaders through independently sourced data within cultural competence training and literature review.
- With increased growth in the diverse 4-H youth population, there is also a growing need for better cultural competence education for students and their leaders to equitably provide and promote resources for all.
- This study found that although independent training and testing did not increase cultural competence overall, most 4-H leaders agreed there is a need and desire for making more cultural competence resources available and required.

Developing Cultural Competence Among 4-H Leaders

Breanna Lewis Wade,^{} Devin Boggs Riley,[†] Jacquelyn D. Wiersma-Mosley,[§] and Betsy Garrison[‡]*

Abstract

Access, equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential elements of 4-H's goals related to positive youth development and organizational sustainability. The 4-H organization has impacted over 6 million youth worldwide and continues to grow every day. At the county, state, and national level, 4-H programs have grown more diverse, making it essential that 4-H programs encourage and highlight cultural similarities and differences through education. However, training in cultural competence for 4-H leaders is lacking, which is the bridge to connecting diversity and inclusion. Cultural competency is an awareness of one's own cultural identity and the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures. This project utilized a multidisciplinary and collaborative effort to deliver cultural competence training for 27 4-H young adult and adult leaders in a mid-South U.S. state. All participants completed pre-assessments of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), participated in 2-hour training sessions on cultural competence, and completed post-IDI assessments three months later. Overall, most 4-H leaders scored in the Minimization orientation, which is the most common orientation among adults. In order to advance beyond the Minimization orientation to the Acceptance orientation, 4-H educators need additional educational opportunities, which may aid them in understanding crucial differences between cultures. The cultural competency model of the IDI provides a valuable framework in preparing culturally sensitive 4-H educators to construct settings where equity, access, and opportunity are available to all youth, allowing 4-H members to better reach their potential as capable, caring, and competent leaders of today and tomorrow.

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Introduction

Access, equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential elements of 4-H's goals related to positive youth development and organizational sustainability. The goal of this study was to assess and equip 4-H leaders with cultural competence education through the use of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer, 2008). Cultural competence education can support healthier 4-H participation, better self-development, and leadership. 4-H is one of the nation's largest youth organizations, impacting over 6 million youth worldwide (ages 5 to 19), and also facilitates collegiate clubs across the country (4-H.org). The 4-H motto is "To make the best better," which is demonstrated through civic engagement, leadership, community service, and project specialties, among other outlets of opportunities.

While an increase in diverse members is celebrated, there also comes along with it a need for adequate education for 4-H professionals and leaders. 4-H strives to be an inclusive and accepting organization, and to do that requires adequate education. It is vital for cultural competence education to be available to 4-H leaders and professionals to create an inviting and accepting environment, not only for its members but for its leaders as well.

Cultural competence is an awareness of one's own cultural identity and the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures (Deardorff, 2011). The IDI (Hammer, 2008) was developed to measure individuals' lenses of cultural similarities and differences along a continuum from monocultural to intercultural worldviews. The IDI is an appropriate instrument for assessing 4-H educators because of the nature of the developmental process that can be supported through learning and experiences.

Cultural competence is necessary for increasing successful communication and understanding, especially among youth development professionals. One study indicated that 259 youth professionals and para-professionals reported that the importance of growing in cultural competence was not only for themselves but to better serve their youth-dominated audience (Williams and Mobley, 2007). Many 4-H leaders are encouraged to learn their area or state's demographics. For some 4-H youth, it is harder to find a connection with 4-H leaders and fellow 4-H members without an extensive understanding of the program. Many still assume that 4-H is strictly agricultural-based, which could have a hand in lower retention rates among diverse members because it does not include urban regions (Smith and Webster, 2018). Given the demographic changes that are occurring within the United States, many scholars argue that there is a systemic need to provide cultural competence education for organizations, especially those

responsible for providing culturally competent services, such as youth leadership (Smith and Soule, 2016).

Another aspect of cultural competence and the ever-presenting push for available education is the existence of youth development professionals who are willing to address their biases. Woods (2004) stresses the importance of unbiased youth professionals (e.g., Future Farmers of America, FFA) alongside having the open-mindedness to adapt learning and teaching styles. Three major areas should be improved, including attitudes, policy, and practice. In a study with 127 youth development professionals, few professionals knew about policies or diversity resources, but many of them reported they were willing to learn how to address this lack of education if they were simply provided additional resources (Fox and LaChenaye, 2015).

The current study examined cultural competence among 4-H youth development leaders. The research questions were: (1) Where are 4-H educators, on average, in their cultural competence, using the IDI framework? and (2) Can cultural competence significantly increase among 4-H educators after attending cultural competence training?

Materials and Methods

Participants and Procedures

Data came from 27 4-H young adult and adult leaders in a mid-South U.S. state representing a collegiate 4-H club at a mid-South university and the State 4-H Office and 4-H Camp. The majority of the participants identified as women (67%) and White (80%) between the ages of 21 and 52. All participants volunteered to participate, and Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from the primary institution of data collection. Starting in December 2020, the Intercultural Development Inventory assessment was sent to each participant via email. One week later, all participants attended a virtual (Zoom) 1.5-hour training workshop led by both a licensed IDI Administrator and the Primary Investigator from the research team. During the presentation, cultural competence theories and definitions were reviewed, as well as research on implicit bias. Each participant was provided general information about cultural competence. The overall group results were discussed as well as what it meant to belong in each development orientation, according to the IDI. Steps that could be taken to increase cultural competence were suggested. Participants were asked to create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based) goals regarding their own cultural competence. Finally, the post-IDI assessment was administered in March 2021, along with a Qualtrics survey asking demographic questions and closed- and open-ended questions about their experiences with the training and opinions regarding cultural competence education.

The IDI is a cross-cultural assessment of cultural competence used by companies, organizations, and schools all over the world. The assessment (costing \$12/student; \$18/non-student) consists of 50 multiple choice questions that extend from a monocultural mindset to a multicultural mindset in order to scale where an individual is in achieving cultural competence. Items include cultural experiences in terms of participants' (a) cross-cultural goals, (b) challenges that they confront while navigating cultural differences, (c) cultural incidents that they face when they encounter cultural differences, and (d) ways they address those cultural differences. The IDI ranges from a score of 50 to 145 that individuals are scored on for their Developmental Orientation (DO), which was used for this study. The DO indicates a participant's primary orientation toward cultural differences and commonalities along a continuum. The DO is the perspective that the person is most likely to use in situations where cultural differences and commonalities need to be bridged. Scores of 55 to 70 indicate Denial, 70 to 85 indicate Polarization, 85 to 115 indicate Minimization, 115 to 130 indicate Acceptance, and 130 to 145 indicate Adaptation.

The data were first analyzed as a group to measure the cultural competence of the 4-H leaders as a whole, examining the average Development Orientation (DO). Then, the pre- and post-assessments of the group DOs were compared to determine if there was a significant change within the three months of taking the assessment, using a paired *t*-test.

Results and Discussion

For the first research question, the participants' pre-IDI assessments were analyzed as a group, and the av-

erage pre-IDI DO was 95.41 ($n = 27$), indicating most 4-H leaders were in Minimization (refer to Fig. 1). The majority of participants (65.2%) were in Minimization, with 13% in Acceptance and 21.7% in Polarization. For the post-IDI assessment, the average DO was 97.46 ($n = 16$), which also represents Minimization (refer to Fig. 2). There were changes in the DO, indicating that only 36.4% were in Minimization three months later, whereas 27.3% were in Acceptance or Polarization. Unfortunately, only half ($n = 16$) of the original participants ($n = 27$) participated in the post-IDI. For the second research question, using a paired *t*-test, the group did not significantly increase in their DO, $t = 0.17$, $P = 0.87$.

As a follow-up to the training, we also assessed 4-H youth leaders on their overall views of the IDI training and regarding cultural competence education to seek further input regarding their SMART goal(s). Of those 4-H leaders ($n = 16$) who participated in the follow-up, 80% agreed cultural competence would enrich 4-H youth experiences, 73% agreed that the IDI should be offered to all 4-H professionals, and 73% agreed that additional training should be included in 4-H and Extension. Unfortunately, 12 (out of 13) educators who responded about their SMART goals indicated they were somewhat or not at all accomplishing their goal(s).

The majority of 4-H leaders fell within Minimization, which is highlighting commonalities too much that can mask a deeper understanding of cultural differences ("I don't see color," color-blindness). For those in the dominant culture (e.g., White/Caucasian), the emphasis is on maintaining comfort and focusing more on recruitment (i.e., diversity), but not retention (i.e., inclusion, sense of belonging). Individuals may often want to change and

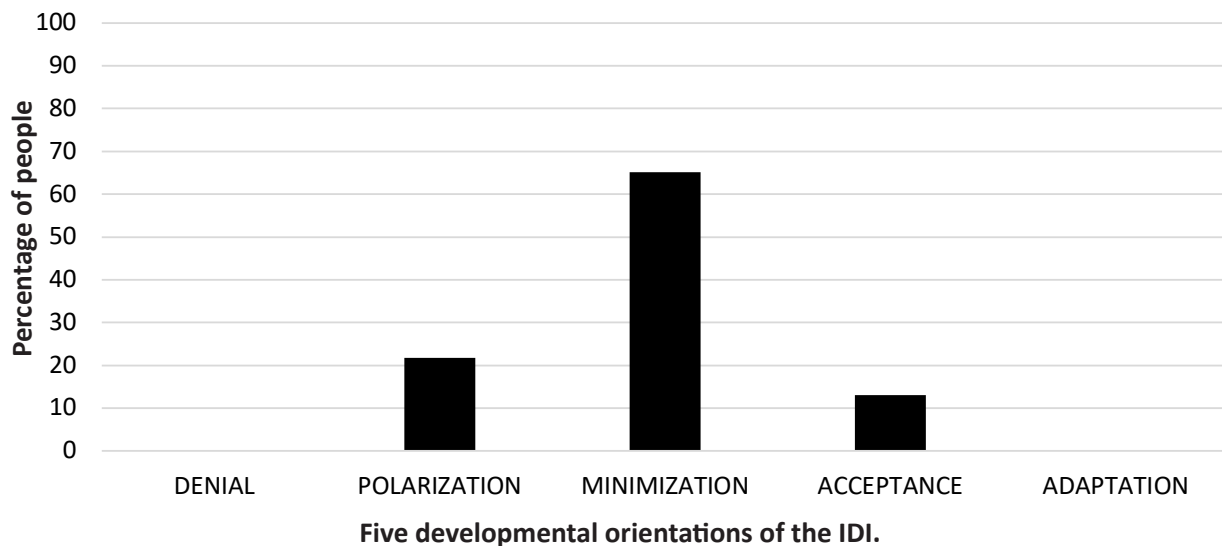


Fig. 1. Pre-Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Developmental Orientations ($n = 27$).

challenge others, but not themselves. For members of the non-dominant culture (e.g., BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), they may “go along to get along” for fear of being labeled negatively for speaking out. In general, individuals within Minimization value equality and want people from all racial/ethnic groups to be treated equally, but they may mask or minimize racial differences as a coping or survival mechanism (Harewood and Zemsky, 2020).

For cultural competence to develop among 4-H leaders, three major domains must be addressed: (1) identity development (i.e., self-awareness), (2) learning about cultural differences, and (3) bridging or adapting behavior with different groups. The best strategy for 4-H leaders to grow in cultural competence is to focus more on equity rather than equality. Equity recognizes systemic barriers and distributes resources based on the needs of individuals, while equality distributes the same resources to all individuals. The 4-H leaders within Minimization have really good intentions, but unfortunately, poor impact.

The present study’s participants were primarily white women living in the mid-South. However, some research (Hu and Kuh, 2003; Loes et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2001) indicates that white individuals benefit more in critical thinking development when they are exposed to diversity educational training. A larger limitation to the study was both less participation in the post-IDI and the 3-month time frame, which is simply not enough time to foster cultural competence growth (Wiersma-Mosley, 2019).

As there is a need to educate 4-H youth professionals on cultural competence education, there is also increased interest from 4-H youth. New York 4-H youth members (aged 14 to 18) have strongly pushed for increased di-

versity and inclusion efforts within 4-H (Sumner et al., 2018). Many 4-H youth professionals have indicated that they would be receptive and open-minded to additional resources and educational training but simply did not have a clear place or direction to start (LaVergne, 2015). The current study expands on this research by providing 4-H professionals with one effective tool (e.g., IDI) that could support, sustain and strengthen their efforts in educating youth leadership. Moving forward, 4-H educators need additional resources, training, and support in implementing cultural competence growth.

Conclusions

Overall, a majority of 4-H educators participating in this study were in the Minimization orientation, which is the most common orientation among adults and comprises 65% of the population. In order to advance beyond the Minimization orientation, 4-H educators need educational opportunities that aid them in understanding concepts regarding equity, as well as other crucial differences between cultures. The cultural competency model of the IDI provides a valuable framework in preparing culturally sensitive 4-H educators to construct settings where equity, access, and opportunity are available to all youth, allowing 4-H members to better reach their potential as capable, caring, and competent leaders of today and tomorrow.

Acknowledgments

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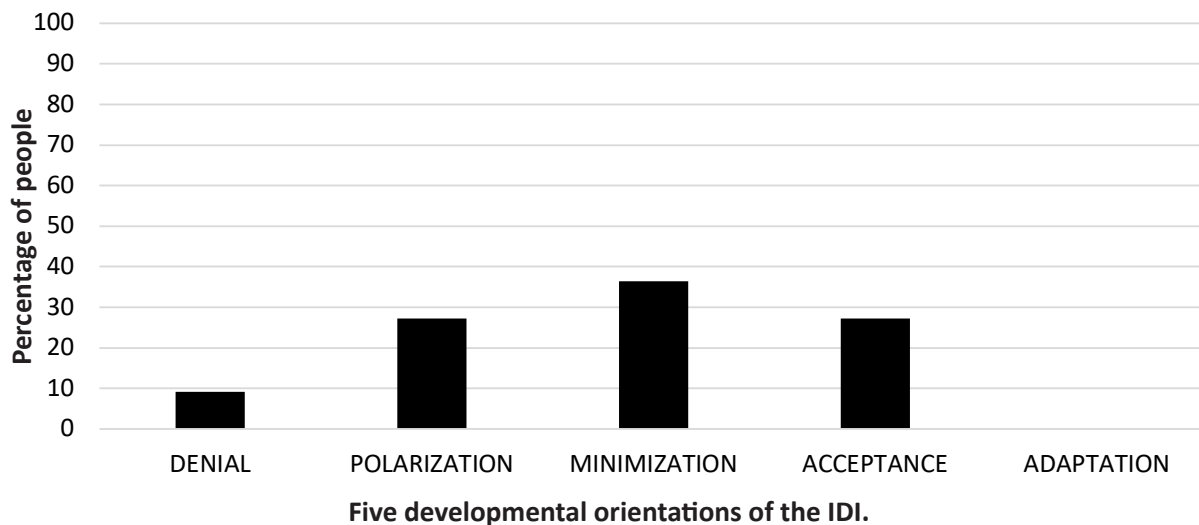


Fig. 2. Post-Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Developmental Orientations (n = 16).

Student Poster Competition, the National Undergraduate Research Week Poster Competition, and the 67th Annual NACTA Conference.

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