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# Suggestions and Strategies For A More Inclusive ASHA

Tanya C. Ingram

*Southern Illinois University Carbondale*, [Tanya333@siu.edu](mailto:Tanya333@siu.edu)

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Suggestions and Strategies For A More Inclusive ASHA

By

Tanya C. Ingram

B.S., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2009

A Research Paper

Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements For The  
Masters Of Science Degree

Rehabilitation Institute in The Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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RESEARCH APPROVAL

SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE ASHA

By

Tanya C. Ingram

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Masters Of Science Degree

in the field of Communication Disorders and Sciences

Approved by:

Dr. Linda McCabe Smith, Chair

(Dr. Maria Claudia Franca)

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## **Introduction**

The American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) has been watching over the fields of speech language pathology, audiology, and speech language hearing science since the 1920s, and the mission has always been to support and empower the professionals in these fields. The purpose of this paper is to review how ASHA can work as an organization to promote inclusive excellence (IE). Within this literature review is an exploration of the importance of diversity and how the gathering of individuals from various cultures promotes learning and understanding. Moving deeper into the meaning of diversity, the paper dissects its two main concept theories and how multiculturalism is the vision for the future. After discussing research on positive and negative impressions of multiculturalism and there comparison to ASHA demographics, the paper explore will IE. Recommendations for increased cultural competency within the field of ASHA are them discussed. Research will explore how cultural competency is of mounting importance due to the ever changing U.S. demographics and how this will affect ASHA members. This review will also dissect ASHA's current diversity and multicultural initiatives. Finally, suggestions will be presented for promoting IE through college curriculum, recruiting and retaining diverse members, continuing education units (CEU's), and multicultural or cultural competency training.

## **Exploring Diversity**

The terms diversity and multiculturalism evolved in the 1960's, when America was engrossed in the civil rights area, and a need for communication about various cultural identities was needed (Roper, 2011). With the progression of time the definition of diversity broadened to include sexual orientation, disability, and even income-level. The term developed and became more inclusive as the world around us changed.

Diversity is a word that has frequently been used throughout universities, organizations, associations and almost any entity that provides services to the human population. The actual meaning and commitment to diversity can vary among these different entities. Diversity is defined by Encarta Dictionary (2012) as, " ethnic variety, as well as socioeconomic and gender variety, in a group, society, or institution." Many would say that Encarta has a well-constructed definition of what diversity encompasses, but Encarta is missing many important elements to the concept of diversity.

Bell provided a comprehensive definition that defined diversity as a, "real or perceived difference among people in race, ethnicity, sex, age, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, religion, work and family status, weight and appearance, and other identity-based attributes that affect their interactions and relationships." (Bell, 2001, p. 4) Bell's definition covers a wide range of characteristics that differentiates between individuals. One interesting component to Bell's definition was the "real" or "perceived" difference between individuals. Diversity is viewed differently through everyone's eyes. One person might not consider one of their own personal characteristics as an element that diversifies them from the majority but another person may. Someone can look at a person, view certain stereotypic behaviors and categorize that person as a certain sex, age, race or culture, without having any other identifying information. The way different people view you is how diversity can be "real or "perceived".

Milem (2005) viewed diversity as interactive engagement across racial and ethnic lines (Anthony, Chang, & Milem, 2005) Ngomsi (2009) believes "Diversity is the similarities, as well as the differences, among and between individuals at all levels of the organization, and in society at large."(p. 2) Both of these authors gave emphasis on engagement or exchange of interactions between members with differences.

Diversity between individuals is comprised of many components. Diversity can be seen as differences between two or more people. Diversity can be developed from one person living in the city and another residing in a rural area, or based on your yearly income and how you spend your free time. The life different individuals live determines what they will encounter and how it will shape their personal culture. Differences in personal culture are what help develop diversity. Roper (2011) describes culture as, “a group-level construct that embodies a distinctive system of tradition, beliefs, values, norms, rituals, symbols and meanings that is shared by a majority of interacting individuals in a community.”(p.70) As we grow and develop in our own communities we develop a distinct personal culture, diversity is about combined individuals from these various cultures.

Curry explained that everyone comes from a different environment, with different life stories, which led to different perceptual lenses. As a result of these different life experiences, diversity allows individuals to bring different qualities to an organization. Curry (2011) stated, "We each bring a different set of skills, knowledge, and experience that makes up the diversity of us all. It's in this diversity that we can flourish.”(p.1) By utilizing these different perspectives and skills and organization can become competitive in this diverse world and provide better services to the community.

Diversity is not simply a definition, it is a tool that when nourished correctly can be the platform for multiculturalism and IE. Providing an environment where all members flourish and the institution itself benefits from differentiating members. Curry (2011) explained that instead of having a company full of employees who can offer the same experience or skills, diversity gives the company the opportunity to utilize the different skills that diverse members bring to the organization. Curry (2011) believes that organizations need to use diversity as an acquired



resource to continue to develop and grow. Many institutions have these diverse members but are not utilizing their abilities because of a lack of insight.

Curry's (2011) research stated that:

With diversity on its side, a company stands a better chance at finding working solutions and in less time. Not only does a variety of experience and background provide a vast array of knowledge and skills, but it also sparks creativity among those involved. The creativity is sparked by those taking part in the setting of diversity itself, not only supplying their own unique slice of diversity but discovering inspiration from others around them. This creates a brand new diversity in itself and adds to that which is already diverse. (p.1)

Curry views diversity within an organization as a full circle. Institution's members bring complex and differentiating perspectives to the drawing board. During the sharing of ideas, new concepts are created in various members' minds, which help to promote new thinking, which leads to positive outcomes.

Overall, diversity is imperative because it brings differentiating talents, perspectives and opinions to institutions which can flourish with the wealth of ideas and experience. Also with globalization and change in demographics, accepting, fostering and promoting diversity will be an essential component in any competing business, association or organization. Those who embrace diverse employee, members or customers will prosper.

### **Challenges with Achieving Diversity**

The real challenge arises when we acquire this pool of diverse members or employees within our associations. Diversity can seem like an outstanding concept to promote but unfortunately that is where it can end in many institutions. Williams (2007) stated that,

"Commitment to diversity is often featured prominently on institutional web sites but rarely enacted in the institutions offices, systems, and strategic planning processes.( p. 11) The fact is that many institutions promote diversity in a general form but fail to take action and “do’ diversity. Williams (2007) research found that:

According to Edgar Schein, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor of organizational behavior and management, if we peel away the shell of any organization, we find a culture that is defined by a set of values, practices, systems, traditions, and behaviors that govern reality within the organization. To achieve deep and lasting change, we must unfreeze, move, and refreeze this culture in a way that is more consistent with our diversity goals, whether we define them in term of increase access and equity for historically underrepresented groups and women, creating a supportive climate for all, instilling a organizational wide belief that diversity is an educational and organizational benefit, or designing formal and informal programs/initiatives characterized by diverse perspectives. (p.9)

Schein (2007) believed that we need to do more than embrace diversity for it to have an effect on organizations. Williams (2007) felt that institutions need to strive for a sense of community that commits to more than recognizing diversity and having tolerance of differences. The goal is to look at diverse individuals as people who bring something of value to the institution. Diversity is not only an element that affects organizations; it affects every individual touched by these organizations. The melting pot and mosaic concepts of diversity are two way the world views this complex topic. The “melting pot” concept has also been referred to as the “assimilation” or “color-blind” model. The mosaic model compares diversity to a particular type of painting, which blends many parts keeping their individual characteristics intact.

“In the melting- pot (assimilation) model of American identity, prevalent at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, immigrants were encouraged to completely discard the cultural heritage they brought with them.”(Binghamton 2002, p1) In the melting –pot model, instead of keeping your traditions immigrants were expected to assimilate into American culture so they could be accepted by the majority. The mosaic model is about maintaining your culture and identity. “In this age of multiculturalism, celebrating diversity and teaching tolerance, the mosaic model has gained precedence.” (Binghamton 2002, p1) The mosaic model is about multiculturalism. The model believes in embracing and accepting all cultures and coming together to work as a whole. “Diversity refers to the ways in which people differ within and between groups, while multiculturalism refers to a person’s capacity to successfully manage relationships and complex interactions with individuals from various cultures.”(Roper 2011, p. 72) Multiculturalism goes beyond gathering diverse members but focuses on embracing differences and learning how to speak, interact, and nurture these diverse members.

### **Exploring Multiculturalism**

Voyers (2011) definition explains that multiculturalism is about inclusion of various underrepresented diverse individuals. This researcher provided a more concise definition stating that multiculturalism applies to, “policies, perspectives, organizations and individuals concerned with embracing, including, preserving and accommodating gender equality, diverse sexual statues and orientations, individuals with disabilities and ‘non dominant ethnocultural groups’”(p. 1876)

Promoting multiculturalism should be a major focus for every institution. Diversity is about gathering and accepting various members from different cultures while multiculturalism is about looking at each individual member as a puzzle that needs the right pieces to become

whole. Each piece contributes to the picture that represents the puzzle as a whole. One piece might involve language, and another faith or beliefs. All of these pieces make up a person's culture and multiculturalism should focus on all the pieces and how they make that individual member unique and valuable to the institution. America has been battling with the ideology of multiculturalism and wondering if it will have positive or negative effects on society. One of the main challenges with multiculturalism is the resistance from non- minority members of society.

### **Challenges with Achieving Multiculturalism**

Opponents of multiculturalism argue that the emphasis on promoting such understanding and appreciation of ethnic cultures within broader American landscape is too prevalent, and as a result, our identity as Americans has become diluted. Critics say multiculturalism feeds fragmentation, and that we should be teaching common culture, not a lot of little communities and identities. (Binhamton, 2002, p.1)

I think one main issue is that members from the majority group thinking that everyone is equal when minority group members "melt" or "assimilate" together. Without multiculturalism diverse individual differences are seen as negative attributes because they differ from the majority, instead of valued unique skills. ASHA as an organization has to look at demographics and assess how this shapes goals set for multiculturalism. According to Highlights and Trend: *ASHA Counts for Year End 2010*, ASHA's demographic profile of constituents is dominated by the majority culture. When looking percentages for race, ethnicity, and gender, ASHA demographics show that the majority of members are White, non-Hispanic, females. (ASHA, 2010)

### ASHA Demographic Makeup Chart

Race	
Source: Dues Notice 2009 n=97,581	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%
Asian	2.1%
Black or African-American	3.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.2%
White	92.9%
Multi-racial	1.3%
Gender	
Source: Dues Notice 2009 n=128,901	
Female	94.3%
Male	5.7%

Highlights and Trends: ASHA Counts for Year End 2010. American Speech Language Hearing Association. [www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/2010-Member-Counts.pdf](http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/2010-Member-Counts.pdf)

From the above chart, provided by Highlights and Trend: *ASHA Counts for Year End 2010*, White non-Hispanic's members make up 92.9% of ASHA demographics and females make up 94.3%. Other minorities and the male sex are severely underrepresented within the organization. From this data you can conclude that there is a drastic trend toward these demographic populations within ASHA. Considering the fact that the large demographic of ASHA members are in from the majority ethnic/racial group, questions must be raised about the extent to which ASHA reflects multiculturalism and that more should be done to make ASHA's demographic more reflective of multiculturalism.

### **Multiculturalism in White Dominated Institutions**

Buffardi, Plaut, Garnett, & Burks-Sanchez (2011) wrote an article based on promoting multiculturalism in a white dominated institution and explored some of the challenges that can arise. The study examined White's reactions multiculturalism and their overall need for inclusion. The research showed that many Whites actually feel excluded when an institution focuses on including minorities. (Buffardi, Plaut, Garnett, & Burks-Sanchez, 2011) Within study 1, White's associated multiculturalism with exclusion not inclusion and did not associate themselves with color blindness. (Buffardi, Plaut, Garnett, & Burks-Sanchez, 2011) From this research we learn that Whites had trouble even relating multiculturalism to themselves, they related more to a colorblind version of diversity that does not celebrate differences in culture, but expects minorities to assimilate (Buffardi, Plaut, Garnett, & Burks-Sanchez, 2011, p.349) If multiculturalism is viewed as exclusion, and therefore pushed away by the majority, no progress can be made. Considering the fact that White, non-Hispanic females dominate the demographic makeup of ASHA, we need to be aware of how they are viewing multiculturalism and the effects on the minorities. If this majority population views no importance in promoting multiculturalism diverse members will be undervalued and considered non essential.

Buffardi's, Plaut's, Garnett's, & Burks-Sanchez's (2011) research stated that many organizations put diversity in their mission statements but struggle to obtain support from the people majority members, which makes the members who are working on these plans feel like their efforts are for nothing. To actually have success with multiculturalism, administrators who run these organizations have to believe that there is a need for multiculturalism and must not feel excluded when trying to support the goals." Buffardi, Plaut, Garnett, & Burks-Sanchez (2011) Explained that Whites consistently fall behind other minority members when trying to promote

diversity. They went on to explain that the feeling of a loss of dominance and status contributes to the majority members uncooperative attitudes toward racial equality. It seems that whites within these dominant positions are afraid to lose their power. There needs to be a way to promote multiculturalism and diversity without any side losing equity. Their research also explained that Whites make up almost two thirds of American workers in private industry and make up (87%) in higher level management. Whites made up (81%) of lower level management and (76%) of professional positions. These numbers show that this ethnic group holds much of the power positions in American workplaces. The same stats are represented in higher education, where whites make up over (80%) of faculty. ASHA is one of these organizations; therefore with the majority holding most of the power, ASHA needs to have a plan for inclusion, excellence, and equitable outcomes for all.

Without the support of whites, organizations and educational settings will fail in their attempts to navigate and manage the complexities of diverse workforces and constituencies. In the face of the dramatic projected growth in demographic diversity mentioned previously, such failure could have severe economic, social, and political consequences. The real dilemma in building diversity and inclusion, then, is to better understand reactions to diversity in hopes of creating diversity messages, practices, and policies that appeal to minority and white group without alienating either. ( Buffardi, Plaut ,Garnett, & Burks-Sanchez, 2011, p.3449)

As an association ASHA needs to work with all members from different demographic areas to provide the best education, research and service. There is a need for something more than multiculturalism in ASHA. ASHA can try to understand various cultures, and the talents or skills that members contribute, but everyone needs to come together as a mosaic. One suggestion

would be to bring members together by moving ASHA from simply focusing on multiculturalism to IE.

### **Inclusive Excellence**

IE is a complex model or philosophy that can be used to support, retain, educate and provide quality membership to any underrepresented population in various institutions. Williams (2007) explains that inclusive excellence can be defined by identifying the meanings of the word itself. Inclusion means to include any kind of diverse person, whether it is race, age, sex, or ability. Excellence means providing the highest level of commitment to your diverse members. Providing excellence includes fostering these member's ability to succeed, providing opportunities, and making sure their opinion is heard and valued.

Williams (2007) noted that IE takes a different look at both quality and diversity. IE allows organizations to utilize their diverse members and allows them to embed diversity throughout the previously developed goals and objectives to achieve excellence. IE challenges institutions to strive for excellence in the diverse structure they already have formed or created. IE moves beyond diversity or multiculturalism by trying to make equitable outcomes for these diverse members by not just accepting their differences, but using those differences to promote success and power.

Anthony, Chang, & Milem (2005) provided a unique comparison of how to understand inclusive excellence. Anthony, Chang, & Milem (2005) compared IE to an alloy, which is a composed of different metals which is extremely strong because of the merge. This alloy is a combination or integration of two elements, diversity and quality. He believed the combination of the two elements made a new creation that is stronger and tougher than the two parts alone. IE is supposed to represent the combination of different parts to make a strong product. Overall,



Anthony, Chang, & Milem (2005) believe that IE moves beyond compositional diversity (compositional diversity is the actual statistical number of diverse members you have in your institution) to a multilayered process by which we learn, research, work, and provide service.

According to Hobart & William (2007) IE is about providing a community that is worthwhile, rewarding and promotes the excellence of all members, but also focuses on relationships and interactions with diverse members and customers. Nuru-Holm (2010) explains that IE allows organizations to utilize, appreciate and respect everyone's perspectives, skills and talents. Also that we need to view these components as links in a chain that foster IE.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges (2007) stated that IE is built around the principles of equity, social justice, cultural competence, and engaged citizenship. Bartee, Bauman, Bensimon, Brown, Bustillos, & Patterson (2005) added that IE is a system that focuses on developing greater diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability at every level.

The term equity was used in each description of IE, but requires a deeper examination at the meaning of the term. Bartee, Bauman, Bensimon, Brown, Bustillos, & Patterson (2005) consider equity, "the creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion."(p. 12) Equity can be applied within associations, organizations, and almost any institution. Within an association, true equity would be the same opportunities available for underrepresented populations as there are for the majority, in terms of position, continuing education (CEU's), different opportunities for advancement or leadership, research topics, and more. Equity is imperative because it allows these diverse underrepresented populations in our institutions to benefit from every opportunity

provided to them. Equity combined with inclusion, cultural competency, and excellence is what helps to construct IE.

From reviewing Nuru- Holm's (2010) research it is evident that an institution that embraces inclusive excellence would provide a welcome environment where respect and learning from various perspectives and cultural backgrounds provides enrichment for all. Nuro-Holm's (2010) believes IE can enhance learning and achievements of all members. IE would allow an association to make their members feel appreciated, valued, and trust that they have a fair opportunity to succeed and advance within the association. To achieve this success with inclusive excellence, members must understand that there is a need for improvement and that it begins with internalizing the mission or purpose.

### **ASHA and Cultural Competency**

Cultural competency is needed when trying to navigate within IE. When gathering these diverse members, there must be a plan to allow them to receive equitable outcomes. The plan is IE and the way to communicate within all of these different cultures is cultural competency.

The quest for cultural competency begins by understanding one's own personal worldview and recognizing that it may be different from others. A personal journey that focuses on ethno-cultural knowledge (including an exploration of diverse values and beliefs), awareness and understanding, with a flexible attitude that is open to self discovery, will set one on the path to becoming increasingly more culturally sensitive and competent. (Elliot, 2011, p. 27)

The message that Elliot (2011) is trying to express is that you must be self-aware and be able to examine the effects of looking through the lens in which you perceive the world. Everyone sees the world through a lens that is affected life experiences, culture, age, and other contributing

factors. When beginning to look at cultural competency an individual needs to understand that everyone has a different world view or lens.

Elliot (2011) defines cultural competency by breaking the word into its separate meanings. Elliot (Elliot, 2011) described culture as consisting of many dimensions. Some of the dimensions discussed are subjective dimensions like beliefs, attitudes, and values. There are interactive dimensions like verbal and non verbal components of communications. Elliot (2011) also stated material dimensions like artifacts and modes of dress. To become cultural competent, one must understand all the components that create a person's personal culture.

Competency, within cultural competency involves the awareness of one's own worldview which was discussed. Martin (2007) explained that competency also involves member's personal attitude toward cultural differences and cross cultural skills. Personal attitude is an important factor. As we learned from earlier research, multiculturalism is productive only if the majority of members agree that there is a need, and commit to understanding and promoting its goals. The same goes for cultural competency. If the majority of members take one class, or participate in a couple of continuing education courses without really internalizing the concepts, cultural competency will not be developed or activated. Within an organization where one majority dominates, administrators need to ensure that cultural competency is actively being cultivated.

Elliot (2011) explained that anyone who is trying to become culturally competent should guide themselves by the phrase, "Treat others as they want to be treated," not the common phrase, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Elliot, 2011, p.27) This phrase in a simple way sums up how people should view cultural competency. Becoming culturally competent means being aware of others cultures and internally reflecting on how others wish to be treated.

“The main focus should thus be on learning about individuals, with the objective of using information about groups to guide our thinking and questioning.” (Elliot, 2011, p.28) Elliot (2011) explains that there is not one precise way to become culturally competent but you can start by beginning to, “talk to individuals and learn about their personal perspectives related to the question, topic, or issue at hand.”(p.28) Elliot (2011) stressed the use of questions to begin the process of becoming culturally competent when working in the healthcare field. “Questions that investigate values, beliefs and practices are a perfect starting point as one seeks to learn about residents/clients in a culturally competent caring manner.” (Elliot, 2011, p.28)

### **ASHA and Globalization**

As service providers, ASHA members need to be invested in becoming more culturally competent. As the world is becoming more diverse, ASHA as an organization needs to move with the times. More culturally diverse members will be joining ASHA because the time when these fields are dominated by White, non-Hispanic members are coming to an end. Also the 92.9% of ASHA members who are White, non-Hispanic’s need to gain the skills to work with and service diverse cultures and work to promote IE.

Elliot’s (2011) supported the notion that members of organizations like ASHA, need to be aware that their clients may have opposing personal beliefs or values. “Cultural competency involves acknowledging that another person holds a worldview that is different from his/her own-but it does not involve giving up your own values, beliefs and practices. (Elliot, 2011, p.30) The big question after researching is, are ASHA members cultural competent?

From the 2011 Speech Language Pathology Health Care Survey (ASHA, 2012) Summary Report, members were asked about culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The questions asked were, “How qualified do you believe you are to address cultural and linguistic

influences on service delivery and outcome?”(ASHA, 2012) The scale ranged from 1= “not qualified” to 5= “very qualified”. The results showed 31% reported being qualified to serve culturally and linguistically diverse populations, 8.6% reported being very qualified, and 22.1% being qualified. (ASHA, 2012) From these results of this study you can tell that 69% of practicing ASHA members report inadequacies when providing services to culturally and linguistically diverse populations. This research should be alarming for ASHA members. This means that students are graduating from programs without the proper cultural and linguistically diverse education on how to work with and service diverse people. Also those members are not being provided the training or continuing education needed for them to service every member of society.

IE is about being motivated to change these percentages that ASHA research provided. If ASHA creates an environment where everyone is included and diversity and multiculturalism are embraced and viewed as assets, cultural competency can be improved which will produce positive results for members and clients. Each day, associations, organizations, and businesses are being affected by globalization and our ever changing world. It is not a secret that the world is becoming more diverse and that multiculturalism and the need for cultural competency are increasing. U.S businesses are moving overseas and America welcomes more immigrants into the country daily as it has throughout history. Organizations, businesses and corporations must accept the fact that they will be servicing and employing a growingly diverse population. The days when organizations like ASHA have a dominant majority are over. In the coming years, globalization will affect every business and organization; therefore, it is important for these institutions to have plans. Ngmosi (2009) believes organizations best plan in maintaining competitive edge in a changing world is making adjustments to deal with the realities of a global

economy which means embracing diversity. As this world and its inhabitants continue to change and develop, companies, organizations, and associations need to have an open door policy accepting everyone and fostering the talents they bring. Implementing IE allows for people of different race, culture, age, religion and various other attributes to obtain quality positions or membership to these different institutions and have valued experience within them. ASHA is one of the organizations who need to open its doors. Currently ASHA has many diversity initiatives enacted within the organization. The problem lies in whether these current programs are making a difference, which requires a closer look at their purpose.

### **ASHA's Core Components**

ASHA's vision involves "Making effective communication, a human right, accessible and achievable for all." (ASHA, 2012) ASHA believes that every human should have the opportunity to communicate no matter what disability, age, sex, or other differentiating factor. Without communication, quality of life will diminish for any human being; ASHA understands that and works with professionals to make a difference. Additionally, ASHA's mission takes their vision a step further. ASHA's mission is "to ensure that all people with communication disorders receive quality services from well-educated professionals." (ASHA, 2011) ASHA aids speech pathologists, audiologists, and speech language hearing scientists in providing the best services for clients, students or patients, advocating on behalf of individuals with communication and related disorders, and advancing communication science.

ASHA believes in providing resources, continuous educational experiences, and opportunities to increase expertise. All of ASHA's work, resources and attention are guided by the ASHA's Strategic Plan-The Strategic Plan to Excellence. ASHA's Diversity efforts are described within their Strategic Plan. We must ask the question; does ASHA's diversity plan do

enough? Or does ASHA need to take additional steps towards being IE. How can ASHA work under the realm of IE or is the association already doing so? To truly answer this question, we must review what steps ASHA has already taken to embrace diversity, such as reviewing the Strategic Plan for Excellence.

The strategic plan involves ASHA's Vision and Mission which was previously stated, Core Values, Strategic Themes or Pillars of Excellence, and Strategic Objectives. Diversity is first mentioned in the Core Values section of the Vision and Mission. ASHA's core values are "excellence, integrity, and diversity, commitment, responsive, member-centric, and research-based." (ASHA 2012) The strategic themes are a crucial part of the association's vision, mission, and strategy. The association feels that these are the areas where they must achieve success in order for the association to do extremely well. The organization's four strategic themes are, "two professions one vision, scientifically based professional practices, advocacy, and the member experience." (ASHA, 2012)

Strategic objectives are used to help guide the association toward success. The strategic objectives include,

Enhancing member satisfaction, advancing efforts that safeguard the discipline, professions, and the association, increasing reimbursement and funding in health care and schools, increasing accessibility and use of research, increasing the diversity and cultural competence of the membership, enhancing advocacy efforts, increasing the number of students and associates, enhancing responsible financial management, improving the science base, improving communications to members, improving data collection and decision-making, improving the use and effectiveness of technology and infrastructure, and strengthening strategic relationships. (ASHA, 2012)

Overall, ASHA's diversity plans are weaved into the strategic plan as diversity being one of the nine core values, and diversity being promoted in one of the strategic objectives, which is to increase the diversity and cultural competency of the membership. The Association has separate entities within the organization that promote diversity and some aspects of inclusive excellence.

### **ASHA's Current Diversity Initiatives**

Funding is one area within ASHA where diversity is promoted. ASHA considers multiculturalism to include issues dealing with race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability. Additionally, ASHA understands the importance of creating and supporting the infusion of multiculturalism in university and professional programs, clinical opportunities, and activities of various allied/related associations and organizations. Since 1996, ASHA has funded projects rooted in multiculturalism. Proposals are written to request funding to an appointed review panel and decisions are made based on various considerations.

ASHA, in partnership with Pearson PsychCorp, awards Diversity Champions to different members of ASHA. Diversity champions are professionals in the field who are awarded for advancing multicultural issues in communication sciences and disorders. Champions are listed on the ASHA website for recognition.

The Multicultural Issues Board (MCIB) is an entity within ASHA that focuses on diversity and includes aspects of IE. The purpose of the MCIB is "providing culturally competent services and to provide leadership, guidance, and strategic planning in reviewing, recommending, and developing ASHA policies, procedures, and programs that are responsive to cultural and linguistic influences, particularly those impacting historically underserved and underrepresented populations."(ASHA, 2012) The MCIB helps in providing a multicultural view



when ASHA develops policies, creates procedures, and develops programs. The ASHA website explained that the MCIB is especially interested in issues affecting populations that are historically underrepresented, which include people identified by race, ethnicity, culture, language, dialect, national origin, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status, and/or ability.

Within ASHA, there is also the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA). According to ASHA, the OMA works with professionals and persons with disabilities on cultural and linguistic diversity issues. The OMA also created a web page on ASHA's web site consisting of resources on multicultural affairs. The web page contains info on how to develop cultural competence, research on multicultural issues and concerns, resources for providing services to an individual who speaks a different language, and how individuals can get involved. It also provides cultural competency checklists and cultural competency awareness assessments. When providing services to culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) populations, the checklist is used to improve awareness of different cultures. The awareness assessment is used to evaluate cultural competency by taking different subtests and comparing percentages to determine your cultural awareness.

On the ASHA's website, ASHA provides sample Multicultural/Multilingual Issues (MMI) syllabi and instructional activities. The samples provided are to be used as examples when discussing the topic. Sample syllabi and activities are provided for Speech and Language in a Cross-Cultural society, Bilingual/Cross-Cultural Assessment, and Accent Modification/Dialect Reduction.

Information is also provided in the form of an article, on the recommended practices by colleges and universities to increase recruitment, retention and also information on career

transition of Communication Sciences and Disorders. (ASHA, 2012) Throughout the research article mentioned above, it describes different strategies for universities and companies and other institutions to retain and recruit diverse students. The suggestions vary from offering mentorship programs, to recruiting from two year universities, to strategies for recruitment of diverse individuals. The article provides information on how Communication Sciences and Disorders programs across the nation have integrated CLD programs into curriculum to attract and foster the talents of multicultural students. ASHA has listed these schools as a resource for programs interested in implementing such changes into their programs.

ASHA Focused Initiative on CLD populations funded a web-based calculator application that illustrates shifting demographics in the U.S. based on information provided by the US Census Bureau. The calculator was developed to give a comparison of the case load demographics within the user's state as a resource. This calculator can be helpful to members by helping them evaluate the effectiveness of their assessment protocols, help the user assess and promote CEU choices to benefit your caseload, and help faculty members at different universities evaluate their campus student body and need for infusing multicultural content into curricula.

In 2004, ASHA developed the ASHA Gathering Place. The Gathering Place is a mentoring program developed to provide opportunities for mentees to collaborate with mentors, promote the sharing of resources, and the ability to achieve goals with the new relationships developed. The two mentoring programs are the Student to Empowered Professional (S.T.E.P.) program and the Mentoring Academic-Research Careers program. Both of these programs offer exceptional opportunities and the S.T.E.P. program provides preference to racial/ethnic backgrounds that have been historically underrepresented. Professionals within the field provide

support, career development ideas, feedback, and overall guidance to students within the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral Communication Sciences and Disorders programs.

The Minority Leadership Program (MSLP) is a leadership development program established for undergraduate seniors, Master's students, AuD students who are enrolled in communication sciences and disorders programs and PhD students who are pursuing a research doctoral degree. ASHA explains that the,

Purpose is to recruit and retain racial/ethnic minorities that have been historically under-represented in the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology. ASHA accomplishes this by providing focused educational programming and activities to build and enhance leadership skills, teaching how the association works, providing an opportunity for program participants to interact with leaders in the professions of audiology, speech-language pathology, and speech, language, and hearing sciences.

(ASHA, 2012)

Preference for the program is given to underrepresented minorities within ASHA. Thirty students are chosen to participate each year.

ASHA is also allied with the Multicultural Constituency Groups (MCCGs). These groups are not a part of ASHA. These constituency groups each focus on an individual population. Within that given population, these groups address the “client/patient/professional/student perspective of the identified population.” (ASHA, 2012) These MCCGs are involved in a multitude of activities like promoting research, recruiting professionals, encouraging leadership and engagement in professional issues, providing networking opportunities, and advocating at local, state, and national levels for their selected demographic. These constituency groups provide a community within the field for diverse professionals. The six MCCGs are The Native

American Caucus, The National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing (NBASLH), The Hispanic Caucus, The Asian Indian Caucus (AIC), The Asian Pacific Caucus, and the L’GASP-GLBTQ Caucus, which includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning professionals and their friends and allies.

Special Interest Group 14 (SIG 14), Communication Disorders and Sciences in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) populations happens to be another entity within ASHA that promotes diversity. The group’s vision is “to be a leading resource for advancing knowledge of the influence and importance of cultural and linguistic diversity on human communication and the infusion of this knowledge into research and clinical practice.”(ASHA, 2012) The mission of the group “is to provide leadership and advocacy for best practices relating to audiology and speech-language pathology services for CLD populations, to promote research and to provide networking, collaboration, education, and mentoring opportunities for its affiliates, students, and other service providers.”(ASHA, 2012)

SIG 14 produces, “Perspectives on Communication Disorders and Sciences in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations,” which is a magazine that discusses their activities and provides articles and research. SIG 14 also provided opportunities for CEs by offering self studies within the group, holding a seminar at ASHA, and providing discounts for short courses at the convention. SIG 14 provides networking opportunities online and through email to affiliates only. SIG 14 has a coordinating committee that provides ASHA information on input regarding policy, guidelines, committees, and other issues.

### **Recommendations**

After researching diversity, multiculturalism, inclusive excellence, and cultural competency, there are many benefits that ASHA could utilize by following some

recommendations. ASHA has many separate entities within the organization that focus on diversity or multiculturalism such as the Multicultural Issues Board, or the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Each office has their own agendas, which is where the problem lies. IE cannot be addressed by one section or unit within an association. IE must be implemented throughout every sector of the association for positive results to occur. “Achieving long-term success is not simply about doing things differently; it is about doing things better.” (Williams, 2007, p. 10) Inclusive Excellence is not about changing the way ASHA operates, but encourages that alterations are made to ensure that every member is included and that as an organization it can strive for excellence in every arena it participates in.

There are several areas within the structure of ASHA that can be altered to promote inclusive excellence. Curriculum provided to communication disorder and sciences (CDS) majors (future ASHA members), focusing on multiculturalism and diversity is one alteration. Recruiting and retaining a more compositionally diverse number of CDS students and members is a necessary alteration to achieve IE. Mandatory cultural competency and multicultural training is requirement for any ASHA member who expects to provide quality service. Also continuing education courses based on principles promoting IE, multiculturalism and cultural competency. These alterations would add education, experience, and a fresh approach to the changing world we are providing service for. (Williams, 2007)

- Problem: CDS graduate programs not providing an adequate curriculum promoting multiculturalism and diversity.
- Strategy: Creation of a educational program for communication disorder and sciences (CDS) majors (future ASHA members), focusing on multiculturalism and diversity, also a change in accreditation criteria for programs accredited by ASHA.

All ASHA members were once students at universities across the world. All of these members studied within programs that were developed to provide an adequate education. With this education, members are expected to provide quality service to our patients/clients/students. One thing that many of these programs are missing is courses focusing on diversity and multicultural issues. Graduate students cannot be adequately educated to service diverse clients or work with diverse members after taking one class on multiculturalism. ASHA needs to evaluate curriculum that educates the various disciplines that have membership within ASHA. Therefore, ASHA also needs to change the criteria for accrediting graduate programs. If graduate programs are giving diplomas to future ASHA members without the students feeling comfortable servicing diverse populations, then they are not properly equipping students with skills necessary to serve the diverse population. Even if courses are not provided within the specific Communication Disorders and Sciences programs, ASHA should require future graduates to take electives to build their multicultural education. If ASHA does not make a commitment to creating cultural competent graduate students then they are setting themselves up for a mass amount of inadequately trained members. If ASHA takes more time to create or support curriculum that focuses on diversity and multicultural issues, these underrepresented populations will know that this association cares and focuses on issues that are important within their culture.

- Problem: The need to recruit and retain a more compositionally diverse number of CDS students and members of ASHA.
- Strategy: Utilizing their current pool of diverse members and allowing them to mentor and advise underrepresented populations about the benefits provided by the various careers ASHA membership represents.... award scholarships, help provide financial aid,

mentoring them throughout their programs, and providing an education that focuses on diversity and multicultural issues (Nuru-Holm, 2010)

Attracting diverse members is a large component to making ASHA an organization that works under the realm of IE. Creating a more diverse ASHA begins with recruiting diverse students into the university programs that produce future ASHA members. In order to promote inclusive excellence, we need to recruit diverse student populations into the field of study in order to insure the future of inclusive excellence is capable of being accomplished. Cleveland University suggested that associations “Engage in various recruitment strategies to attract and hire candidates from diverse populations, including using diverse faculty and staff to identify and attract diverse candidate pools.”(Nuru-Holm, 2010, p.16) ASHA could attract diverse members by utilizing their current pool of diverse members and to serve as mentors and advise underrepresented populations about the benefits provided by the various ASHA careers (Nuru-Holm, 2010). If mentors came to diverse communities and educated students on careers that the association supports and opened diverse student’s eyes to the opportunities, we may increase diversity within the programs. The majority of ASHA members are non-Hispanic, White women.(ASHA, 2011) If we could educate high school seniors and early level undergraduates about the exciting careers available, we could change the diversity composition of ASHA which would promote IE. We cannot expect to see changes in multiculturalism, which will lead to an inclusive excellent environment, without an increase in compositional diversity.

After ASHA obtains these diverse students, they need to focus on retaining these same diverse students within the program. A couple ways ASHA could support these diverse students is to award scholarships, help provide financial aid, mentoring them throughout their programs, and providing an education that focuses on diversity and multicultural issues (Nuru-Holm, 2010).

Underrepresented populations often have difficulty with funding their education. One way ASHA could show support for underrepresented student populations would be to offer scholarships specifically for these students. Many students do not have the social support they need to compete in such competitive programs. Also because this field is dominated by white women, many minorities do not know current members. When picking a career it is easy to look toward your parents or family members, which is not possible for most minorities in this field. Students have no one giving them advice on the correct curriculum or course of action for their college career. Mentors could provide advice and personal experience to these underrepresented populations so they feel accepted and appreciated by the program.

ASHA needs to use their mentoring programs (S.T.E.P. and MSLP) and integrate them into their IE plan. For the mentoring programs to promote IE, they must focus on underrepresented populations, providing them guidance, and educational support. Nuru-Holm (2010) stated that it is important to “develop and maintain an effective mentoring process for career advancement and development of diverse academic leaders and administrators, including succession planning that allows all to grow through broad leadership experience”. (p.17)

Mentoring these underrepresented populations will provide support for the students, help them to achieve their full potential, and in the process develop future diverse leaders within the association. This in turn will support retention and create equitable outcomes, two important components of IE.

- Problem: ASHA members providing services without an understanding of multiculturalism, diversity, or the importance of inclusive excellence.



- Strategy: ASHA needs to provide CEU's that focus on principles promoting IE, also the creation of specialization areas awarding specializations in inclusive excellence after obtaining adequate CEU hours.

Education does not stop at the university level. ASHA requires members to have continuous CEU's to develop their skills and stay current on the services ASHA provides. ASHA needs to evaluate CEU's available to practicing members and alter discussion topics if necessary, to insure that they cover topics that promote IE. CEU's could be based on servicing patients from diverse backgrounds, working with colleagues of a different sex, race, cultural background, ability, or age. CEU's provide opportunities for ASHA's members to increase their education and value to the field. Providing these CEU's, which are mandatory within this profession, would guarantee the creation of members who work under the realm of inclusive excellence.

- Problem: ASHA members providing services without obtaining cultural competency.
- Strategy: Provide free mandatory cultural competency or multicultural training for ASHA members that are required yearly for retaining clinical competency (CCC's) provided by ASHA.

Besides CEU's that members must pay for, ASHA should provide mandatory cultural competency and multiculturalism training for all members. ASHA needs to create an environment where diverse or underrepresented populations feel welcome, want to continue membership, and are able to achieve equitable outcomes. Nuru-Holms (2010) believes it is important to "provide diversity training concerning multiple dimensions of diversity for the campus community (p. 15) Whether it is within higher education, workplace organization, or professional association, diversity training makes members flexible and able to work with and provide services to any person with a diverse cultural background.

Voyer (2011) believed that, “training is based upon the assumption that changes in the culture and climate of an agency, institution or community follows the psychological change of its members.” (p.1877) Voyer (2011) is saying that for cultural competency or multicultural training to be affective, members must actually internalize what they are learning and make their own psychological change. Within training, members can learn how speak using language that is, “free from bias and privilege and should be used in all circumstances.” (Voyer, 2011, p.1881) For ASHA members communication is part of the field of study, with that comes a responsibility to avoid language that “implicates you in systems of dominance and exclusion” (Voyer, 2011, p.1882) Through cultural competency or diversity training ASHA members can, “confront their own biases while also empowering individuals to stand in the face of discriminatory behavior.” (Voyer, 2011, p.1883) Obtaining cultural competency or multicultural training is about obtaining a different outlook on the world, an outlook that is full of compassion and actual desire to learn from others different from you. With ASHA being dominated by one majority, it is imperative that training is mandatory for all members.

### **Conclusion**

Through this research conclusions can be made that ASHA is an organization that strives to promote diversity and multiculturalism. As an organization they include words like “diversity” and “excellence” within their core values. ASHA works on the values through their strategic objectives. One such objective is focuses on increasing diversity and the cultural competency of members (ASHA, 2012 )The question is with 92.9% of one dominant culture as members, is ASHA achieving their goal. Embracing and promoting inclusive excellence would provide ASHA with the structure to make strides in the right direction. Focusing on curriculum,

recruitment and retention, continuing education, and multicultural or cultural competency training will alter this organization in a remarkable way.

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VITA

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University

Tanya C. Ingram

Tanya333@siu.edu

Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education, May 2009

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