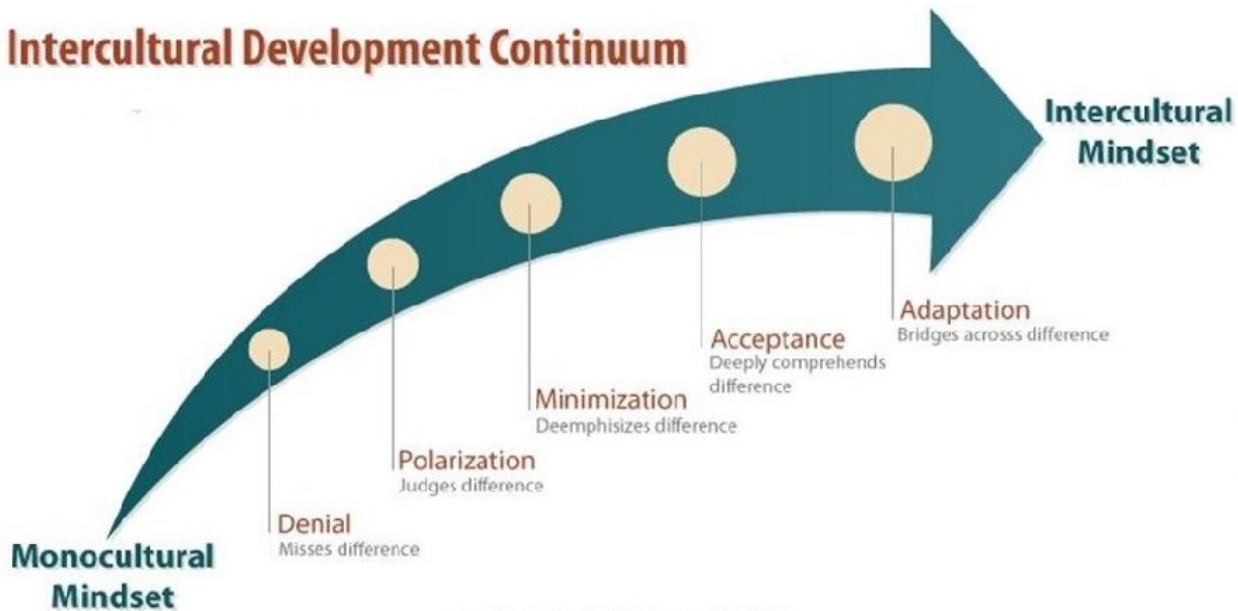


Intercultural Development Continuum



DENIAL



I don't see differences at all.

Those in this stage are not yet aware of cultural differences. They know how things work in their own culture and assume it's more or less the same elsewhere. They are generally uninterested in the topic of *culture*.

Study Abroad students in this stage say...

"I've traveled a lot. I can deal with any culture without much thought."

"Culture Shock just doesn't happen to me."

"As long as we speak the same language, there's no issue."

Benefits of being in this stage: You likely have a strong social network of people who are very similar to you and you minimize conflict by avoiding difference.

Risks of remaining in this stage: You miss out on opportunities to grow, and you probably misunderstand or even offend people who are different from you.

To Move Forward: Learn to recognize the existence of cultural differences.

Here, students become aware of cultural differences, often feeling intimidated or threatened. There are two forms of this stage: **Defense** is where individuals see "us" as being better than "them." **Reversal** is when one admires the "other" culture and views their own as inferior.

Study Abroad students in this stage say...

"Traveling abroad made me realize all I appreciate at home."

"These people are sexist/racist/etc.?"

"Forget my home culture, from now on, I want to be like them."

Benefits of being in this stage: You meet difficult intercultural issues head on and are confident in your preferences (us or them).

Risks of remaining in this stage: You will often find it difficult to work/play with culturally different others because your perspectives seem incompatible.

To Move Forward: Recognize *common humanity* & similarities in needs and feelings. Also, work on finding a balance between appreciation and criticism for both your own and other cultures.

POLARIZATION



I see our differences, but I don't like them and my culture is better. I love me.

I see our differences, I like them and your culture is better.

MINIMIZATION



Those in this stage believe that since we are all human, everyone is fundamentally the same; we all have similar feelings, hopes and needs. Here, cultural differences are trivial. The Golden Rule is all we need.

Study Abroad students in this stage say...

"I've found things in common with local students here. When it comes down to it, our values are universal."

"I don't see color"

"Our basic needs are the same world-wide"

Benefits of being in this stage: You are accepting and tolerant of people, despite cultural differences. You are motivated to get along well with others.

Risks of being in this stage: In focusing on similarities and surface-level differences, you will miss the impact of "deep" culture like beliefs, values and goals.

To Move Forward: Develop cultural self-awareness & learn that even when similarities between cultures are obvious, there are also a lot of important differences.

Here, one is able to recognize that there *are* significant differences between people from distinct cultures. Those in Acceptance both accept and respect these differences. But, they still feel insecure about how to deal with these differences.

Study Abroad students in this stage say...

"Knowing that people's values differ, and that my culture gives me privilege, it can be confusing how to behave around those different than me."

"Being around sameness all the time would be stale, boring."

"I know my host family & I have had very different life experiences, but we are learning how to live together."

Benefits of being in this stage: You are able to shift perspectives, seeing both others and yourself through the lens of other cultures.

Risks of remaining in this stage: You may not be willing or able to behave in ways that others consider appropriate, even when you realize there are different "rules".

To Move Forward: Refine your analysis of cultural contrasts and practice negotiating who will adapt to whose expectations and norms in intercultural interactions.

ACCEPTANCE



ADAPTATION



Those in adaptation have gained competency & experience to effectively deal with difference. They are *edge-walkers*, able to adapt their ways of interacting & communicating. They are comfortable engaging with people of differing world-views. Culture is seen as a *process* of engagement with others, not someone one *has*. Cultural empathy has been developed and is intentionally expressed to others. They follow the *platinum* rule: treat others how they want to be treated.

Study Abroad students in this stage say...

"Whatever the situation, I can usually see it from various cultural points of view, and respond effectively"

"I greet people from my culture and people from others cultures in different ways, taking those differences into account to show respect."

Benefits of being in this stage: You are able to consistently communicate across cultures in ways that are effective, appropriate and satisfactory for you and others.

Risks of being in this stage: Under stress, you are likely to move back to previous stages, and it's easy to be judgmental of peers whose skills are less well-developed.

To Move Forward: Challenge yourself by moving into unfamiliar cultures. Hone your skills of empathy and cultural frame-shifting, and be mindful of when you swing back to other orientations temporarily.