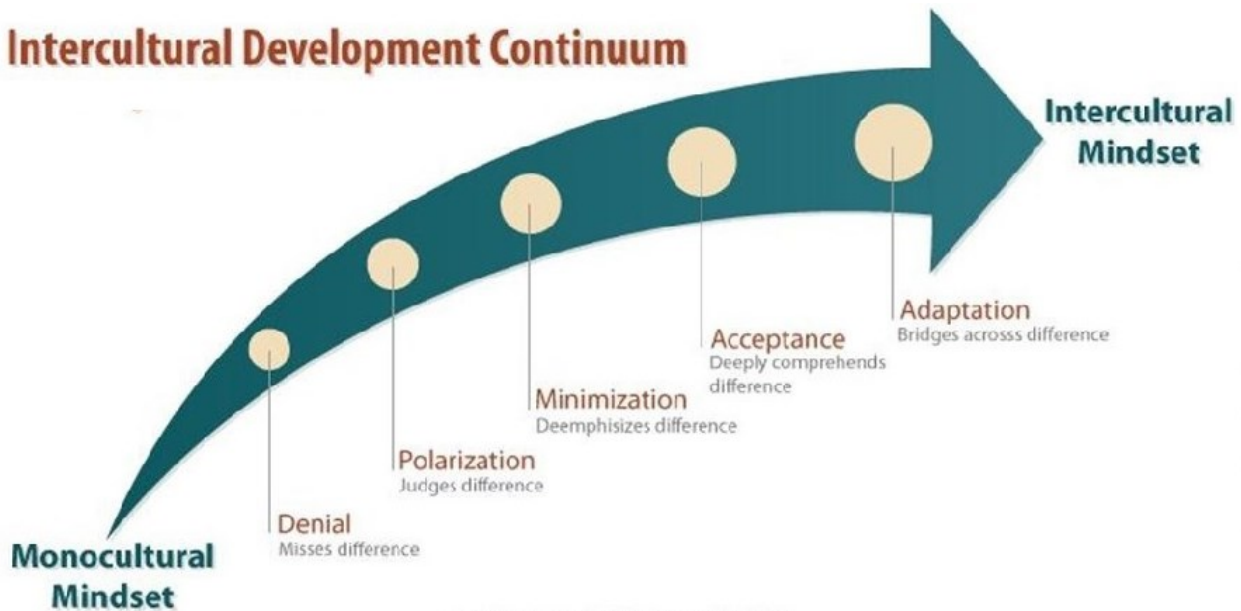


Intercultural Development Continuum



DENIAL



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 very similar to you; 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 those 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 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



Since we are all human, everyone is fundamentally the same; we all have similar feelings, hopes and needs. In Minimization, cultural differences are trivial, insignificant. 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 & 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 & surface-level differences, you will miss the impact of "deep" culture like beliefs, values & goals.

To Move Forward: Develop cultural self-awareness; learn that even when cultural similarities 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 them.

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/able to act in ways that others see as appropriate, even when realizing there are different "rules."

To Move Forward: Refine your analysis of cultural contrasts; negotiate who will adapt to whose expectations & norms in intercultural interactions.

ACCEPTANCE



ADAPTION



Those in Adaption are *edge-walkers*, able to adapt their ways of interacting & communicating. They have gained competency & experience to effectively deal with difference. Their values are flexible to those of others. They are comfortable engaging with those of differing world-views. Culture is seen as a *process* of engagement, not something someone one *has*. Cultural empathy has been developed and is intentionally expressed.

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: Able to consistently and effectively communicate across cultures in ways that are satisfactory for you and others.

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

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