

Creating Cultural Competence

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Fayetteville, AR



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Dr. Jacquelyn Wiersma-Mosley (*she, her, hers*) is a Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences in the School of Human Environmental Sciences at the University of Arkansas. Her teaching program has focused on creating curricula to increase cultural competence (via the Intercultural Development Inventory) in courses she developed, including a new general elective course, *Introduction to Cultural Competence*. She is a trained administrator of the Intercultural Development Inventory and conducts trainings across campus with students, faculty, staff, and campus leaders, as well as the local community. Dr. Wiersma-Mosley can be contacted at jwiersma@uark.edu.



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Creating cultural competence is essential on college campuses, in our communities, and in the workplace. Cultural competence, as defined by the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), is the capability to shift cultural perspective and adapt—or bridge—behavior to commonality and difference. The IDI is an assessment-driven approach to developing individual intercultural competence and to build cultural competence through adaptation of behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. These five videos portray what defines cultural competence, according to college students' diverse perspectives. The videos are organized along the IDI spectrum, which ranges from a monocultural to intercultural perspective: Denial, Polarization, Minimization, Acceptance, and Adaptation. The monocultural mindset uses cultural differences and commonalities based on an individual's own cultural perspectives and values and often uses stereotypes as a way to identify cultural differences. The intercultural mindset is more able to make sense of commonalities and differences of culture based on their own cultural practices and values and those of the other's culture. They are more likely to use cultural generalizations that recognize cultural differences and support more complex perceptions and experiences based on difference and commonality.

These videos can be used for diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings, in classrooms that focus on social justice topics, on college campuses that are working to become culturally competent, and in a variety of community contexts. Using this resource in your course or workshop? Please let us know!

VIDEO 1: WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?

University students talk about what cultural competence is and what cultural competence means to them personally.



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VIDEO 2: CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN DENIAL AND POLARIZATION

University students discuss what their experiences have been with either themselves or with others who have mindsets in Denial and Polarization in a monocultural mindset.

Denial is the first orientation in the IDI continuum and indicates a person is disinterested or avoidant of differences. Individuals in this orientation may avoid those who are different from themselves and view their own cultural values and practices as preferable and may be critical of the cultural values and practices of others. Approximately 2% of people fall within Denial. The best strategy is for them to notice and recognize differences.

Next, Polarization (16%) is the “us vs. them” mindset, where people have a natural tendency to judge differences, and may become *Defensive* of their own way, identity, or culture; or they fall within *Reversal*, which is valuing others’ cultures over one’s own, and may report being embarrassed or ashamed of one’s own culture. The best strategy for moving beyond these orientations is to start searching for commonalities among cultural groups.



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VIDEO 3: CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MINIMIZATION

University students discuss what their experiences have been with either themselves or with others who have mindsets in Minimization.

Most people (65%) fall within Minimization, which is the tendency to focus too much on similarities and by ignoring differences; essentially, this orientation represents “color-blindness,” where people say, “I don’t see color, we’re all the same” but takes away the value of individuality with which one identifies. This expectation of cultural commonality and universal values and principles may mask a deeper recognition of cultural differences. These individuals tend to have really “good hearts,” believe in equality and humanity but have poor impact. The best strategy for moving beyond this orientation is to explore and focus on issues of power, privilege, and systemic differences.



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VIDEO 4: CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ACCEPTANCE AND ADAPTATION

University students discuss what their experiences have been with either themselves or with others who are oriented in Acceptance and Adaptation.

Moving toward a more intercultural mindset, individuals in Acceptance (15%) are those who recognize and appreciate cultural differences and similarities, but need additional experiences, as they are able to “talk the talk,” but not quite able to “walk the walk.” These individuals may recognize and appreciate culturally different patterns and commonalities in both their own and others’ cultures but may not know how to advance toward a more intercultural mindset.

Adaptation (only 2% of people) is truly becoming able to “walk the walk” and to adapt one’s behavior within both cultural similarities and differences. Those who find themselves in the Adaptation orientation are capable of shifting cultural perspectives and altering their behavior in ways that are both culturally appropriate and authentic. Cultural competence is a journey, not an event, and one must continue growing in their cultural competence to have an Adaptation mindset. Those who reach this orientation have a strong sense of cultural self-awareness and understanding and are able to “bridge” behaviors across cultural differences.



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VIDEO 5: BECOMING CULTURALLY COMPETENT

University students discuss what it means to become culturally competent. They provide specific strategies that anyone can use to advance along the continuum.

Based on the IDI framework, three major steps are needed to grow in cultural competence:

- (1) learning about your own self-identity and culture,
- (2) learning about cultures that are different from your own, and
- (3) having experiences where you can navigate cultural differences and similarities.

A deeper cultural self-understanding helps one to make sense of and respond to differences in cultural perspectives based on their own culturally learned perspectives, while a deeper cultural other-understanding helps individuals make sense of and respond to differences in culture as they are presented by other cultural groups.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Support for this project was provided by The University of Arkansas Global Campus and the Wally Cordes Teaching and Support Faculty Center.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To learn more about the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) please visit [The Roadmap to Intercultural Competence Using the IDI](#).

The complete video playlist can be accessed on the [Arkansas Open Educational Resources \(OER\) YouTube Channel](#).