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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE:
A JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING,
CONDUCTED BY THE INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY

By
Nicole Ryks

A Manuscript Submitted
to the Graduate College
of MNSU in Mankato
in Partial Fulfillment of Requirement
for the Degree of
Master of Science

at
Minnesota State University, Mankato
May 2012

ABSTRACT

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE:
A JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING,
CONDUCTED BY THE INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY

By

Nicole Ryks

Minnesota State University, Mankato, 2012
Under the Supervision of Dr. James Grabowska
And Committee Members Dr. Kimberly Contag and Dr. Elizabeth Sandell

The purpose of this study was to first identify the most accurate definitions of intercultural competence by the examination of other representative works on the topic, then to elaborate on the different characteristics and articulate the theoretical underpinnings of the intercultural development inventory (IDI) used to assess intercultural competence. Strategies for implementation of information learned from the IDI instrument are presented along with results of the writers own assessment in order to create a more personalized, detailed study. This study was a first step in the process of understanding intercultural competence and the IDI was used as a starting point in researching its assessments. The goal in researching this topic was to guide the readers in developing an understanding of culture and diversity, and though information provided in this study, they will then acknowledge their own strengths and abilities and acquire motivation in pursuing their own path of development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction.....	4
	• Intercultural Training.....	4
	• Globalization.....	6
	• Intercultural Competence: An Individual Journey.....	8
II.	Chapter 1.....	9
	• Defining ‘Competence’.....	10
	• Defining ‘Intercultural’.....	11
	• Defining ‘Intercultural Competence’.....	12
III.	Chapter 2.....	14
	• Measuring Intercultural Development: Utilizing Multiple Models.....	15
	• Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).....	17
	• Differences in Assessments.....	19
	• Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).....	22
	• Intercultural Development Continuum.....	25
	• Individualizing Profiles.....	28
IV.	Chapter 3.....	30
	• Opportunities for Development.....	34
	• 5 Steps to Development.....	36
	• Personal Results.....	39
	• Personal Reflection.....	41
V.	Conclusion.....	42

Introduction

The need for some kind of intercultural training in the U.S. today has become quite evident over the recent decades. After World War II, the need for understanding diverse, or different, cultures and people increased greatly in popularity and in necessity in the workplace, schools and in society. Society began to realize the need for intercultural training after WWII when the second great migration introduced itself. After the war, people began to see diversity in areas that were predominately single-cultured; such as small towns and communities. Many people were new to the idea of diversity in their community and a very important question needed to be answered: how do we all live together effectively? Shortly after, intercultural training became the answer. (Fagin)

The purpose of this study is to help the reader understand what intercultural competence truly is, what importance it holds in everyday life, how instruments that assess intercultural competence, like the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), work and how to plan for success. The reader will also realize that motivation of the individual plays a very important part in developing understandings of different culture groups. The use of an instrument such as the IDI and its plan for achievement will help guide individuals toward improving their acceptance towards other cultures, by giving them specific opportunities for development and suggestions. This study is conducted specifically for those who are passionate or curious about developing an understanding of culture and diversity, and through their curiosity and the information provided, they will then be able to acquire motivation to pursue their own path of development.

Intercultural Training

The introduction of new diverse cultures in the majority of all U.S. towns, cities and communities has challenged North Americans in many ways. Many people find it difficult to accept a non-native simply because he/she is different and has diverse beliefs, values and ideas. On the other hand, some people living in the United States may have the opposite effect when introduced to other cultures within their own country or abroad. They may feel more connected and accepted by another culture and therefore ultimately reject their own. These two examples, however, are extreme and should be avoided. The individual should create a balance where he/she can accept or adapt to different cultures. Training has recently become a very important tool in this situation of increased diversity and has served by helping individuals develop intercultural competence.

Before 1976, there were only approximately 25 articles and chapters that were written about culture. It wasn't until 2008 when that number increased to 15,000 chapters, books, presentations, and articles that included subjects that were all related to culture (Trimble, Pedersen, Rodela 492). It is because of intercultural training that the increased popularity of the term 'culture' and the importance of cultural information have risen.

Intercultural training is focused on increasing one's acceptance of other cultures and diversity and the ability to identify difference and effectively perceive the world from a different perspective. Because the world is continuing to come closer together, the purpose of intercultural training is to help individuals understand and respect each other so people living in the U.S. (and the world) can thrive. However, some groups of people continue to reject the idea of becoming interculturally competent. These groups are not keen on the idea of change and continue to view the world from only their own personal perspective. Diversity and intercultural training were

introduced in hopes of being able to turn these groups not into multicultural experts but into those who are at least culturally aware. (Fagin)

Globalization

Intercultural competence is increasingly gaining importance in every area of today's society through migration, immigration and international business, therefore an important factor in being able to learn and understand about another culture is understanding that cultures language. Only 500 years ago the world contained 14,000 different languages. Today, over 50% of them have been lost, and 40% of the world's population speaks only 8 different languages. With these statistics in mind, Spitzberg and Changnon state that even though one universal language is far from being predicted, "the objective of finding common purpose through mutually coordinated communication across cultures and languages continues to be a goal of many if not most people, organizations, and nations" (2). This is very similar to that of globalization which is also a significant factor for making intercultural competence so important in today's society. In 2006, the U.S. exported \$910 billion which constituted 88% of the total value of the worlds exported goods. These statistics and the obvious importance of U.S. exports imply that U.S. businesses rely on Intercultural communication to be able to compete in the global market (4).

Similar to globalization, Margaret D. Pusch introduces the concept of 'glocalization' in her article on "The Interculturally Competent Global Leader". Glocalization is "the ability to absorb foreign ideas and the best practices from other places and meld them with indigenous traditions" (72). Pusch also states that culture is not genetic or unchangeable or in other words

'hardwired into human DNA', meaning that culture can be influenced or modified throughout time (73). Through glocalization, different cultures are able to learn to tolerate each other and therefore collaborate together effectively. More importantly, they learn how to trust one another. To achieve glocalization, people interacting with a variety of cultures do not have to take significant steps in revamping themselves or completely changing who they are, but they can become more "glocalized" simply by modifying and adapting in order to communicate effectively, trust and work together across cultures. (73)

As communities, societies and businesses become more globalized and multicultural, researchers have the opportunity to investigate and evaluate the cultural competence of more diverse individuals. Through investigation, one can then continue to develop a personal understanding of who he/she is in this ever-changing global environment. Trimble, Pedersen and Rodela state that "since all thoughts and behaviors are culturally biased, accurate assessment, meaningful understanding, and culturally appropriate interventions are required for the understanding of each context for communication to occur effectively and appropriately" (493). While some may assume that competence increases simply through exposure to multiculturalism and diversity and by responding to differences as they experience other cultures, it is actually true that individuals may or may not increase their own personal level of cultural competence simply through exposure to difference. In order to identify levels of competence, instruments have been designed to assess where an individual is in the process of developing cultural competence. There are a number of different assessment instruments currently available that attempt to assess intercultural competence. Instruments can consist of a simple test, interview or an observed setting in which different characteristics of competence are evaluated.

Intercultural Competence: An Individual Journey

Cultural difference is something that has been very important to me since I started my undergraduate degree in Spanish in 2006. By obtaining this degree, I was able to travel and explore Spanish speaking countries and cultures. Before my first study abroad experience in 2007 to Costa Rica, my view of the world was universal, which means that I thought my perceived view of the world was that of every other culture's. I was not aware of how other cultures viewed the world or what their values or beliefs were. I had only one idea of what the world was, and that view was my own. In Costa Rica, I immersed myself into a different culture with different views and I began to slowly identify and appreciate small differences. I later studied abroad in Mexico in 2008 and also lived in Spain for the 2009-2010 school year as a Teaching Assistant. By living in other countries and attempting to adapt to their way of life, I was able to appreciate and understand their culture; a very important factor in developing intercultural competence.

Because of my cultural experiences in different international environments and interactions with people from diverse backgrounds and histories, culture and diversity have become very important in my life. I will always continue to pursue exploration in different Spanish-speaking cultures and further my understanding on others' beliefs, values and ideas. Culture and diversity are fascinating to me and because of my passion for exploration in these two areas, developing an understanding of different cultures as well as understanding my own perspectives in a broader context, is pertinent to my own development and is undoubtedly essential and necessary. Nevertheless, this process of development is not easily acquired, so I

continue to motivate myself and set personal goals in order to obtain and further my understanding.

However, throughout my years of studying foreign language and culture and through travel, I was never certain of my own level of intercultural competence nor was I aware that there were such instruments for assessing my competence level. After discovering the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), an instrument that measures the orientation to cultural differences (Fantini, Assessing 471), and learning that this assessment was offered on campus at Minnesota State University, Mankato, I decided to research the topic and focus my findings not only on intercultural competence and its definition but also on how it is assessed, specifically through the IDI.

Chapter 1 of this study serves to define the concept of intercultural competence. Readers will find information on the IDI as well as information on other models used to help develop measures of intercultural competence in Chapter 2. Readers are then provided strategies for implementation learned from the IDI instrument and will also learn about my personal findings and reflection on my IDI in Chapter 3.

Chapter 1

In order to follow and fully comprehend this project, one must be able to understand what the term intercultural competence truly means. The definition of intercultural competence is described by the Intercultural Development Inventory as “the capability to accurately understand and adapt behavior to cultural difference and commonality” it also “reflects the degree to which cultural differences and commonalities in values, expectations, beliefs, and practices are

effectively bridged, an inclusive learning environment is achieved, and specific differences that exist in your institution are addressed from a “mutual adaptation” perspective” (3). This specific definition is important because it appears on an instrument that assesses intercultural competence. However, the process of defining this term is not as easy as it may seem. My first chapter is dedicated to the definition and the understanding of the meaning or meanings of intercultural competence.

The definition of intercultural competence has been labeled difficult to explain simply because there are many different interpretations of the term and different beliefs of what elements it actually entails. Darla Deardorff mentions in her article “Implementing Intercultural Competence Assessment” that intercultural competence is too often used without a concrete definition, however, “...it is essential to arrive at a definition of intercultural competence before proceeding with any further assessment steps” (478). She also mentions that there has been numerous scholarly works on defining the term and that these works need to be considered while conducting a definition of one’s own (479). The explanation of the term deems difficult because it is comprised of more than one component. When looking at intercultural competence as a whole, it is beneficial to break the term apart and consider the different components that together create meaning.

Defining ‘Competence’

When evaluating the term, competence is the most simple to define, which, according to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* means “the knowledge that enables a person to speak and understand a language”, a definition that is closely linked to ‘performance’ (“Competence”).

The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* has a few more characteristics to add to its definition, however, it is essentially the same; “the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified; ability and a specific range of skill, knowledge or ability”. It also continues to define competence as a linguistics term, “The knowledge that enables one to produce and comprehend a language” (“competence”). The two sources agree on the same meaning in terms of linguistics; that competence is the understanding of a language. However, competence is not limited to terms of linguistics. Instead, it can be used as a general term where it is described as knowledge, a skill or ability. In agreement, Spitzberg and Changnon also define competence as having been

“variously equated with understanding (accuracy, clarity, co-orientation, overlap of meanings), relationship development (attraction, intimacy), satisfaction (communication, satisfaction, relational satisfaction, relational quality), effectiveness (goal achievement, efficiency, institutional success, negotiation success), appropriateness (legitimacy, acceptance, assimilation, and adaptation)” (6).

However, the act of equating competence to a certain set of abilities or skills poses a few problems. While one perceives a certain set of abilities or skills as competency, another may not see these abilities as such. In addition, the same ability or skill may be viewed as a competency in one context but not another. This proves that certain abilities and/or skills are not universally seen as competencies, but depend on who perceives them as such. (6)

Defining ‘Intercultural’

The term Intercultural is not as easily defined as its component. By doing so, first one needs to break apart this word into two different terms; 'inter' and 'culture'. 'Inter', according to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, has several different meanings such as 'between', 'shared by', and 'involving two or more' ("Inter-"). Unlike the terms first component, the meaning of the word 'culture' is vastly more broad and in-depth. Culture is defined in many ways such as: the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations, the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. It is also defined as the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization. Lastly, it can be defined as the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic" ("Culture").

Defining 'Intercultural Competence'

After evaluating the individual meanings of intercultural competence, one can begin to construct a definition of the term as a whole. Now it is possible to conclude with great generality that *inter* signifies between, *culture* is the values, beliefs and actions of people within a group, and *competence* is the understanding of a specific knowledge, ability or skill. With these individual definitions of intercultural competence, it is safe to say that the term as a whole, very generally stated, means the ability to understand or effectively interact between two or more different groups of people which contain different values and beliefs. This general definition of intercultural competence is not very far off from that of Spitzberg and Changnon who suggest that intercultural competence is "the appropriate and effective management of interaction

between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world” (7) (orientations meaning groups of people of different race, ethnicity, religion, and/or area).

Simply defining intercultural competence has proved very challenging for researchers due to the many interpretations of its meaning. Stefanie Rathje, of the University of Jena in Germany, includes many different definitions in her journal entry on intercultural competence that ultimately lead to the same conclusion. However, she suggests that the definition depends on the purpose of intercultural competence. In her article, she focuses on intercultural competence that is economically oriented which means emphasis is typically focused on productivity within interactions. A definition of this purpose is defined as “the ability to (help) shape the process of intercultural interaction in a way that avoids or contextualizes misunderstandings, while creating opportunities for cooperative problem solving in a way that is acceptable and productive or all involved” (256). She also continues to define it as the ability “within an intercultural context to establish contact in an appropriate way and to establish conditions that are acceptable for the free expression and effective exchange of all involved” (256). And the final definition explains that consequently “a level of cooperation is achieved that is agreeable to all participants... allowing the existing diversity... to be exploited for the achievement of common goals” (256). Even though all three citations are different definitions of the same concept, all contain the same conclusion; that the goal of the intercultural competence depends on the participants own successful achievements.

Rathje’s second purpose of intercultural competence, which focuses on the academic or education-based interaction, is defined as “a capacity whose success is best measured in individual growth. This act of personal development is described as an ‘establishment of discrete

commonalities upon a certain plane of significance” (qtd. in Rathje 257). However this definition can be seen as being too idealistic therefore needs to consider the individuals situational objectives. (Rathje)

Rathje’s definitions suggest that intercultural competence should only be measured in individual growth. Based on one’s own knowledge and characteristics, an individual’s level of competence will develop at its own pace therefore it is best to be measured accordingly. In agreement, Fantini also states that the level of competence is based upon the individual’s traits and characteristics, ability to communicate, collaborate and maintain relationships, knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness’s, proficiency in the host language and also his/her current level of development (Fantini, About). This level of competence of an individual is able to be measured by the use of many different types of assessment instruments. The instruments used in measuring these personal characteristics will be further examined in the next chapter of this paper.

It is quite evident that the act of defining the term intercultural competence is no simplistic task; rather, just the opposite. In this chapter I have presented a review of attempts to define intercultural competence, broke the term into its two core components and concluded that intercultural competence is the ‘ability to understand or effectively interact between two or more different groups of people which contain different values and beliefs’, which is the definition that will be used in this study. Even though there are evidently many views and beliefs as to what intercultural competence is, they all seem to point in this general direction of the definition proposed in this chapter.

Chapter 2

Because of the recent importance of acquiring intercultural competence, the ability to assess knowledge and understanding has therefore also become just as important. In this chapter I review the development and theoretical underpinnings of the Intercultural Development Inventory.

While there are a variety of instruments that have been developed to measure intercultural competence, I have selected the IDI for my investigation and as a starting point. The discussion will focus on how measuring intercultural competence can be designed in many ways and can use different models and instruments to determine accuracy. Researchers have employed many different kinds of models and instruments that attempt to meet the different needs of individuals by offering assessments that target different areas of competency and rely on a variety of styles. In order to improve the already reliable and valid assessment, it might yield more accurate results if one takes multiple assessments rather than one. Likewise, it may also be important to allow sufficient time for identifiable results as individuals use the assessment tool as a means to develop a keen awareness of their level of competency. However, as a first step in the process of understanding intercultural competence and determining a point from which to begin, I have selected the IDI as the model in this study.

Measuring Intercultural Development: Utilizing Multiple Models

The Intercultural Development Inventory is only one of many instruments used to assess intercultural competence. The specific instruments used in assessment are actually only sub-categories of a specific model used in the explaining and the training of intercultural competence. Spitzberg and Changnon describe in their chapter of “Conceptualizing Intercultural

Competence” the many different kinds of models that help develop, validate and refine measures of intercultural competence.

In the first chapter of the *Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, Spitzberg and Changnon describe five different kinds of contemporary models starting with Compositional Models which “identify the hypothesized components of competence without specifying the relations among those components” (10). Compositional models are typically comprised of lists that reveal typical traits, characteristics and skills that are defined as interculturally competent. The next model, Co-orientational, is “primarily devoted to conceptualizing the interactional achievement of intercultural understanding or any of its variants (perceptual accuracy, empathy, perspective taking, clarity, overlap of meaning systems)” (10). These models may be very similar to others, however, they focus more on the mutual communication between interactants. Adaptational Models “typically envision multiple interactants in the process and emphasize interdependence of these multiple interactants by modeling the process of mutual adjustment... the core emphasis is that competence is manifest in mutual alteration of actions, attitudes, and understandings based on interaction with members of another culture” (10). Causal Path Models “reflect fairly specified interrelationships among components and are the most easily formalized or translated from or into testable propositions. These models typically take a form similar to a path model, with an identifiable set of distal-to-proximal concepts leading to a downstream set of outcomes that mark or provide a criterion of competence” (10). And lastly, Developmental Models emphasize the concept of time in acquiring intercultural competence. These models categorize the different levels of competence while stressing that complete competence is only attainable throughout time. (Spitzberg & Changnon 10)

These developmental models, such as the IDI, suggest that by engaging in social, communicative activity with another person from the target culture, this produces greater understanding, learning and incorporation of respective cultural perspectives. These models also provide certain levels of competence that are used as stages of progression in gaining intercultural competence. (Spitzberg & Changnon 21)

Because there are many Developmental Models, there are many different ways of representing these stages of progression. One representation was done by King and Baxter Magolda. They divided the stages into three very general categories; initial, intermediate and mature. These specific levels of competence are used to identify the different levels of sensitivity to, awareness of and adaptability to other cultures other than their own. An initial or low score on the continuum represents a generally low level of intercultural competency and a higher score represents a better understanding. The significance of this specific continuum is that the individual's progress towards a greater level of competence through study, observation and interaction with people of another culture (Spitzberg & Changnon 21).

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

Another representation of stages of progression is the continuum designed by Milton Bennett called the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) (Pusch, Intercultural Training 26). The presumption of this model and the IDI is that throughout time, people can progress from ethnocentric understandings of other cultures, which is the belief that one's own group or culture is more important than any other, to more ethnorelative understanding, which is the acceptance of other cultures. By using these developmental models, people can progress from

a monocultural perspective on cultures to a multicultural perspective. “The underlying assumption of the model is that one’s experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one’s potential competence in intercultural relations increases” (Spitzberg & Changnon 21).

The current 5 stage continuum of the IDI is based from the 6 stage continuum of the Development of Intercultural Sensitivity created by Milton Bennett (Paige 99). The DMIS continuum begins with the most monocultural, ethnocentric level which is called *Denial*. At this stage, the interactant views only his/her own culture as real or relevant while other cultures are not. In the next stage, *Defense*, the interactant recognizes other cultures but in a very critical manner. This stage can also take a different form called *Defense Reversal* where the interactant is less critical towards the target culture and more critical towards his/her own, but still while holding an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ perception on the two cultures. The last of the ethnocentric stages is *Minimization* (Spitzberg & Changnon 21). This stage “incorporates the differences discovered in other culture(s) as somehow reflected in or extended from one’s own culture in various forms of universalistic thinking” (22). After these three ethnocentric stages the ethnorelative stages begin which is when the interactant begins to view his/her own culture in another cultures perspective which occurs first in the *Acceptance* stage. With this new view of the individual’s own culture in mind and he/she starts becoming more aware of what is behaviorally acceptable in the other culture, the interactant has entered into the *Adaptation* stage. If one proceeds even beyond the Adaptation stage where his/her own identity is constructed by a mix of multiple cultural identities, he/she has reached the final, most monoculture and ethnorelative stage called *Integration*. “Integration is not necessarily better than adaptation in situations demanding intercultural competence, but it is descriptive of a growing number of people, including many

members of non-dominant cultures, long term expatriates, and ‘global nomads’” (Spitzberg & Changnon 23).

Differences in Assessments

There are many kinds of assessments used to identify intercultural competence. Chapter 27 in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, written by Alvino E. Fantini, discusses the different focuses, notions, areas, test types, formats and strategies of many assessments. Each instrument is different in the way it assesses and what it assesses which is why there is a necessity for so many different types. Fantini discusses these differences:

“While some instruments bear superordinate titles that designate composites of abilities, others address varying subcomponents of intercultural competence. Some instruments focus on lingual rather than cultural aspects; some do the opposite. Other instruments stress international rather than intercultural and thereby exclude differences within national boundaries; still others are simply ambiguous and their intent is unclear” (247).

In discussing the differences in instruments, one needs to consider the variety of areas, test types, formats and techniques and strategies. The different areas of intercultural competence which the instruments assess may include attributes, the three areas (building relationships, communicating, collaborating), the four dimensions (awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge), level of proficiency of the target language, developmental indicators over time, or a combination of all the mentioned areas. (Fantini, *Assessing* 462)

Because there are so many different types of tests, one must be able to choose which one is best for his/her individual needs. The different tests types are the following:

- *Readiness* tests are used in order to determine how ready an individual is for an intercultural experience.
- *Placement* tests are used in order to determine the compatibility of the material and the individual.
- *Diagnostic* tests determine the specific areas of an individual which are competent and which areas may need strengthening.
- *Aptitude* tests are conducted in order to predict one's potential in learning specific material. These tests are normally done in the advancement of language learning, however, they can be applied to cultural advancement as well.
- *Attitude* tests are used to determine one's behavior towards other cultures or different cultural ideas.
- *Proficiency/Communicative/Competency-based* tests are used to measure one's performance in certain material.
- *Criterion-Referenced/Norm-Referenced* tests are able to determine an individual's expertise in a certain material or aspect in comparison to a specific group or criteria.
- *Bilingual/Culture-Language Dominance* tests are conducted to find one's competence with two or more languages and/or cultures.
- *Formative* tests are given to individuals to determine their developmental progress of material.
- *Achievement/Standardized* tests that are used to measure one's acquirement of certain criteria and/or culture.

(Fantini provides a throughout description and examples of each assessment on pages 466-474)

(Fantini, Assessing 462-463)

The different types of tests not only include a variety of areas but also several different formats as well. There are 4 kinds of formats: Direct, Indirect, Discrete and Global. These formats are different in the ways that the assessments are conducted. With direct assessment, an individual is tested at a specific moment in time about specific material. Traditional tests and quizzes are perfect examples of direct assessment. Indirect assessment is conducted at a moment that is unknown to the individual. The instructor observes and makes notes about any progress or regression in the material and the individual is graded accordingly. Indirect assessment is normally ongoing and sporadic and the individual is unaware of being assessed. Examples of this format are interviews, focus groups and self-report surveys. Discrete assessment is very narrow and specific and focuses on a particular aspect of learning; such as a specific skill. Global assessment, in contrast to discrete assessment, is very broad and focuses on the abilities that need to be assessed as a whole. (Fantini, Assessing 463-464)

The assessment of intercultural competence also requires a variety of techniques and strategies. These different techniques and strategies include: closed and open questions, objective strategies that involve scoring, oral and written activities, active and passive activities, individual and interactive activities in pairs or groups, dialogue, interviews, debate and discussion, demonstrations, poster sessions, role-plays and simulations, structured and unstructured field tasks and experiences, questionnaires that require self-evaluation, peer evaluation, group evaluation and/or teacher evaluation. Just like the different varieties of areas, tests and formats in assessing, instruments can, and normally do, use many different techniques and strategies in one

assessment. By using a combination of elements, the individuals' results will be more varied and will have a better sense of progress and in attaining his/her objectives. (Fantini, Assessing 464)

Even though there are many significant differences in the different types of assessments, there are some important qualities that remain the same within all of them such as the variety of the potential outcomes. Fantini describes that the assessment of intercultural competence should be “multidimensional as well as multiperspective, ongoing, integrated, aligned and intentional. It should also include a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods... including interviews, observation and judgment by self and others” (465). No matter the instrument, intercultural competence is an ongoing process. Even though there may be potential instances of regression, intercultural competence progresses over time and is dependent on the amount of contact in the target culture and in the individual's motivation to continue learning. (Fantini, Assessing 459)

Assessment instruments are not used to increase competence, rather measure it and therefore be able to give the individual objectives in reaching his/her goal of competency. Fantini goes on to explain this by stating that “...assessment is related directly to explicitly articulated goals and objectives and assessment measures their attainment by the learner. What is to be learned and what is to be measured are related; they are, in fact, the same” (461). The important thing to remember about the different types of assessment is that one single element alone is inadequate and insufficient. By combining the many different areas, tests, formats and techniques and strategies, intercultural competence will be better measured and therefore better planned for attainment in its objectives. (Fantini, Assessing 465)

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

The intercultural development inventory is just one instrument used in assessing intercultural competence; however, it does much more than just provide scores of an individual's calculated competence. The result to one's assessment contains his/her developmental orientation (actual level of competence), perceived orientation, any trailing orientations and also information on any cultural disengagement he/she may have. The instrument gives all this information along with reasons as to why individuals would have acquired their specific results.

As diversity started to become more apparent and intercultural competence became a focus of research, Mitchell Hammer built on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) created by Milton Bennett and constructed a model he believed would be able to better depict the level of competence a person has (Paige 99). This level of competence is illustrated on an advanced continuum called the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Before the model was created, trainers of intercultural competence were to 'diagnose' their clients' level of competence by conducting interviews that would reveal his/her level or his/her "orientation to cultural difference" by using the DMIS model (Pusch, Intercultural Training 26). The IDI is one of the more modern instruments used to assess intercultural competence. The instrument uses a variety of questions and situations in which the assessor needs to answer to the best of his/her ability. The IDI is different than other instruments because it uses the individual's own experiences in cultural differences rather than basing the assessment solely on behaviors, beliefs and attributes. (Pusch, Intercultural Training 26)

The intercultural development inventory proves valid and reliable in the measuring of individuals and group orientations. Statements of the IDI were received directly from interviews conducted with participants representing cross-cultural diversity. Therefore, these items add to the cross-cultural perspectives of the instrument. (Validity and Reliability)

The following quote is excerpted from the article “Validity and Reliability of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)” located on the Inn.Side People and Training website. This excerpt expresses the many ways in which the validity and reliability of the IDI are demonstrated.

“Validity of the IDI was established in several ways. Content validity was established by using actual statements drawn from interviews, along with reliable categorization of these statements by both raters and the “panel of experts.” Construct validity was established by correlating the IDI with the Worldmindedness scale and with the Intercultural Anxiety scale, a modified version of the Social Anxiety scale. All construct validity tests supported the validity of each of the IDI scales.

Finally, no significant differences were found on the IDI scales for age, education, gender, or social desirability. Overall, the development and testing of the IDI for reliability and the validity reveals the instrument to be a robust measure of the cognitive states described by the DMIS, these identified worldviews are associated with stable orientations toward cultural differences, and the instrument is generalizable a cross cultures.”

The IDI is defined as a type of self-assessment which is “a systematic self-reporting of perceptions using a scored questionnaire that allows reflection on a particular issue” (55). Self-assessments are inventories that are used to help define a person’s level of competence and help him/her understand his/her behaviors, thoughts and attitudes. The assessment’s purpose is to help pinpoint one’s strengths and be able to use those strengths as tools to gain understanding in certain areas of competence the person lacks. (Fowler, Blohm 55)

The intercultural development continuum is comprised of five different orientations ranging from a monocultural to an intercultural mindset. A monocultural mindset sees cultural differences based on one's own cultural perspective and beliefs. The person with a monocultural mindset may view culture as universal rather than individual and be more susceptible to stereotyping. Intercultural or global mindsets, on the other hand, use generalizations in viewing cultural differences and they also understand cultural differences based on one's own cultural values and beliefs as well as those of other cultures. The continuum indicates that the less monocultural and more intercultural mindset an individual has, the more understanding he/she is of cultural difference and more capable in recognizing true commonalities. (Individual Profile Report 3)

Intercultural Development Continuum

The order in which the specific orientations are identified on the continuum start with a monocultural mindset and increase to an intercultural mindset. These range from Denial, Polarization (which is also comprised of two sub-orientations; Defense and Reversal), Minimization, Acceptance to Adaptation. The IDI also measures a separate dimension aside from the continuum called Cultural Disengagement, which informs an individual of how he/she relates, or fits in, to his/her own culture group. (Individual Profile Report 3)

The *Denial* orientation is the most monocultural and the first orientation to appear on the continuum. When an individual is in the Denial stage, he/she is only able to view other cultures with very observable, restricted, differences and do not recognize any in-depth changes such as

‘conflict resolution styles’ (4). He/she may also reject or refrain from acquiring any new knowledge about cultural difference.

As awareness increases to a more intercultural mindset, the next orientation is *Polarization* and is defined as, “a judgmental orientation that views cultural differences in terms of *us* and *them*” (4). At this level, an individual is able to pick out certain differences between two or more cultures, however, he/she uses these differences to separate or categorize different groups. Polarization is also comprised of two parts: Defense and Reversal. *Defense* occurs when an individual has an overly critical view of other cultures and an uncritical view of his/her own. *Reversal*, in comparison to Defense, occurs when an individual has an overly critical view of his/her own culture and an uncritical view of other cultures.

Located in the middle of the continuum is *Minimization*. This level is defined as, “an orientation that highlights cultural commonality and universal values and principles that may also mask deeper recognition and appreciation of cultural differences” (4). The idea behind this particular orientation is that the individual is able to view commonalities or similarities between two or more cultures such as values, beliefs or attitudes. By noticing these similarities, the individual can then be able to ‘bridge’ together or identify links between the different cultures.

The next orientation is *Acceptance*, which is “an orientation that recognizes and appreciates patterns of cultural difference and commonality in one’s own and other cultures” (4). At this level an individual can identify and appreciate differences of culture and he/she is not limited to one viewpoint of his/her surroundings or the world. Rather, an individual can view the world with perspective from his/her own culture and that of another.

The last, most intercultural orientation is *Adaptation*. This level of competence is defined as “an orientation that is capable of shifting cultural perspective and changing behavior in

culturally appropriate and authentic ways” (4). By obtaining the level of Adaptation, not only can an individual view the world with from other cultures’ perspectives, the individual is also able to adapt to the way of life of the other culture by adjusting his/her own perspectives, behaviors and attitudes. (Individual Profile Report 4)

Aside from orientations on the continuum, the IDI also measures one’s *Cultural Disengagement*. This is a separate dimension of the IDI and is defined as, “a sense of disconnection or detachment from a primary cultural group” (Individual Profile Report 4). Cultural disengagement is just as important as the other orientations on the continuum; however, its primary focus is on how the individual connects, or ‘fits in’, with his/her own culture group.

Cultural disengagement is very closely related to cultural identity. In 1950, psychologist Erik Erikson described the process of identity development as having two parts: individual identity and group identity, which both ultimately mold into one. “Erikson thus placed cultural identity at the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his or her ‘common culture’” (Kim 54). Erikson highlights the importance of one’s cultural group relating it with one’s individual identity. With cultural identity being the ‘group dimension of identity’, the term identity is defined as an ‘individual’s global self-identity that is constituted by both personal and social dimensions’ (54). This term is very important in developing intercultural competence because identity can be the cause of intercultural behavior (Kim 54).

In agreement with Kim, Deardorff also mentions that much research has shown that identity is important in successful intercultural interaction which leads to better adaptability, flexibility and cultural empathy, all which are specific elements of intercultural competence. If an individual does not have a sense of self-identity he/she may feel disconnected or detached from his/her primary culture group (266). In Kim’s article on “The Identity Factor in

Intercultural Competence”, she provides a theoretical argument that states that the more self-identity an individual possesses the greater chance for effective intercultural relationships. This theory identifies the importance of one’s self-identity in acquiring intercultural competence. One’s lack of identity, whether it is individual or cultural, can definitely hinder one’s level of intercultural competence which is why it is important for the individual to be aware of his/her Cultural Disengagement orientation. (59)

Individualizing Profiles

In addition to the five orientations, the IDI is also able to provide specific information regarding an individual’s results using the intercultural development continuum. The IDI continues to explain the different orientations a person has, thinks he/she has and the reason as to why he/she has the specific orientation that the assessment had assigned to him/her.

The IDI breaks down the orientation into two parts: Perceived and Developmental. *Perceived Orientation* is the level at which one thinks he/she reaches and *Developmental Orientation* is the level at which the IDI has officially placed him/her. Both Perceived and Developmental Orientations are placed along the continuum anywhere from Denial to Adaptation, and it is at these specific levels that the IDI bases its results. A person most likely uses the perspective from the Developmental Orientation to make sense of and respond to cultural differences and commonalities.

An *Orientation Gap* occurs when the Perceived and Developmental Orientation do not reach the same point on the continuum. The gap is the difference between the two orientations and is expected to occur within an individual’s results. However a gap of seven points or higher

indicates a large difference between what one perceives his/her level of competence to be and what it actually is. If the Perceived Orientation score is higher than the Developmental Orientation, it indicates that the person is overestimating his/her personal level of competence. If the Perceived Orientation score is lower than the Developmental Orientation then underestimation occurs.

The IDI also differentiates between two other orientations: Trailing and Leading. *Trailing Orientations* are the specific orientations on the continuum that occur before one's Developmental Orientation and are deemed 'unresolved'. For example, if one's Developmental Orientation were Minimization, the Trailing Orientations would be Denial and Polarization. The IDI indicates that

“when an earlier orientation is not resolved, this ‘trailing’ perspective may be used to make sense of cultural differences at particular times, around certain topics, or in specific situations. Trailing Orientations, when they arise, tend to ‘pull you back’ from your Developmental Orientation for dealing with cultural differences and commonalities. The IDI identifies the level of resolution you have attained regarding possible Trailing Orientations.” (5)

Leading Orientations are all the levels of competency that occur after one's Developmental Orientation. These orientations indicate the next step in furthering one's intercultural competence. (Individual Profile Report 5)

The purpose of assessment of intercultural competence is not only to conclude an actual level of competence an individual has; rather to identify and understand one's strengths and weaknesses and then, in time, develop further competence through this understanding. Therefore, the IDI assessment contains much more than just one's developmental orientation. The

assessment helps the individual understand his/her results by explaining the meaning of each orientation he/she receives and why he/she has acquired these results.

Chapter 3

The Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) is an important document generated from the individual's scores of the IDI assessment (IDP). This part of the assessment takes the results and turns them into individual opportunities for developing intercultural competence. The plan uses the individual's own interests and motivation by guiding him/her in creating his/her own goals and objectives to attain further knowledge and understanding. The IDP is important because it acknowledges the individual's personal strengths and suggests ways to use them in order to gain further development and understanding. The documents provided in the IDI serve as both an individual situation report and a planning guide to intercultural competence. I also provide my personal results of the IDI which were prepared by Dr. Elizabeth Sandell, Associate Professor at Minnesota State University in Mankato.

As mentioned previously in this paper, the different instruments used to assess intercultural competence are just that; assessments. The instruments do not increase intercultural competence; rather, these instruments measure the level of competence of an individual and, in terms of the IDI, put this level on a scale or continuum where the level can be easily viewed and understood. In terms of the Individual Profile Report, which is a personalized report produced from the IDI informing the individual about his/her results, one is able to identify and understand where his/her competence level appears on the continuum. In addition to the Report, a

personalized Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) is given to each individual who takes the assessment. The IDP is a customized plan that is centered on one's results and helps him/her to understand more about his/her personal level of competence and also helps him/her organize and create goals to achieve a higher level of understanding. The IDP works as a guide for attaining intercultural competence rather than solely contain information about an individual's results such as the Individual Profile Report. The plan contains different opportunities, processes and questions for the individual to do or answer that will help guide him/her in achieving his/her objectives and goals.

The IDP recommends that the individual review his/her results with a trained administrator to help deliver the results clearly and concisely and to help organize the best plan so he/she has the best opportunity to attain higher competence in the future. The plan also recommends that another IDI is taken in the future after completing the activities and objectives that the plan suggests in order to track development (IDP). Both the report and the plan come customized with the individual's name, along with the institution where the assessment was taken and the preparers name on the cover. Developing one's intercultural competence is a timely, ongoing process, therefore it is important for each individual to be able to reflect upon and assess his/her development in an ongoing manner (Deardorff 481). By working through the Plan and towards completing their goals and objectives, individuals will be able to have more understanding on why they perceive different cultures or groups the way they do, they will also engage themselves in intercultural learning which in-turn increases their competence and helps bridge the two cultures or groups together. (Intercultural Development Plan)

The importance of the IDP in maintaining personal motivation to not only creating objectives and goals but following through with attaining them is immense. Trimble, Pedersen

and Rodela agree by stating that one's willingness is key to developing intercultural competence, "for without a conscious intent and desire, the achievement and realization of cultural competence is not likely to occur" (493). One needs to have motivation and willingness in acquiring intercultural competence because knowledge and understanding simply do not become attained without it. The IDP states that "developing intercultural competence is a self-reflective, intentional process focused on understanding patterns of difference and commonality between yourself (and your cultural group) and other culture group's perceptions, values and practices". Bennett mentions in her article on "Cultivating Intercultural Competence" that motivation can perhaps be the starting point in developing intercultural competence though asking oneself what inspires him/her in wanting to learn about different cultures (Bennett 127). Kitsantas also agrees by stating in her article in *College Student Journal* that motivation and goal setting teaches individuals to take responsibility in their own development,

"... research on goal setting clearly indicates that teaching individuals to take personal responsibility of their own learner process is an essential element in the instruction of academic skills. That is, teaching individuals to set goals and subgoals for the particular skill to learn, plan how to go about achieving these goals, self-monitor and evaluate their accomplishments based on their standards and then, change their performance accordingly will motivate them to participate in the activity, and encourage them to adhere to this type of behavior, long enough to achieve the desired outcomes" (Kitsantas 447-448).

Kitsantas' article on goal setting in study abroad experiences explains that it isn't solely the experiences or the immersion into a foreign land that develops intercultural competence; rather, growth and progression occur when the students take responsibility in their own

development and set goals for themselves. In her study, she concluded that students who set personal goals of enhancing their cross-cultural skills before studying abroad not only developed a higher competence level than those who began without personal goals of enhancement but also increased writing skills, greater performance satisfaction and greater interest. Researchers have stated that a student's goal setting plays a very important role in enhancing the learner's self-efficacy beliefs and improving performance. (Kitsantas 443)

Many may think that simply by study abroad, living or working in a foreign country one will attain intercultural competence. Even if an individual acquires specific or even a general knowledge of a different culture through travel, this does not mean he/she is inevitably competent. Bennet concurs with this statement and explains that "cultural knowledge does not equal intercultural competence since a person can be an expert on a particular aspect of... culture and yet be unable to negotiate well with his... [cultural] counterparts" (123). This means that even though a person may have knowledge about a certain culture, he/she may not necessarily have the skills to effectively communicate or adapt to this culture (Bennet 123). It is all too frequent that an individual will live and/or study in a different country and/or culture but not acquire the amount of competence as previously expected before the trip was taken. This failure of expectation occurs because many people travel and/or stay with members of their own culture while in a different country. By doing this, a person cannot fully experience the other culture, language, people or other cultural differences. The person then contains only a monocultural perspective that could have been avoided because he/she was not fully immersed into the target culture. To avoid sustaining this monocultural view, one must have the motivation and willpower to step out of his/her comfort zone and experience the culture in a whole new perspective. (IDP)

Opportunities for Development

Developing intercultural competence is about making a commitment. As noted previously, development is an intentional process that can only be done when an individual wants to acquire competence (IDP). Trimble, Peterson and Rodela state that developing intercultural competence can occur in a variety of ways and activities such as reading, participating in training workshops and taking courses, and attending in conference presentations (501). However, these are only a few of many different ways to increase development. The IDP recommends and lists many opportunities that can help one on his/her way. Provided in the Plan is a list of ten general opportunities that can help an individual accomplish his/her goals in attaining intercultural competence. These opportunities consist of:

- Training programs which provide information on intercultural relations, cultural differences and patterns and can also be conducted by providing culture specific and/or culture general information.
- Workplace activities which can be a variety of committees and groups that build intercultural and diversity skills.
- Theatre, film and arts such as cross-cultural movies, plays, museums and performances which can increase cultural self-awareness and perspective.
- Educational classes that focus on intercultural communication and relations.
- Personal interactions with people of different groups and/or cultures can be helpful to increase intercultural communication and perspective.

- Writing in an intercultural journal can be helpful to reflect on observed intercultural differences and commonalities between interactions with others of a different group or culture.
- Books that are written about patterns of cultural difference and commonalities.
- Cross-cultural travel can help develop intercultural competence by engaging and observing cultural diversity.
- Contacting an IDI qualified administrator to review the results of the assessment and help coach in the further development of intercultural competence can be done.
- Specific cultural/ethnic websites that can be viewed and studied to help with acquiring intercultural competence.

The point is not to do every single opportunity listed. Rather, the plan asks which opportunities can be done that compliments the intercultural stress points of an individual (IDP). Individuals are different in the way they gather information, how they interact, in their perceptions, how they construct meaning and how they organize and apply knowledge. These differences in thinking and learning styles will lead to individualized plans, objectives and goals (Bennett 129). There is no universal way to acquire competence, which is why the plan guides each individual to plan each objective and goal to fit his/her own needs.

However, it is not by simply doing these opportunities that allows for success in achieving intercultural competence; rather, the IDP states that it is the “intentional reflection on the cultural patterns of commonality and difference that make up these activities/events that will contribute to your intercultural competence development”. According to Bennett, by acknowledging these cultural differences and similarities along with one’s own cultural patterns, the individual will continue the developmental process and adapt across cultures (Bennett 122).

Along with the intentional reflection, the IDP also states that in order to obtain at least one full orientation along the continuum or higher, thirty to fifty hours of concentrated work on building intercultural competence is suggested. In addition, it is recommended that an individual works on his/her IDP for a period of three to nine months along with periodic training and/or coaching that can take part weekly or monthly depending on the rate at which one wants to progress. (IDP)

5 Steps to Development

The Intercultural Development Plan is broken down into five components: Reviewing, Describing, Analyzing, Identifying and Creating. In preparing an intercultural development plan an individual must first review his/her IDI results (preferably with an IDI Qualified Administrator). In this first step, the individual is asked a set of questions about the results of his/her IDI. These questions consist of basic 'yes' and 'no' answers and also ask the individual to think about the meaning and impact of his/her results. (IDP)

In the second step individuals need to be able to describe their intercultural background and also their thoughts about their IDI results. The individuals are asked to reflect on the different experiences they have had, or not had, around different cultures or groups. These questions ask about the challenges and also the rewards in interacting with these different groups (IDP). Bennett mentions that in the past, many professionals of intercultural competence agreed that any intercultural contact would reduce stereotypes and prejudice and therefore be considered successful and develop intercultural competence; however, this is not so. A couple core concepts, empathy and anxiety management, were later discovered as very important in improving intercultural contact rather than contact itself because they facilitate interactions and affect one's

understanding (Bennett 132-133; Rathje 255). Even though one may have had more experience and interaction with different cultures or groups, this does not mean he/she is more interculturally competent. Because of these misconceptions, it is important to be able to reflect on the cross-cultural experiences, thoughts and feelings one has had and be able to depict which areas have most influenced his/her perceptions. (IDP)

After describing his/her cultural background in step two, one needs to analyze his/her goals and objectives in achieving intercultural competence (IDP). According to Deardorff, goals can be described as the 'end destination' and objectives are the means by which these end destinations are reached. Examples of clear, strong objectives can include beginning statements such as: *Learners will be able to...* *Learners will demonstrate...* *Learners will become...* etc. These act as 'road maps' or measurable proof that the goals are being, or have been reached.

Creating measurable objectives can be simplified by the acronym SMART. SMART stands for objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Action oriented, Realistic and Time delineated (481-482). A strong objective should contain these five elements (however, most importantly Realistic (Deardorff 482)) in order for the goal to be more easily attainable. In this third step, individuals need to create three to five different goals and goal objectives that are important to them while on their journey in developing intercultural competence. The goals should focus on what one wants to achieve and the objectives work as proof that one is achieving these goals. The individual needs to commit to achieving these goals and objectives in the immediate future therefore they need to be practical and feasible (IDP).

The article "Studying abroad: the role of college students' goals on the development of cross-cultural skills and global understanding" found in the *College Student Journal*, identifies the importance of creating goals in the development of intercultural competence. Kitsantas

conducted a study on 232 students that were enrolled in study abroad programs. She researched whether the students' personal achievement goals contributed to his/her development of cross-cultural skills. She defines goals as "intentions to attain a specific standard of proficiency, usually within a specified time limit" (442). She continues by adding that "goal setting influences behavioral functioning by focusing attention and regulating expenditure of one's effort" (442). Studies have concluded that goal setting significantly improves development and boosts learners' self-efficacy. After pre and post assessments, Kitsantas' study showed that the students' goals accounted for 31% of the developed cross-cultural skills and 16% of the developed global understanding in comparison to students who did not have identifiable goals (447). Not only is setting goals recommended and suggested by the IDP, it is proven to predict the development of cross-cultural skills.

In the next step, one needs to identify his/her *Intercultural Stress Points*. These stress points act as intercultural barriers and are defined as specific situations in which having intercultural competence is needed or challenged. Stress points are situations that one may encounter that can be personal, social, and work or community related and they challenge individuals to become more effective around cultural differences. (IDP)

Finally, in the last step one must create his/her own personal intercultural development plan. In this section, the IDP provides many questions, activities and opportunities which are specifically geared towards the individuals results. These are simply just suggestions and the individual is not expected to complete all of them, rather, choose which ones best fit his/her lifestyle and preferences. There are two different sets of suggestions; the first set is related to the individuals Development Orientation (these suggestions should be considered first) and the second is related to the Leading Orientation. Within these two sets are three different categories

of suggestions. The first category requires personal reflection on one's past, current or future perceptions, values and attitudes. The second includes cross-cultural topics that need to be observed and written in a journal. The final is a specific activity that needs to be performed. All reflections, written topics and activities are beneficial in developing intercultural competence. The individual needs to choose from these suggestions that best suits his/her specific goals and objectives that were identified in Step three of the IDP. (IDP)

After reviewing the results and background information, analyzing goals and objectives and identifying intercultural stress points, step five continues with information about the individual's Developmental Orientation, Leading Orientation, and Cultural Disengagement which were all concluded in the IDI results. Information regarding both Orientations and Cultural Disengagement contain all the same elements such as its Definition, Strength one possesses in holding the orientation, Developmental Opportunity (which informs individuals of certain aspects they need to acquire for obtaining this orientation) and Suggestions which will help acquire this orientation. (IDP)

The Individual Development Plan bases all of its information upon the individual results of the Intercultural Development Inventory. Every individual has his/her own perceived and developmental orientation, orientation gap, and trailing and leading orientations. Not every score is alike; therefore every IDP is personalized according to the individual's results.

Personal Results

Results of the IDI may be quite surprising if an individual has had much cultural and/or travel experience and received results that were lower than expected. This, unfortunately, is my

situation. My cultural and travel experience is vast, therefore prior to taking the IDI, I had expected a somewhat higher orientation score on the continuum; however, my results have proved different. My Perceived Orientation score is 121.41 on a scale of 55 to 145. This score is within the Acceptance orientation and is located on the ethnorelative side of the continuum. In addition, my Developmental Orientation score is 88.99, which lies in the early stages of the Minimization Orientation and is located on the ethnocentric side of the continuum. (IDI 6)

Because of this fairly large difference in my Perceived and Developmental Orientation, I also have a considerably large Orientation Gap. An Orientation gap score of 7 or higher is considered a meaningful difference, and my score is 32.42 which is obviously quite high. Because my Perceived Orientation is higher than my Developmental Orientation, this means that I overestimate my intercultural competence by 32.42 points (6). Yet another hindrance is that I also have a Reversal Trailing Orientation. Any score that is 4 points or above means that the Trailing Orientation is considered 'Resolved' (7). Unfortunately, because my score is 2.56 it is considered 'Unresolved'. This means I view my own culture critically while I view other cultures values and practices in an uncritical manner. Not everyone has Trailing Orientations; however, unless one's orientation is in Adaptation, everyone has Leading Orientations. My Leading Orientations, which are all orientations following my developmental orientation, are Acceptance and Adaptation. (8)

The last measurable orientation in the IDI is Cultural Disengagement. Cultural Disengagement is not located on the IDI continuum; however it is just as important. Just like the Trailing Orientation score, a score of 4 or higher indicates a 'Resolved' disengagement. My score is 2.6 which means I am 'Unresolved' and signifies that I feel that I lack involvement as a member in my primary culture. (IDI 9)

Personal Reflection

It is needless to say that by viewing my Orientation gap score, my Developmental Orientation score was a very big surprise. I overestimated my level of intercultural competence and the IDI showed me much more than just an unexpectedly low level of competence. Not only was my score a surprise, but my Trailing Orientation as well as my Cultural Disengagement scores were as well. After viewing my results for the first time, it became clear to me that I do only view the commonalities and universal values within different cultures. I also later realized that it is difficult for me not to identify difference, but rather accept it. I recently attended Dr. Michael Eric Dyson's speech about equality and diversity at the 2012 Pan-African Conference held at Minnesota State University. It was during this speech that I realized something very valuable in being able to accept cultural difference. In my reflection paper about Dr. Dyson's speech I wrote:

“Throughout his presentation, he was referring to himself and the African Americans in the room as ‘We’. I couldn't help but feel excluded from the whole conference by this remark. After discussing this with myself and listening to other comments he made about difference, I realized that I try too hard to make everyone equal and [therefore] completely eliminate difference between groups and cultures... [In his speech] he highlighted equality because everyone deserves the same rights, privileges and opportunities... [but he also] stressed difference because every group IS different.”
(Ryks, 2012)

In my mind, in order to create equality between all cultures I had to delete and even ignore all difference. However, after Dr. Dyson's speech I began to realize the importance of difference and diversity and the magnitude of these differences in keeping their cultural identity. After viewing my IDI results and listening to Dr. Dyson's speech, I began to reflect on my ways of thinking about difference and culture. I believe that my Reversal Trailing Orientation and Cultural Disengagement scores both greatly hinder my intercultural development. Because of this, in my IDP I geared my personal goals and objectives towards developing recognition of my own cultural values and practices and also focusing on how to become more engaged in my personal community. When I begin to recognize and focus on these two elements, then I will be on my way to furthering my intercultural competence.

The intercultural development plan is a very important part in the IDI assessment. The plan highlights the individual's strengths and provides opportunities to utilize them in order to create a deeper understanding of intercultural competence. The plan provides a step-by-step process that makes it easy for individuals to create their own plan by designing their own goals and objectives according to their personal interests. Motivation has a huge role in developing intercultural competence. The plan uses the individual's motivation by asking him/her to reflect on and think about the meaning of his/her results, background and intercultural stress points. The IDP also uses the individual's motivation to help him/her create his/her own goals and offer suggestions and opportunities in order to develop a better understanding. One's results may be surprising, which is my scenario; however, the plan is designed to help the individual realize why, and in return, facilitate the process of developing intercultural competence.

Conclusion

Over the past few decades, societies and communities have learned that intercultural competence has increasingly become a very important term in North America, and even the world. Since WWII and the Great Migration, the United States of America has seen an increase in diversity and in the diffusion of different cultures in America. The coexistence of diverse populations has increased the need for diversity and culture training since the lack of understanding between cultures is often undeniable. In order for large and small businesses to thrive in diverse communities with diverse needs, these companies need specific knowledge within the cooperation in order to identify how diversity affects perception and integration outside of the cooperation. Just as it is imperative for businesses to have diversity and cultural knowledge, so it is for the individual. Intercultural competence of the individual relies on his/her behavioral patterns, motivation and willingness to interact effectively and with greater sensitivity to difference. In order for a person to accept or adapt to a different culture, not only does he/she need to understand and identify commonalities and differences, but also understand him/herself and his/her primary culture.

There is much more to intercultural competence than just understanding a foreign culture. Even the simple task of defining the term has deemed challenging and nearly impossible. By dissecting the term and defining each individual component, one is able to create a general definition of intercultural competence that gives individuals an “ability to understand or effectively interact between two or more different groups of people which contain different values and beliefs”. Developing this understanding and effective interaction is an ongoing process that requires motivation and willingness of the individual. Specific assessments that

measure an individual's intercultural competence can help supply opportunities that can guide him/her toward developing greater cross-cultural competence.

The IDI, or Intercultural Development Inventory, is the assessment researched in detail for this paper in part because it is being used more widely than before to assess and train for intercultural competence. The assessment provides information on the individual's specific orientations toward cultural commonality and difference. With these orientations, the individual will then be able to identify the different steps to developing intercultural competence and, with the results, be able to help guide the individual toward developing increased cultural self-awareness. Both the results to the IDI and the information provided by the IDP, or the Individual Development Plan, which is a customized plan to help gain intercultural insights, increase understanding and engage the motivated individual in intercultural learning. This Plan provides different opportunities or suggestions, such as activities and reflections, to help guide the individual to developing an increased understanding of him/herself as he/she engages in intercultural activities.

The plan is a five-step process that helps the individual develop intercultural competence by reviewing the results, describing his/her background, analyzing goals and objectives, identifying intercultural stress points and finally creating a personalized Intercultural Development Plan. The plan guides the individual through each step in detail and makes suggestions along the way.

Intercultural competence is not easily acquired and does not develop simply through immersion. Because of this, one's IDI results can be surprising. Many people believe that studying abroad or traveling to different countries will provide them the necessary opportunities to develop a high level of cross-cultural competence, however this is not necessarily true and my

IDI scores are proof of this. Even though I had many cultural travels in my life, my results were not what I had expected. Because of my IDI results and reviewing my IDP, I realized my difficulty in development and became aware of my lack of self-awareness. After reviewing the forms and realizing my areas of difficulty, I immediately began to identify and accept important cultural differences which are anyone's goal to developing intercultural competence.

However, the IDI is not the only instrument used to measure intercultural competence. There are many different varieties of instruments that can be used that contain different areas to assess and different test types. It is very important that an individual understands in which area he/she wants to be assessed in order to choose the most appropriate assessment that fits his/her specific needs. Once an instrument has been finalized, it will benefit the individual to complete the same assessment(s) after reaching his/her goals and objectives in order to identify and measure his/her development.

Having and developing intercultural competence in today's society is imperative. As mentioned earlier, the world is coming closer together and individuals are faced with the opportunity to interact with new values, beliefs and behaviors due to the contact between cultures and the increased incidence of diversity in their communities and in workplaces. By developing intercultural competence individuals are accepting and adapting to different cultures and, in turn, living effectively. Intercultural competence is very valuable in identifying who we are as individuals and learning how we can all live and interact effectively and productively.

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