



AN ESSENTIAL JOURNEY:
FROM CULTURAL AWARENESS
TO INTERCULTURAL
COMPETENCE

Multilingual Student Support (MSS) - Camosun College

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Goals

By the end of this presentation, you will be able to

- Reflect on what "normal" means for you and build cultural self-awareness
- Consider how culture influences *visible* attributes as well as *invisible* attributes of every individual
- Understand the different stages of intercultural sensitivity and the essential components for building **intercultural competence**

Consider...

What do you think about when you hear the word "culture"?

Why is cultural awareness important? What are the benefits?

How often do you interact with people from different cultures? In what contexts?

What are some of the barriers to intercultural communication?

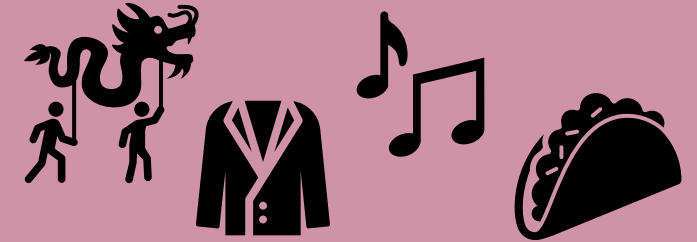


WHAT IS CULTURE?

Gaining Cultural Awareness

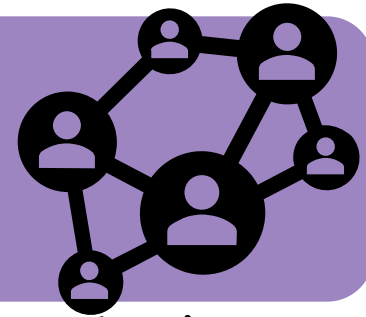
Culture is "the learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviours of a community of interacting people"
(Bennett, 2001)

Culture includes



- dress, food, language, music, and art
- social manners, rules, laws, and morality
- holidays, celebrations, beliefs, and spiritual practices

Culture is made up of systems of values and preferences



- that even people from within the culture don't always agree on
- that are constantly shifting and changing
- and that interact and sometimes conflict with one another (Findley & Rothney, 2011, p. 14).



Cultural Self-Awareness

“Cultural self-awareness refers to our recognition of the **cultural patterns** that have **influenced our identities** and that are **reflected in the various culture groups** to which we **belong.**”

◦ (Bennett, 2013)

Social Identity

See MSS website for a printable PDF:
[Intercultural Awareness Resources](#)

How would you fill out the **Social Identity Wheel**?

Personal Social Identity:

Age/Generation: Gen X, Numerical Age, Mature Student, Millennial, Young Adult, ...

Gender Identity: Non-binary, Cisgender, Transgender, Female, Male, Gender Fluid, Two Spirit...

Other Identities: Education Level, Indigenous, Sexual Orientation, (Dis)Ability ...

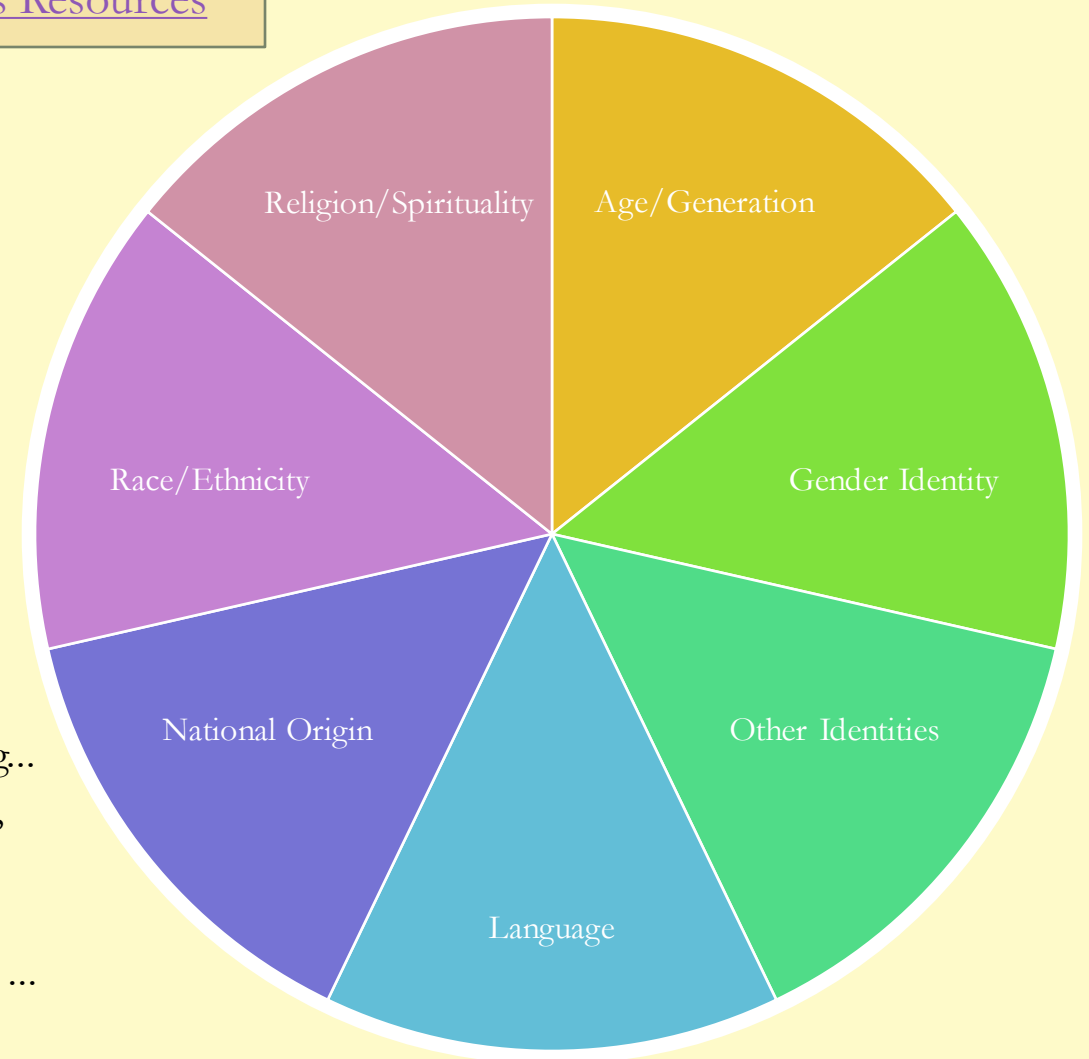
Cultural Social Identity:

Language(s): Urdu, Arabic, English, Spanish, Mandarin, Hindi, Tagalog..

National Origin: Canada, Egypt, Haida Gwaii, Mexico, Ukraine, Métis, Kenya, Syria, France...

Race/Ethnicity: Multiracial, Black, Inuit, Brown, Latino, White/Southeast Asian, French Canadian, Czech, Mi'kmaq, Irish, Chinese ...


Religion/Spirituality: Unitarian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Taoist, Hindu, Atheist ...





TALKING ABOUT CULTURE

Metaphors and Terms



To illustrate simply, imagine if your cultural glasses have **pink** lenses and you spend time living in a culture where people's glasses have **yellow** lenses; as you learn more about that culture, you will start to see the world from a perspective with an **orange** hue, influenced by both cultures.

Culture is like...

- A pair of “glasses” that we see the world through.
 - Our culture creates the style, shape, and colour of the lenses.
 - Our glasses can be influenced and embellished, especially as we experience other cultures, but never taken off.

Culture is like...

- An onion, that can be peeled, layer by layer, in order to reveal what is inside.
- The inside directly dictates the outside, but each layer is different in form and function.





“What does a fish know about the water in which he swims all his life?” - Albert Einstein

Culture is like...

- The water a fish swims in.
 - We can never leave culture – we can only jump into a different bowl.
 - Unlike a fish out of water, we can survive, adapt, and become familiar with our surroundings, even thrive.

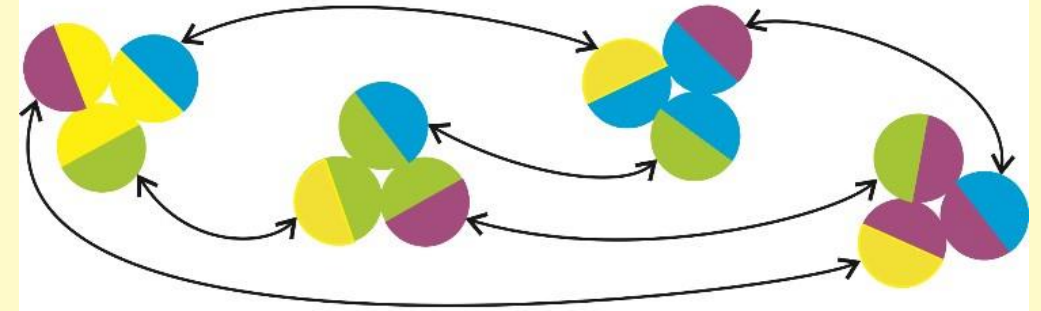
Definitions of Terms

MULTICULTURAL

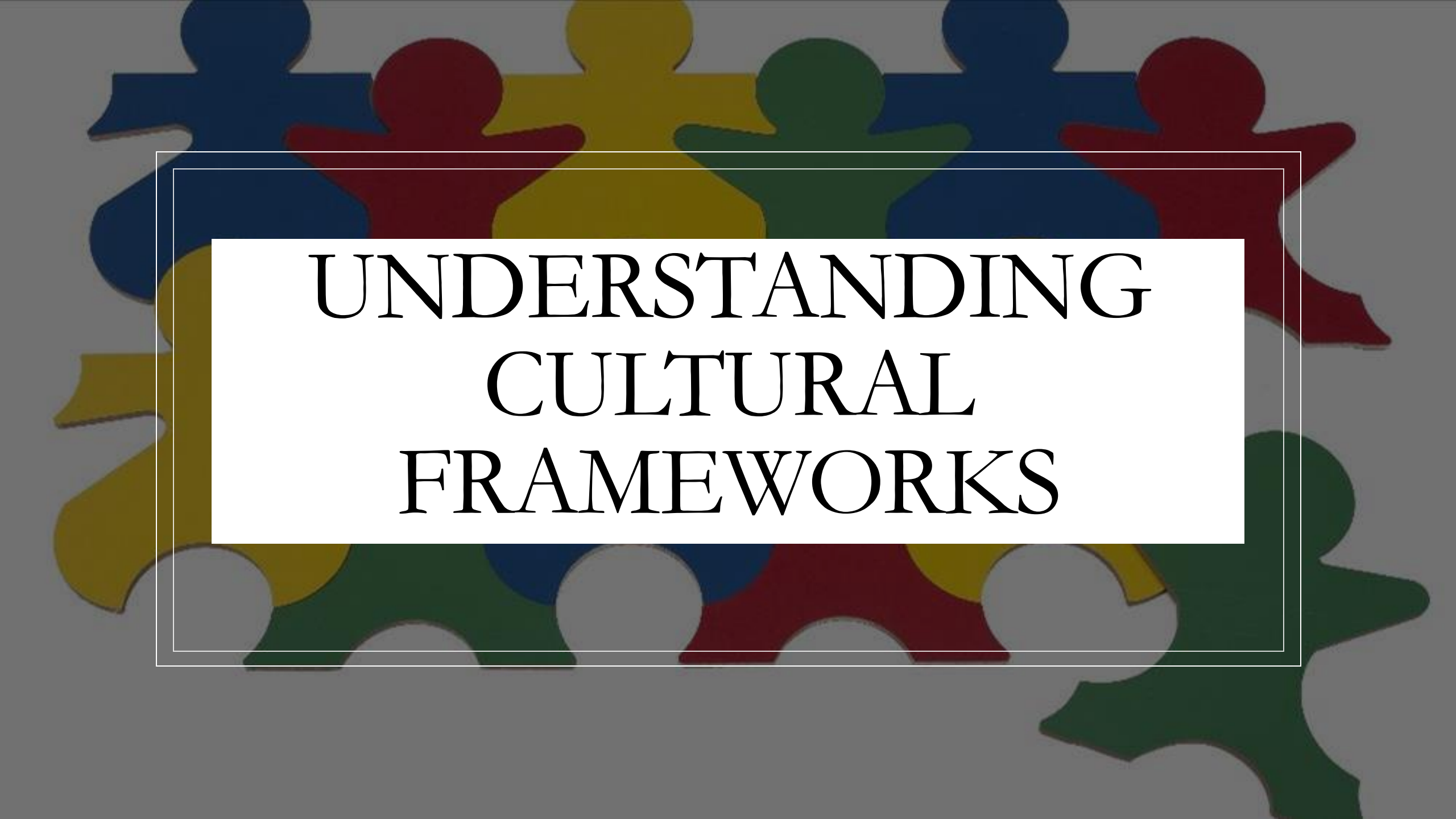


- **“Multicultural” describes the makeup of the group**
 - Situation/Setting (static)
 - The presence of several cultural groups together
 - Surface level description, “us-and-others” perspective

INTERCULTURAL



- **“Intercultural” describes the relationships between people**
 - Behaviour/Attitudes (dynamic)
 - The exchange of cultural ideas and practices; sharing and influencing between cultures
 - Acknowledges, and aims to work through, complexity beneath the surface

The background features a repeating pattern of stylized human figures in various colors (blue, red, yellow, green) holding hands in a circle, symbolizing unity and diversity. The figures are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some overlapping. The overall color palette is muted and professional.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL FRAMEWORKS

THE CULTURAL ICEBERG

- Created in 1976 by Edward T. Hall
- The visible, perceptible, aspects of culture are just “the tip of the iceberg”.
- This is an idiom that means **the small, visible part of something that is much larger, and most of it is unknown or invisible.**



Surface vs. Deep Culture

- In intercultural exchanges, it is easiest to focus on aspects of culture that we can see
- Most aspects of culture lay beneath the surface
- It takes time, openness, and close attention to notice these deeper similarities and differences between cultures.

Food, Flags,
Clothing, Games,
Dances, Performances,
Music, Language, Festivals,
Holidays, Arts & Crafts, Literature

Communication
Style: facial
expressions,
gestures, touch, eye
contact, space, tone,
body language,
conversational
patterns, emotion

Attitudes towards:
elders, adolescents,
dependents, rule,
expectations, work,
authority,
cooperation,
competition,
animals, age, sin,
death

Concepts of: self, time,
past & future, fairness,
justice, roles

Approaches to: religion,
courtship, raising
children, marriage,
decision-making,
problem-solving

Notions
of: courtesy,
manners,
friendship,
leadership,
cleanliness,
modesty, beauty

- freely enjoying simple pleasures vs. suppressing needs and desires to align with strict norms

- individualist or collectivist perspective; focus on "I" vs. "we"

**Individual/
Collective**

**Indulgence/
Restraint**

Power Distance

- acceptance of authority and hierarchy (vs. egalitarian)

**Hofstede's
Cultural
Dimensions**

1984, 2010

- long-term outcomes vs. short term rewards

- These are **NOT** rules
- → Cultural groups, **NOT** individuals

**Long-Term
Orientation**

**Masculine/
Feminine**

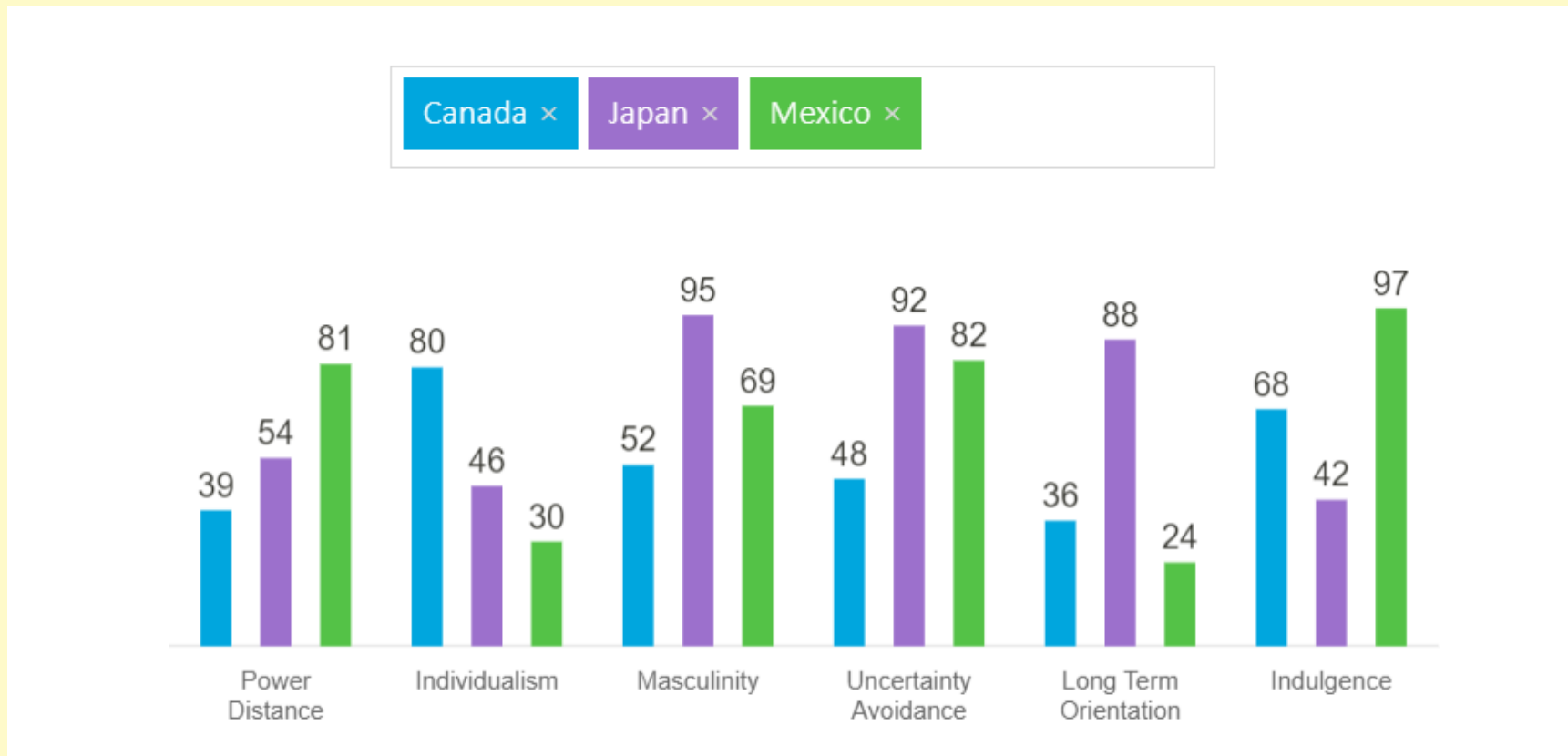
- achievement and power vs. cooperation and nurture


**Uncertainty
Avoidance**

- degree of comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity

Country Comparison

Hofstede Insights Country Comparison Tool: Canada, Japan, and Mexico



The background features several colorful wooden figures (red, yellow, orange, blue, green, pink) connected by a thin grey string, arranged in a circular pattern. The figures are stylized with rounded heads and rectangular bodies. The entire scene is set against a neutral, light-colored background.

BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Importance of Intercultural Competence

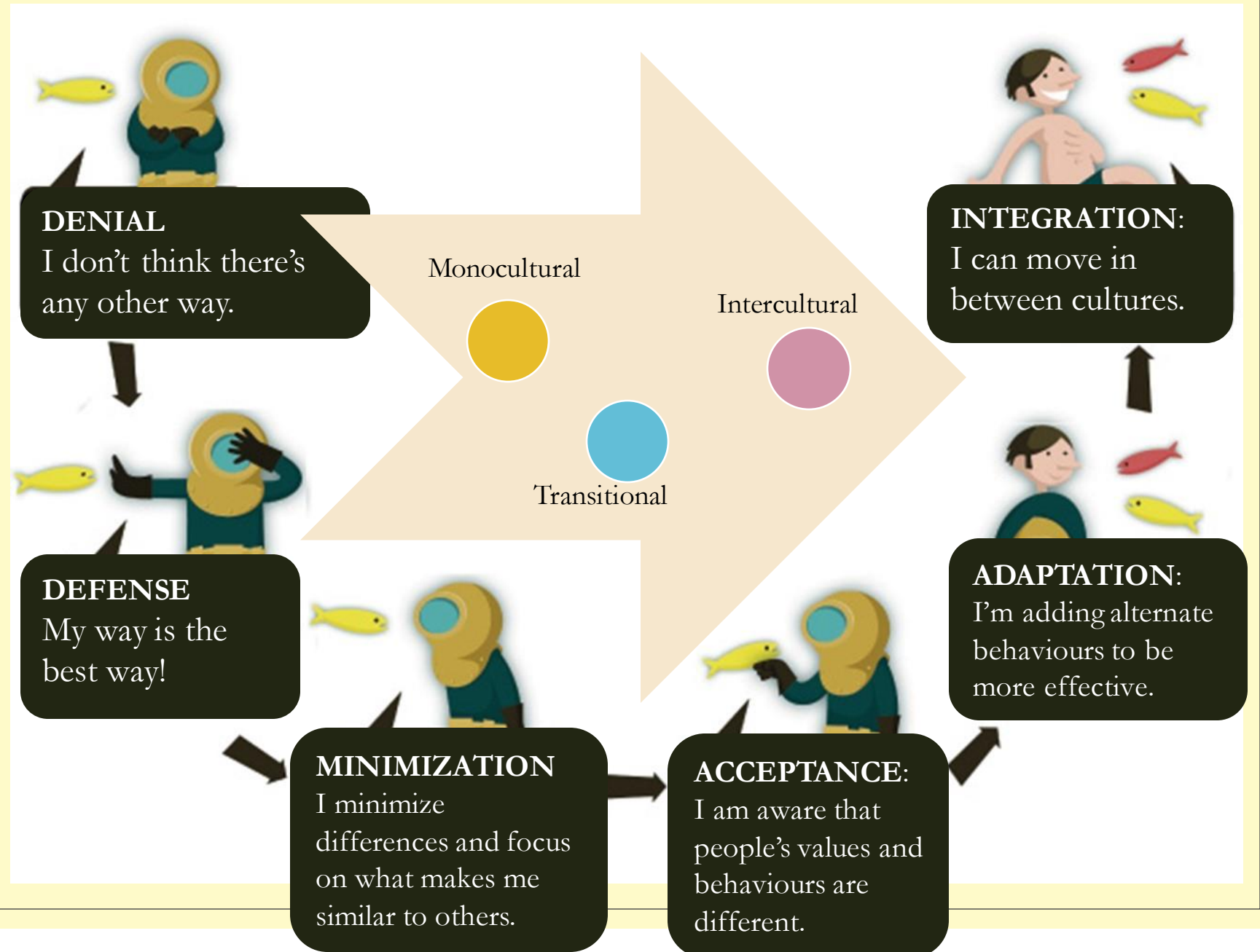
Intercultural competence (IC) is generally accepted as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately across different cultures (Bennett, 2013).

Why is this important? What are the benefits?



Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

- Created by Milton Bennet (1986, 1993, 2004, 2013)
- Explains how an individual relates to other cultures.



Developmental Stages in Groups

Monocultural

Transitional

Intercultural

- The stage of a group impacts how the group members **behave, interact, and feel**.
- “Professional challenges commonly relate to our misconceptions, misunderstandings, and culturally ingrained assumptions ... based on our own cultural backgrounds, education, and socialization” (Myles, 2019)
- Based on the stage of the group and its leaders, **members from non-dominant cultures may feel:**

DENIAL

- overwhelmed and ignored or “un-seen”.

DEFENSE

- judged, unsettled, and ill-at-ease.

MINIMIZATION

- some of their needs are recognized, but they are forced to adapt, and diversity is not acknowledged.

ACCEPTANCE

- their needs are recognized and addressed.

ADAPTATION

- secure in the inclusive environment where diversity is actively valued and diverse individuals are engaged and involved.

Developing Intercultural Competence

These 3 elements are essential to developing intercultural competence:

Attitudes

- valuing other cultures
- being open to and curious about differences
- being comfortable with differences

Knowledge

- knowledge of other cultures
- knowledge of one's own culture

Skills

- listening
- observing
- using critical-thinking skills to evaluate

Summary

CULTURAL SELF-AWARENESS helps us acknowledge the aspects of our culture that we take for granted and the assumptions we might make about other people.



Learning about other cultures and other ways of being in the world is an essential step towards understanding and compassion for others.



Actively working on our **attitudes** (openness to differences), **knowledge** (of ourselves and others), and **skills** (communication and critical-thinking) will move us towards **INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

Resources

Country Comparison Tool by Hofstede Insights

Compare up to four countries at a time based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions:
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>

East Meets West by Yang Liu

A visual representation of many of the differences between German and Chinese cultures:
<https://www.slideshare.net/cyrusinchina/east-meets-west-by-yang-liu/>

The Danger of a Single Story by novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

A powerful TED Talk, warning “that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding.”

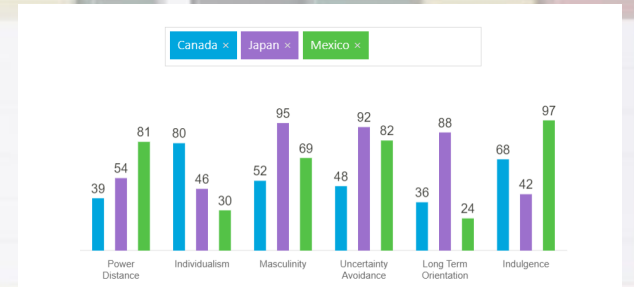
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Follow up: **More than One Story**, Department of Culture and Leisure of Simrishamn, Sweden

A card game, also available to play online, providing prompts for sharing stories – available in many languages: <http://morethanonestory.org>

Social Identity Wheel (printable) on the MSS website:

<http://camosunmss.opened.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/5763/2023/03/Social-Identity-Wheel-Printable.pdf>





Thank you!

We want to hear from you!

Please let us know what you think of this presentation by taking this short 2-minute survey:

- <https://forms.office.com/r/XCba7tLRMy>



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