

# Interpreting Your Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Profile

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), developed by Dr. Mitchell Hammer and Dr. Milton Bennett, is a 50-item, theory-based paper and pencil instrument that measures intercultural sensitivity as conceptualized in Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)<sup>1</sup>.

The DMIS is a framework for explaining the reactions of people to cultural differences. The underlying assumption of the model is that as one's experience of cultural differences becomes more complex, one's potential competence in intercultural interactions increases. Dr. Bennett has identified a set of fundamental cognitive structures (or "worldviews") that act as orientations to cultural difference. The worldviews vary from more *ethnocentric* to more *ethnorelative*. According to the DMIS theory, more ethnorelative worldviews have more potential to generate the attitudes, knowledge, and behavior that constitute intercultural competence.

The IDI measures an individual's (or group's) fundamental worldview orientation to cultural difference, and thus the individual's or group's capacity for intercultural competence. As a theory-based test, the IDI meets the standard scientific criteria for a valid and reliable psychometric instrument.

## THE IDI SCALES

**The DD Scale** measures a worldview that simplifies and/or polarizes cultural difference. This orientation ranges from a tendency toward disinterest and avoidance of cultural difference (a denial interpretive cluster) to a tendency to view the world in terms of "us" and "them," where "us" is superior (a defense interpretive cluster). The denial cluster includes two additional interpretive clusters, disinterest in cultural difference and avoidance of interaction with cultural difference. This worldview is considered ethnocentric, meaning that one's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way.

**The R Scale** measures a worldview that *reverses* the "us" and "them" polarization, where "them" is superior. This *reversal* orientation is the "mirror image" of the *denial/defense* orientation and is similarly considered to be ethnocentric.

**The M Scale** measures a worldview that highlights cultural commonality and universal values through an emphasis on *similarity* (a tendency to assume that people from other cultures are basically "like us") and/or *universalism* (a tendency to apply one's own cultural values to other cultures). This worldview is considered to be "transitional" from more ethnocentric orientations measured by the "DD" and "R" scales to more culturally sensitive (ethnorelative) worldviews.

**The AA Scale** measures a worldview that can comprehend and accommodate complex cultural difference. This can range from *acceptance* (a tendency to recognize patterns of cultural difference

in one's own and other cultures) to *adaptation* (a tendency to alter perception and behavior according to cultural context). The *adaptation cluster* included two additional interpretive clusters, *cognitive frame-shifting* and *behavioral code-shifting*. This worldview is considered ethnorelative, meaning that one's own and other cultural patterns are experienced in alternative cultural contexts.

**The EM Scale** measures a worldview that incorporates a multicultural identity with confused cultural perspectives. EM measures *encapsulated marginality*, which is one of the two theorized aspects of a broader developmental worldview called "Integration." *Encapsulated marginality* refers to an experience of "cultural marginality" that is mainly characterized by feelings of alienation. The other part of Integration is *constructive marginality*, where the experience of cultural marginality incorporates the fluid movement in and out of cultural context. *Constructive marginality* is not now measured by the IDI, although efforts are underway to develop a CM scale.

## THE IDI PROFILE GRAPH

The IDI Profile graph identifies specific issues and impediments around cultural difference faced by the individual or group profiled. In this graph, a brief definition of each of the IDI scales is presented along with specific interpretive "clusters" for each of the IDI scales. The individual or group results are visually profiled as a colored bar extending horizontally from left to right.



- ❖ A colored bar extending into the far right-hand third of the scale indicates that developmental issues in this general area are “resolved.”
- ❖ A colored bar extending into the middle third of the scale indicates that developmental issues in this general area are “in transition.” An “in transition” profile in the interpretive clusters can provide insight into the specific kinds of issues involved.
- ❖ A colored bar extending no further than the first third of the scale indicates that issues in this general area are “unresolved.” An “unresolved” profile in interpretive clusters can provide insight into the specific kinds of issues involved.

### **INTERPRETING YOUR OVERALL PERCEIVED AND DEVELOPMENTAL INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY PROFILES**

The Overall Perceived and Developmental Intercultural Sensitivity Profiles are presented as colored bars along the developmental continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The length of the bars indicates your overall development towards ethnorelativism. The length of the bars *does not* indicate your resolution of any specific issues, as in the case in the following Worldview Profile and Developmental Issues graphs.

The Perceived Intercultural Sensitivity Profile indicates *how you rate yourself* in terms of intercultural sensitivity. The length of this bar is not adjusted to take into account any developmental factors.

The Developmental Intercultural Sensitivity Profile indicates *how the IDI rates you* in developmental terms. This bar is typically shorter than the Perceived bar. The Developmental bar is adjusted to show the effect of ethnocentrism on the development of ethnorelativism.

### **INTERPRETING YOUR DD SCALE PROFILE**

**Resolved Issues:** A profile in the “resolved” third of the scale indicates that you have successfully dealt with issues that might otherwise have been impeding your intercultural development. This profile suggests that you are generally interested in cultural differences, you may seek out interaction with culturally different people, and you

are not inclined to polarize cultures into “us and them.”

**In Transition Issues:** A profile in the “transition” area indicates that you are still dealing with issues around simplifying or polarizing cultural difference, and that your worldview is still somewhat ethnocentric. Your experiences with cultural differences may be somewhat negative, with a tendency toward disinterest in cultural difference and/or a tendency toward avoidance of interaction with culturally different people. Further, there may be a tendency to view the world in terms of “us” and “them,” where “us” is superior.

**Unresolved Issues:** A profile in the “unresolved” area indicates a fairly ethnocentric worldview. This profile indicates that you generally experience a tendency to simplify and/or polarize cultural difference. You may be quite disinterested in cultural difference, or your experiences with cultural differences may be generally so negative that you avoid them as much as possible. You may also have a tendency to view the world in terms of “us” and “them,” where “us” is superior. These issues need to be resolved for further intercultural development to occur.

### **INTERPRETING YOUR R SCALE PROFILE**

**Resolved Issues:** A profile in the “resolved” area reveals that your intercultural experience is not affected by a tendency to *reverse* an “us” and “them” polarization, where “them” is superior. The profile indicates that you are not inclined to experience your own culture more negatively than you experience other cultures.

**In Transition Issues:** A profile in the “transition” area indicates that you are in the process of dealing with issues around the negative evaluation of your own culture. These issues may be interfering with increased intercultural sensitivity. This profile suggests that you may tend to polarize cultural difference by *reversing* “us” and “them,” considering “them” as superior.

**Unresolved Issues:** A profile in the “unresolved” area indicates that you clearly experience your own culture as inferior to one or more other cultures. You may be rejecting your own culture in favor of an assumedly superior other culture, either by “going native” or by taking on the cause of another culture group that defines your own culture as inferior. These issues need to be resolved for further intercultural development to occur.



## INTERPRETING YOUR M SCALE PROFILE

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**Resolved Issues:** A profile in the “resolved” area reveals that your experience of other cultures is not impeded by over-estimating the role of cultural commonality or universal values. This profile suggests that you probably do not assume that people’s similarity is, in general, more important than their differences.

**In Transition Issues:** A profile in the “transition” area indicates that you are still dealing with issues around the assumption of cultural commonality. You may be stressing cultural similarity and/or universal values in a way that can mask crucial cultural differences. This often takes the form of an assumption of common needs, interests, and goals among people from different cultures and/or an assumption of the universality of certain values, norms, religious beliefs, and/or practices.

**Unresolved Issues:** A profile in the “unresolved” area means that your experience of other cultures is heavily oriented toward underlying commonality. This profile indicates that you may have a strong commitment to the idea that people from other cultures are basically “like us,” or that people of other cultures should share the same set of “universal” values that you have. This profile reflects difficulties in identifying important cultural differences that influence intercultural relations. These issues need to be resolved before you can exercise your greatest potential of intercultural competence.

## INTERPRETING YOUR AA SCALE PROFILE

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**Resolved Issues:** A profile in the “resolved” area reveals that you can comprehend and accommodate complex cultural differences. This profile suggests that you recognize patterns of cultural difference in your own and other cultures, and that you tend to shift perspective and behavior according to cultural context. Depending on your profile in other areas, a “resolved” profile in AA may indicate a very ethnorelative experience of other cultures.

**In Transition Issues:** A profile in the “transition” area indicates that you are dealing with issues around the acceptance of or adaptation to cultural difference. You may not yet be able to experience the existence of other cultures fully, or you may not yet be able to shift your perspective

or behavior easily into other cultural contexts. This profile suggests that you may need to make more effort to comprehend complex cultural differences, or that you should attend more carefully to how different cultural contexts call for more change in perspective or behavior.

**Unresolved Issues:** A profile in the “unresolved” area means that your experience of other cultures does not include the acceptance of and adaptation to cultural difference. This profile probably reflects some difficulty in recognizing patterns of cultural difference in your own or other cultures. It also probably indicates a resistance to the need for changing perspective or behavior to account for different cultural contexts.

## INTERPRETING YOUR EM SCALE PROFILE

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**Resolved Issues:** Depending on your other profiles, an EM profile in the “resolved” area indicates that you either have not experienced identity cultural identity issues at all, or that you have transformed your experience into a more constructive form. This profile suggests that you are not experiencing difficulties with cultural identification, or that you are comfortable with a multicultural identity and the movement among different cultural identities.

**In Transition Issues:** A profile in the “transition” area reveals that you are dealing with identity issues that can interfere with increased intercultural sensitivity. This profile suggests that you may be experiencing confusion in cultural perspectives or discomfort around issues of cultural identification and movement between different cultural identities.

**Unresolved Issues:** A profile in the “unresolved” area reveals a clear experience of discomfort with cultural identity issues. This profile suggests you may be experiencing alienation from your own cultural experiences, either because you are uncomfortable with a multicultural identity or because you are unable to sort out competing cultural perspectives.



## Denial

Issues in Denial indicate that you are comfortable with the familiar and are not anxious to complicate life with “cultural difference.” You may simply not notice much cultural difference around you. For instance:

- ❖ In general, you may be unaware of a significant minority population in your area or you may be disinterested in multicultural or international affairs that do not immediately affect you.
- ❖ As a visitor in another country, you may spend most of your time concerned with the familiar categories of food, clothing, and money, instead of exploring the less-familiar idea of cultural differences.
- ❖ In business situations, you may be so intent on the tasks at hand that you do not notice much about the cultural aspects of business relationships with clients and coworkers.
- ❖ In educational settings, you may be unaware of and uninterested in the effects of cultural difference on teaching and learning.

You also may maintain separation from others who are different. For instance:

- ❖ Perhaps you avoid personal travel because of the discomfort of dealing with strange people and situations.
- ❖ You might seek out neighborhoods that are “nice” in the sense that residents are culturally similar to yourself.
- ❖ In business travel, you may actively seek familiar accommodations and food, and you may restrict your communication to expatriates from your home country or to host-country people who are already part of the company.

**Your strength is:** Adherence to traditional values and tasks and support for the community of like-minded people.

**Your developmental task is:** To recognize cultural differences that are escaping your notice.



## Defense

Issues in Defense indicate that you have a strong commitment to your own worldview and some distrust of cultural behavior or ideas that differ from your own. You are aware of other cultures around you, but you may have a relatively incomplete understanding of them and you probably have fairly strong negative stereotypes about some of them. For instance:

- ❖ You may routinely refer to people of other cultures as “them,” and you might be particularly attentive to negative qualities attributed to other groups.
- ❖ You might belong to or sympathize with groups that stress the superiority of your own culture.
- ❖ As an educator or student, you may focus exclusively on traditional subjects and be dismissive of non-traditional learning.
- ❖ As a manager or educator, you are likely to feel that cultural adjustment is entirely the responsibility of people who choose to move from their own cultural group into a different group.
- ❖ If you travel or live abroad, you may find yourself complaining quite a bit about the failings of your hosts.
- ❖ If you do have a good relationship with a co-worker, neighbor, or friend from another culture, you may consider that person an exception to the rule about the group to which he or she belongs.

**Your strength is:** Dealing head on with difficult international and multicultural issues and resisting the temptation to return to blissful ignorance about them.

**Your developmental task is:** To become more tolerant of differences and to recognize the basic commonalities among people of different cultures.



## Reversal

Issues in Reversal indicate that you have a largely positive view of an adopted culture or other cultures in general and a somewhat negative opinion of your own. However, your understanding of the adopted culture may be based on positive stereotypes. For instance:

- ❖ You may be a current or former cross-cultural volunteer (e.g. Peace Corps, Vista) who has “adopted” an idealized version of the culture to which you were assigned. In doing so, you may have also adopted some of their negative stereotypes of your own culture.
- ❖ If you are a long-term expatriate manager in a global corporation, you may have developed a cynical view of your own culture that passes for sophistication in many international circles.
- ❖ As a member of a dominant ethnic group who is concerned with ethnic oppression, you may have disavowed your own ethnic roots in favor of being “one with” members of the oppressed group.
- ❖ In an educational context, you may reject all traditional approaches to learning in favor of anything non-traditional, even if some of the non-traditional approaches are less effective.
- ❖ As a manager or educator, you are likely to feel that cultural adjustment is entirely the responsibility of dominant-culture people, given the history of their advantage.
- ❖ While less likely, issues in Reversal may also reflect your experience of some negative aspects of a multicultural identity (see Encapsulated Marginality).

**Your strength is:** Demonstrating concern with global and domestic inequity, a willingness to be self-critical, and a positive attitude toward other cultures.

**Your developmental task is:** To become more tolerant of your own culture and to recognize that other cultures, like your own, have a mix of good and bad elements.



## Minimization

Issues in Minimization indicate that you have gotten beyond feeling that other cultures pose a threat to your own. Your experience is that people from other cultures are pretty much like you, under the surface. You are quite aware that other cultures exist all around you, and you may know something about cultural differences in customs, celebrations, etc. You do not denigrate other cultures and you seek to avoid stereotypes by treating every person as an individual or by treating other people as you would like to be treated.

- ❖ You may offer to be a host family for a foreign student, or volunteer for international programs, with the motivation that it will be fun and you can help the visitors understand the ways of your own culture.
- ❖ In educational or business settings, you probably feel supportive of equal opportunity and “colorblind” recruitment, but you may not be certain whether or how the organization should change to accommodate more diversity.
- ❖ You probably believe that, despite interesting differences in food, customs, etc., people are deep down fairly similar, responding to basic human needs and operating according to certain universal values.
- ❖ If you are a member of a dominant cultural group, you are probably unaware of how you may be perceived as privileged or culturally imperialistic by those from non-dominant cultural groups.

**Your strength is:** Recognizing the essential humanity of every person and trying to behave in tolerant ways towards others.

**Your developmental task is:** To learn more about your own culture and to avoid projecting that culture onto other people’s experience.

## Acceptance

Resolved issues in Acceptance indicate that you both acknowledge and respect cultural difference. You are aware of your own culture(s), and you see that your own culture is just one of many ways of experiencing the world. When you think of people from other cultures, you imagine them as every bit as complex as yourself. Their ideas, feelings, and behavior may seem unusual to you, but you realize that their experience is just as rich as your own. You may not like everything about other cultures (or everything about your own, for that matter), but that fact does not make you think that any cultural group is more or less “civilized.” You are curious about other cultures and seek opportunities to learn more about them, even if you do not have many opportunities to interact with members of those cultures. For instance:

- ❖ As a manager or administrator, you probably recognize the value of global and domestic diversity in organizations. However, you may not be considering how you and the organization need to change to accommodate the diversity.
- ❖ In educational settings, you are likely to support efforts to diversify the curriculum to be more representative of a broad range of cultural perspectives.
- ❖ If you are traveling or living in other cultures, you may not act any differently than you do with members of your own culture. But you are probably aware that your behavior might be interpreted in unusual ways. You in turn are probably careful to withhold quick judgments of members of other cultures and to consider how their behavior might mean something different than it would in your own culture.

**Your strength is:** Recognizing cultural differences between your own and other groups and seeing how these differences are valuable to society and to yourself.

**Your developmental task is:** To link your knowledge about your own and other cultures to the skill of “shifting perspective”—looking at the world through the lens of a different worldview while maintaining your own commitments to values.



## Adaptation: Cognitive Frame-Shifting

Resolved issues in the Cognitive Frame-Shifting form of Adaptation indicate that you recognize the added value of having more than one cultural perspective available to you. Further, you are able to “take the perspective” of another culture for the purpose of understanding or evaluating situations in either your own or another culture. For instance:

- ❖ You may know enough about your own and at least one other culture to shift substantially into the other cultural frame of reference. You are likely to add this perspective to discussions about “how things work.”
- ❖ As a manager or administrator, you may routinely use your frame-shifting ability to act as a “bridge” between people of two different cultures for conflict resolution coordination of understanding.
- ❖ In business, you are probably skeptical of training that touts the one best way of communicating, marketing, or relating to others. You know that all such behavior occurs in cultural contexts.
- ❖ As a faculty member, you are likely to include different cultural perspectives in your curriculum.
- ❖ If you are a long-term expatriate, or a minority interacting extensively with the majority culture, you may be bicultural—your worldview contains two fairly complete cultural frames.
- ❖ If you are not bicultural, you probably would like to be, if you had the opportunity.

**Your strength is:** Creativity and flexibility in perspective along with a deep understanding of at least one other culture.

**Your developmental task is:** To link your cognitive ability to other aspects of your behavior, with the goal of generating “natural” behavior in more than one cultural context.



## Adaptation: Behavioral Code-Shifting

Resolved issues in the Behavioral Code-Shifting form of Adaptation indicate that you are able to intentionally change your culturally based behavior. You have a broad repertoire of behavior that allows you to act in culturally appropriate ways outside your own culture. For instance:

- ❖ When you shift into the frame of another culture, you find that your behavior changes in a natural way to express that different view of the world. In other words, you can feel when and what different behavior is appropriate. You also may be able to intentionally change your behavior to match that of another culture, even if you are not around people from that culture.
- ❖ As a businessperson, you are likely to be accomplished in negotiation across cultures or managing multicultural teams. You may often find yourself facilitating intercultural discussions.
- ❖ In organizations, you are likely to recognize that global and domestic diversity demands constant adaptation and that policies must reflect that need. You are probably a proponent for organizational development along these lines.
- ❖ As an educator, you may actually teach from a variety of cultural perspectives. That is, you do not simply teach about other cultural perspectives—you are able to embody them, to some degree.
- ❖ It is likely that you are bicultural in at least one other culture, although you can shift your behavior in more limited ways towards other cultures, as well.

**Your strength is:** The ability to behave and communicate effectively in a variety of other cultures.

**Your developmental task is:** To deal with the identity issues associated with the “chameleon effect” that may accompany your cultural flexibility.



## Encapsulated Marginality

Issues in Encapsulated Marginality indicate that you are struggling with how to integrate your intercultural abilities with your identity. You may be asking yourself, “Now that I can shift my cultural perspective and behavior whenever I want, who am I anyway?” This condition is a transition between Adaptation and Integration (Constructive Marginality), where you are more likely to say to yourself, “Who I am is a person who can move easily among cultures.” But at this point, you are probably feeling some alienation from all the cultures you know about, including your own. For instance:

- ❖ As a traditional-age or returning-adult student, you may have trouble making decisions about what to study, since everything seems equally interesting and important to one of the many careers that you are considering.
- ❖ If you are returning from a long sojourn abroad and have developed an Adaptation world-view, you may experience this sense of alienation associated with re-entry into your original culture.
- ❖ In business situations, you may find yourself feeling separate from your co-workers and unable to identify with either the corporate culture or any of the national/ethnic cultures of which you may be a part.
- ❖ Although less likely, your sense of alienation may be associated with Reversal, because you are rejecting your own culture but do not have the depth in another culture to support a clear identity.

**Your strength is:** Self-awareness, specifically recognizing that your ability to be culturally adaptive has profound implications for your identity.

**Your developmental task is:** To see yourself less as a victim of cultural confusion and more as a conscious constructor of multiple cultural experiences.



## VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY (IDI)

The IDI represents a valid and reliable method of measuring individual and group orientations toward cultural differences as described in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) theory. Items on the IDI are actual statements selected from interviews of a sample of 40 respondents representing cross-cultural and situation diversity (i.e., not limited to university students). Therefore, the items of the IDI are statements that reflect a wide range of cultural perspectives. All statements about cultural differences from the initial interviews were categorized using the DMIS theoretical framework by four raters with an inter-rater reliability of .85-.95 (Spearman's rho). Cross-cultural experts then reviewed the item pool and items were deleted which were not similarly categorized by five of the seven experts. Additional pilot tests were then conducted with a culturally diverse sample to insure item clarity, and a preliminary 60-item instrument based on this initial research was extensively field-tested.

The latest validation sample for a revised IDI consisted of 591 respondents from diverse backgrounds who responded to both original and revised items from the interview statements. Confirmatory Factor Analysis established that 50 items constituted the following dimensions or scales with their corresponding item reliabilities (coefficient

alpha) that meet or exceed standard reliability criterion for individual and group psychometric diagnosis (Nunnally, 1978; DeVellis, 1991):<sup>2</sup> DD (denial/defense) scale, 13 items, alpha = .85; R (reversal) scale, 9 items, alpha = .80; M (minimization scale), 9 items, alpha = .83; AA (acceptance/adaptation) scale, 14 items, alpha = .84; and EM (encapsulated marginality) scale, 5 items, alpha = .80.

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 (Sampson & Smith, 1957; Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989)<sup>3</sup> and with the Intercultural Anxiety scale, a modified version of the Social Anxiety scale (Gao & Gudykunst, 1990).<sup>4</sup> All construct validity tests supported the validity of each of the IDI scales.<sup>5</sup>

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 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 across cultures.

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Bennett, M.J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- 2 Hammer, M.R. (1998). A measure of intercultural sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory. In S. Fowler & M. G. Mumford (Eds.), *The Intercultural sourcebook: Volume 2* (pp. 61-72). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- 3 Hammer, M.R., & Bennett, M.J. (1998, 2001). *The Intercultural Development Inventory Manual*. Portland, OR: The Intercultural Communication Institute.
- 4 Hammer, M.R., Bennett, M.J., & Wiseman, R.L. (in press). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory. In R.M. Paige (Ed.), *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Special Issue*.
- 5 Nunnally, J.C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd edition). New York: McGraw-Hill; DeVellis, R.R. (1991). *Scale development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 6 Sampson, D.L., & Smith, H.P. (1957). A scale to measure world-minded attitudes. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 45, 99-106; Wiseman, R.L., Hammer, M.R., & Nishida, H. (1989). Predictors of intercultural communication competence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 349-370.
- 7 Gao, G., & Gudykunst, W.B. (1990). Uncertainty, anxiety and adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 5, 301-317.
- 8 For further data on the latest IDI reliability and validity studies, see M.R. Hammer, M.J. Bennett, & R.L. Wiseman (in press). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory. In R.M. Paige (Ed.), *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Special Issue*.

