Learning about my viewpoints towards cultural differences and commonalities was very enlightening. I consider myself someone that is not only capable of change but excited about it. So I look forward to taking this journey to learn how to close the gap in my development. My specific orientation is Polarization which is an “us” vs “them” mindset. There are two ranges that break down this orientation though and they are Defense and Reversal. I fall into the reversal category which means I am more critical of my own cultures and more accepting of outside cultures and practices. This is not surprising to me as I have become very critical of American culture over the last decade. It is hard to explain but there is something about not just becoming a parent that for me has really changed how I view my own culture and society. I want so much for my children which has actually led me to learn more about other cultures in order to give them the best life I possibly can regardless of my comfort and willingness to adapt to situations.

Looking more into the Polarization Orientation for my personal development I can see one characteristic that stands out to me is “May mistrust cultural values and behavior that differ”. Seeing as I am on the reversal side of the polarization I realize that I do have a lot of mistrust towards our culture as a whole. It seems that we can’t agree on anything as a nation and our supposed leaders are not helping us learn how to find common ground within our differences. This has led me to not only lose faith in what should be a united society but also how we work together as a nation. It feels like other countries around the world are not as divided as we are. Whether that is true or not is up for debate and a completely different topic. The next characteristic that sticks out and ties into my previous statements is that “Cultural differences are seen as obstacles to be overcome”. I would love to say that our nation uses our differences to be able to build each other up and embrace changes amongst communities however it seems as though they just bring us further apart. An example close to my heart is school safety and how we handle protecting our children in public school. In my opinion the bottom line should be protecting our children regardless of the path. We need to take education from other nations who can successfully go years without a mass shooting and interweave those practices into our own society. However, it has become a debate about gun vs no guns and our nation can not agree, when the only thing we should be worrying about is if our children are safe and feel safe in their educational environment.

The strength that was provided to me was that, “You likely can deal head on with difficult international and multicultural issues and resist the temptation to ignore these concerns.” This actually does make me feel very proud of myself. I would love to be considered an advocate for other cultures and known in my personal and professional life to embrace others and be willing to learn about and accept change where it is needed. That being said, part of my development plan states that I need, “to become more tolerant of differences, recognize basic commonalities between your cultural group and people from different cultures, and recognize that all cultures, including your own, have a mix of positive and negative features.” This does bring me back to the fact that in the overall combination of history America is a young country and we have a lot of learning to do and just like with young humans I should probably give our nation some grace as we navigate through these tough points in history. I also need to focus on the positive things our country has to offer like devise cultures throughout the nation, the freedom to be able to take this class and express these opinions without fear of reprimand and the ability to enjoy baseball every spring.

Ideally I like to be in Acceptance and Adaptation orientations however I know I need to start my journey with moving towards Minimization. This will help me highlight common ground between my culture and other cultures. I need to take the time to appreciate and accept the cultures that I do have around me, even if they aren’t globally diverse. I work with people that have moved to Alabama from various parts of the country because they enjoy the southern beach lifestyle. I can take the time to learn more about the midwestern and northeastern cultures they are from and see what orientations we have in common and what is different.

Intercultural competence is being able to take what I currently understand about culture and challenge myself to learn about the impacts of my perception and bridge my competence across different community cultures. This will require me to put myself into situations where I can work on cultural development. From my example earlier about child safety, I can work with the school board or state governments to advocate for our children and learn more about the reasons behind some of the decisions that I have made in regard to public school safety. I was also reviewing the learning opportunities and I am very interested in integrating these into my everyday life. I am finally back into the workforce after being home with my children so joining in on workplace activities that can enhance my intercultural development is something that could bridge my gap as I reenter the workforce. Secondly I could take my children to local plays, art exhibits and events in order to learn more about different parts of the world.

It can be easy to say that you have intercultural competence, I definitely thought I was better at this but there is more to being competent than just stating that you are accepting of other cultures. For example, I learned I am probably more accepting of other cultures because I am unhappy with my home culture and I feel like we need a change. Cultural intelligence is actively working to improve your knowledge and understanding of others and their uniqueness. Though these are different they go hand in hand. You can fully have the ability to appreciate and strive for cultural intelligence without the base foundation of intercultural competence and the research it takes to understand the environment you are trying to embrace. ‘

Overall I thought this lesson was not only a gut punch on my cultural intelligence but also really made me think about why I have just a reversal polarized view which is not something I have had to put into words before. This is something I am excited to learn more about as the class progresses and I can develop personally.