



Session II A, July 17-21, 2017

14. Turning Intercultural Theory into Practice

Conceptual understanding of intercultural differences has been developed extensively over the last 50 years, yet there often remains a gulf between academic research and real-world practice. How can we better understand culture in order to do our work? As psychologist Kurt Lewin noted, "There is nothing as practical as a good theory." This workshop is designed to deepen your knowledge of theory and concepts related to culture and intercultural interactions in applied contexts, both domestic and international. With an emphasis on the practical, real-life situations you may encounter in the course of your work, we will bridge that gulf in order to build your capacity and expertise.

Designed for: Educators, trainers, consultants, diversity officers, and others who are involved in contexts where deeper knowledge of intercultural concepts and theory, as applied in real-life situations, would be beneficial. This workshop would also be helpful for those who are interested in catching up with current perspectives in the field.

Workshop Objectives

- Examine the role of theory in predicting behaviors, explaining behaviors, and understanding cultural dynamics related to identity and structural power
- Learn more about social scientific and interpretive theories of culture and intercultural interaction
- Explore theories related to intercultural conflict, cultural adjustment, and relationships
- Apply intercultural communication theory to workplace and other settings
- Develop a matrix of theories and their applications, as well as approaches to teach students or clients about culture in easy-to-understand (non-academic) ways in training, teaching, and consulting contexts
- Identify ways to continue deepening your theoretical foundation after the workshop

Learning Activities

- Short lectures and discussion on the concepts
- Case studies examining the application of theory in various contexts
- Experiential activities designed to make sense of theories and concepts in concrete ways
- Partner and small group discussions about how to apply and share theoretical concepts



Dr. Mary Meares is an associate professor of communication studies at the University of Alabama, where her research focuses on intercultural groups, virtual teams, workplace diversity, mistreatment, and perceptions of voice. She has taught intercultural and organizational communication in the U.S. and Japan, was named the Faculty Mentor of the Year at Washington State University, and recently served as the first intercultural specialist for the Semester at Sea comparative cultures study abroad program. She has consulted for educational, corporate, and public service organizations in the areas of intercultural transitions, team building, and conflict. Mary also provides career counseling to participants at SIIC and teaches yoga.

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