

This day is about the intersection of theory and practice, and the critical linkages that must exist between the two. All legitimate, academic disciplines and fields of study have such linkages; sometimes they take decades or even centuries to develop, but they in fact do exist. The development of a solid theory or theories that inform inquiries of good practice and the development of measureable indicators are the hallmarks of the academy.

Education abroad still finds itself in the early stages of its development as a legitimate academic discipline. We on whole, as a field, do not have the theoretical grounding that has led to the establishment of best practice and pedagogy. Instead, we are simultaneously grappling with trying to create a thorough and workable theory that underpins the reasons for our existence, at the same time looking to develop measures to assess the theory that we have not yet fully formed. Further, there are the very real external pressures that demand that we produce clear, simple answers that validate the value of this kind of educational model (and the financial resources that are required to support it) and directly relates to future student success. It is an impossible task.

Yet, here we find ourselves for the next six hours, and if the best and brightest is a bit of an overstatement, certainly we represent the capable, the competent and the caffeinated. So, let me welcome you to The College of Global Studies' first ever colloquium on education abroad which has as its spirit to tackle the impossible, together.

We begin with the informed assumption that the field of education abroad, international education, study abroad, global studies—however you want to describe it—lacks a theoretical frame. Without a well-articulated rationale, without solid theories that underpin the work, we exist in a chaotic state trying various program models, curricula and pedagogies and matching them with measures that methods of assessment that we hope by chance have an association between them. How do you know what to do when you lack the notion of why you do it? Why do we spend so much time, resource and energy into building the programs as we do? How do we know when their effective? When we assess our programs, what is it that we're looking for?

These kinds of questions are ones that we face every day in our work, but they are also ones that can be resolved with a solid theoretical model to guide our work. The fact that we struggle with these kinds of questions suggests that we lack the theory that provides context. One of the rationales for this particular colloquium today is to begin a discussion about some of the theoretical underpinnings of our field and to see if we can move the discussion forward.

If any particular theoretical model informs our work, it's probably Milton Bennett's Development Model for Intercultural Sensitivity, which of course provides the basis for the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which is widely used in higher education to measure cultural development. This particular model, I would argue, is the dominant one in the field, and for many good reasons. Study abroad offices may not always be aware, but I think nearly all of our education abroad offices have to some degree accepted Bennett's Model. It informs the language that we use, as well as some of the programmatic elements, such as orientation and re-entry programming. It has become the dominant way that we think about the student's cultural experience, and in the case of the IDI, it's one of the few measurement tools that's being used to assess the student's study abroad experience. I don't think it's too bold to say that the field of education abroad largely accepts Bennett's Model—even if we've never quite stopped to think that that's the case.

Look for example, at the articles in *Frontiers* and in *International Educator*. Those articles that feature measurable outcomes, and many don't, nearly all site the IDI. The FORUM's Glossary has an entire section related to the terms associated with intercultural development, intercultural competence and intercultural communication; all notions and terms that either Bennett has directly been involved with, or ones that are natural associations with his work. No other theoretical model receives this kind of treatment in our journals and professional organizations. There is no other model that rises to the level of prominence within the field as Bennett's Intercultural Model. It is from this perspective and assumption that I base the remainder of my comments; the intercultural model dominates our field, so it therefore worth exploring how well it fits.

It is worth our time here today to turn our attention to the model, perhaps better understanding some of its nuances, and if we can be so bold, offer some critiques on its effectiveness. Or more specifically, critique how this model is currently being used in the field of education abroad. The model—and the accompanying IDI—may in fact not be appropriate to what we do, in certain areas. Perhaps we have become too reliant on a model that was not intended to specifically address education abroad, and certainly never positioned itself as an assessment tool of such activities. Perhaps we should do our due diligence and query the model that seems to dominate our work.

I should also emphasize, that no matter what I intentionally or unintentionally say, I deeply respect Bennett's work and theory and our field owes an enormous intellectual debt to Milton Bennett and Michael Hammer. As I was talking to Lorna yesterday, saying that I feel quite foolish, in one respect critiquing the work of Bennett. And Lorna in her typical way said, "my dear, we all respect the work of Galileo, but thank heavens we didn't stop there". So in that spirit, let us begin.

For many of you, this may be a review, but I thought it would be useful to start with Bennett's Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, so as to bring us all to the same point for our discussion. The article that I shared with you, published in 1986, has become a seminal piece for cultural studies as well as the field of education abroad. In it, Bennett postulated that cultural sensitivities, also known as worldview, are in fact cognitive constructs that inform attitude formation and behavior. Similar to other areas of personal development, individuals construct a cognitive frame that serves to inform their experiences. As they are increasingly exposed to new experiences, so too, their particular cognitive view shifts to accommodate the new environment. The more sophisticated the exposure, the greater the potential for the individual to develop in-depth cognitive processes that assist them in explaining the world around them.

Thinking about this approach in the education abroad context, this seems compelling. Student experiences in new cultural environments are challenging their existing worldview, which hopefully leads to the development of a more sophisticated worldview and great intercultural insensitivities. At the core of the model, Bennett postulates that there are six intercultural stages, with each stage of development, "corresponding with a particular worldview structure".

The first three stages, *Denial*, *Defense* and *Minimization*, are associated with a predominately ethnocentric cognitive structure. The second set of stages, *Acceptance*, *Adaptation* and *Integration* are associated with an ethnorelativistic worldview. In brief, Bennett's Model is a constructionist one that supposed that individuals progressively move through the stages on their way to intercultural competence. As Hammer and Bennett articulate, "as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases". Transitions from stage to stage are characterized by cognitive resolution of the issues particular to each stage of development. While Bennett acknowledges occasional "retreats" back to previous stages, he generally contends that development remains progressive and "unidirectional".

In brief discussion of the model, the first stage is one characterized by *denial*, which Bennett defines as the “default condition”, based largely on monoculturalistic socialization. One in the stage of denial tends to assert that there is only one true culture with other viewed as lesser, primitive or underdeveloped. While aggressive attitudes toward other cultures may be associated with one in the denial stage, primarily they are characterized by indifference or disinterest. Individuals in the denial stage don’t seem to recognize cultural difference, they tend not to care about those differences that they do recognize, and nearly always associate cultural difference with being “wrong”.

While the denial stage is one that is characterized by a lack of awareness regarding cultural conditions, the *defense* stage is one where those differences become more apparent to the individual. As in denial, those in the defense stage perceive their particular cultural construct as correct and true, but they are also increasingly aware that their worldview may be at odds with others. Frequently, those in the defense stage speak in terms of “us” and “them”. Dominant cultural majorities will typically feel threatened by non-dominant cultural groups, whereas non-dominant cultural groups will form a separate cultural identity against the majority. Typically, this intercultural frame is where one builds sub-groups, or cliques, that are closed to others; reinforcing the “us” versus “them” construct.

The third stage of intercultural development within the ethnocentric block is referred to as *minimization*. In minimization the perceived threats of the defense stage are either absorbed into one’s own cultural identity without recognizing the origin, or the cultural conditions are trivialized or even “romanticized”. In some instances, individuals positioned in minimization will correct other’s cultural manifestations. As described earlier, these first three stages are characterized as ethnocentric in their worldview, with the individual’s cultural lens remaining as the correct one in their mind. At the risk of stereotyping, this particular stage always brings to mind the cruise ship tourists—every family has them—that spend eight hours in an Italian port city to “see” or “do” Italy and then regaling all of us about their cultural findings at family get-togethers. Bennett calls this stage, “the last ditch attempt to preserve centrality of one’s own worldview...with an attempt to bury difference under the weight of cultural similarities”. As an editorial aside, I sometimes fear that that this is where we reside when we speak of “global citizens”.

These three stages are defined as ethnocentric, where experiences and interactions are interpreted through one’s own worldview. In Bennett’s model ethnocentrism is not a positive or preferred worldview. In the ideal, the individual develops beyond their own worldview and moves toward an ethnorelativistic viewpoint, where cultural differences

are increasingly interpreted through “the other’s” cultural lens. Differences are acknowledged and respected.

The first of the three ethnorelativistic worldviews is referred to as *acceptance*. Acceptance is characterized as one beginning to perceive their own cultural worldview alongside other existing cultural perspectives. The individual begins to associate their specific perspective within the context of their own cultural environment, and is increasingly aware of the interaction between the two. Further they begin to recognize the worldview of others developing out of similar cultural process. ‘I feel more guilty, because I’m Catholic’, for example. One of the important points in this stage is that difference becomes less of a thing and more of a process. Individuals begin to recognize difference not just in observed, such as items, clothes, food, but also within interactions, customs and in thinking.

The fifth stage in the model is referred to as *adaptation* and is characterized by the increased ability to perceive alternative cultural viewpoints as appropriate within their own cultural environment. One’s individual worldview expands to incorporate new information sources and new approaches to cognitive structures that yield different results in attitude formation and in behavioral contexts. Bennett also describes adaptation as the “empathy stage”, as the individual attempts to see the world as if one were the other person. Increasingly, the individual has the ability to both perceive the other’s worldview and to act ethnorelativistically in accordance with the other’s viewpoint.

In the final stage of *integration*, individuals transition in and out of cultural contexts, adopting the appropriate worldview without cognitive dissonance. Bennett points out that integration is not necessarily inherently better than adaptation, but rather it is more responsive to individuals who are exposed to two or more cultural worldviews that require a shifting cognitive approach. Individuals in the integration stage typically do not experience one dominant culture and develop features of a global nomad. The experiences of cultural difference are, “an essential and joyful aspect of all life”, as Bennett describes.

This brief and incomplete presentation of Bennett’s larger and more sophisticated model is simply intended to provide a general overview. As you will have seen from Bennett’s own writings, he describes sub-groupings within these six stages; which while informative and developed may not add much to our discussion here today. Bennett also in later works discusses that one’s particular worldview deviates in its progression. Depending on one’s particular experiences, at times of stress, one may fall back into their trailing tendencies, which reinforce characteristics in previous stages.

Alternatively, one may also have advancing viewpoints in particular circumstances, where you extend your viewpoint for a limited time. The point, I suppose is that this type of development is quite dynamic and not static or precisely linear. While one may have dominant tendencies, your perspectives are in a constant state of development or regression.

Moving from Bennett's theoretical frame to forms of practice and measurement, we turn our attention to another critical component of Bennett's work and that is of course the Intercultural Development Inventory, or IDI. Extending the theoretical model, Bennett along with Michael Hammer developed a measurement instrument that purports to measure and identify the stage of one's particular development. As referenced earlier, the IDI is one of the few norm-scaled, widely used assessment inventories in the field of education abroad; although I think it's quite important to highlight that the IDI was not developed in order to assess or measure programming specific to education abroad. While the GPI, the BEVI and some other experiential based instruments are also in use across the field, the IDI remains the dominant tool. It is an expensive instrument that it somewhat challenging to administer on a large-scale. However, it remains valid, reliable, and strong with many relevant uses across very diverse educational, governmental and corporate fields.

As introduced earlier, the intercultural model remains at the heart of much of our work in education abroad. However is it the right one; or more appropriately, the only one that we should be working from? Let us now explore some of the potential limitations for the intercultural model in education abroad.

At its core, Bennett's Model values the progressive move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Ethnocentrism is viewed as lesser sophisticated worldview than ethnorelativism; less desirable as an individual outlook. Therefore, in order to "develop" one needs to evolve their thinking beyond ethnocentrism. Perhaps on first thought this idea seems innocuous and evolved, but within the university construct perhaps it needs further thought.

Presented another way, we are considering the tension point between relativism and universalism, which may not be as black and white as the model initially suggests. For the sake of this argument, I will avoid the use of extreme examples—such as female genital mutilation as a cultural practice to make the point that the relativism trumps universalism as a desired cultural worldview. Consider our institutional missions, for example. A number of our institutions articulate in their mission statements descriptions of the ideal student, often with language that directly sites religious values or global engagement in particular ways. Even large, public institutions speak in broad terms

about civic engagement, citizenship and social responsibility. Our institutions, to varying degrees are not relativistic in their outlook. They have as their mission the goal to produce a certain kind of learned citizen, engaged in the world in a certain kind of way, espousing a certain kind of value system. This is not to say that our institutions are not open, tolerant and diverse communities, but I am perhaps wondering how relativistic they are.

Therefore, if you assume that international programming is connected to our institutional missions, how are we reconciling the goals of intercultural development, which calls for a relativistic worldview, with the not always relativistic missions of our programming. Using some of the items from the IDI as an example, let's explore this point further. In the IDI, respondents indicate their level of agreement with particular statements. Here are two such items:

- We're all God's children.
- Human behavior worldwide should be governed by natural and universal ideas of right and wrong.

In a professional presentation, Sister Elaine Meyer-Lee of St. Mary's College questioned the test item, "We're all God's children". If agreed to within the IDI framework, this particular item would be scored as corresponding to the minimization stage of cultural development. Meyer-Lee indicates that this designation is inconsistent with the educational instruction within Catholic institutions. In this instance, the movement toward relativism does not correspond with the goals of universalism that a Catholic institution such as St. Mary's College espouses. In what instances, therefore is the IDI an appropriate or inappropriate instrument at an institution like St. Mary's College?

Even if we step away from the religious perspective, I'm not entirely confident that someone who disagrees with the second item is by their nature more developed than someone who agrees. Further, from my own perspective, I'm uncertain whether one perspective is preferred over another. However, the IDI and the DMIS model are in fact evaluative, preferring a disagreement to these statements. I suspect that there are some in this room that would disagree with the preferred relativism of these statements, and I hold that many of our institutions do too. Yet, in some instances we are using the IDI as the primary assessment tool to indicate the success of our programs and the overall student experience. There may in fact be a disconnect between these kinds of institutional goals and program goals and the use of the IDI.

As another example, consider service learning programs or other kinds of civic engagement programs. I think by their very nature, service learning programs tend toward a universalistic or ethno-centric perspective. I suppose very well designed service learning programs can be relativistic, but by and large, they do have a valuative component. They are study and work environments that intend to alleviate issues of inequity or injustice, poverty, civil unrest or some other plight of the human condition. Sometimes they are presented as altruistic in nature, aligning such values with their program mission or perhaps a religious component, depending on the institution. If an institution is administering the IDI as a way to assess their programming, are students who engage in international service learning programs included with other study abroad students? Or, are education abroad professionals discerning in who is receiving the IDI, since not all programs seek to produce the same results? I fear that often times such distinctions are not being made, as the students are grouped together to produce a high n; when in fact I suspect the IDI is not fully compatible with a number of the programs that we offer.

In the instance of service learning program, it seems incompatible that Bennett's Model or the IDI would be an adequate resource to capture and measure the kinds of goals and objectives that these kinds of programs advance. What then is the programmatic model that is best suited for the development model and the IDI? What kinds of programs are not well served with this approach? If the intercultural model does not provide sufficient theoretical context, what theory does?

I've also wondered how one with a nihilistic worldview would fair on the IDI scale. Or perhaps someone who is apathetic and disengaged, and responds in a detached, "I don't care...live and let live", manner. Would these individuals in fact score as more developed on the IDI scale then perhaps someone who has a strong religious conviction or one with a deep sense of social responsibility? Which would generally be more desirable to our university communities?

Matthew Thomas Johnson's article, "Towards the Development of Objective, Universal Criteria of Cultural Evaluation: The Challenges Posed by Anti-Foundationalism, Culturalism and Romanticism" speaks to the need to revisit objective measures for culture. Which for our purposes, I think we can extrapolate to include learning in a cultural context as well. The idea that culture can both be viewed and measured objectively is an intriguing one, which may ultimately inform the development of a different kind of cultural model within our field. The greater point is that perhaps we shouldn't be so quick to abandon or dismiss the objective and universalistic viewpoint. Or, perhaps ethnocentrism isn't as much as dirty word as we sometimes assume.

At the risk of being obvious, my second point of critique is that as the name of the model indicates, intercultural development is a developmental model; it is not explicitly a learning model. As Bennett states, “a developmental model need not by itself suggest particular teaching methods or learning area concepts”. He’s right of course, as he articulates that the model is not linked to a particular curriculum or pedagogy, nor attached to specific learning outcomes.

I suppose it remains an open question within education abroad and international education whether the primary goal and purpose of the programming is to promote development or learning. Surely, both outcomes are desirable and probably likely in well-constructed programs, but are we building programs that result in furthering student development; changing their worldview, increasing their maturity and helping them see new perspectives. Or, are we looking to intentionally introduce concepts and material that requires the student to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information differently—in essence learning. Obviously, the two things intersect, so I don’t want to put too fine a point on it. But depending on whether you see the primary function of education abroad activities as developmental or learning, it again informs the kind of programming, goal setting and assessment activities that one would likely engage in.

For The College of Global Studies, our emphasis is on learning, and we seek to put learning at the heart in all aspects of our programming. We are interested in exploring the idea that intentional programming and intentional, meaningful engagement enhances student learning, and not simply in a particular content area or about a particular locale. Our theory is based on the notion that there is something inherently unique in the pedagogical style of this kind of learning environment that changes the way students cognitively process information. That in fact, the experiential elements of the program present a more sophisticated model of learning. And again, the Intercultural Model and the IDI seem inadequate for these purposes. While the outcomes related to student maturity and intercultural development are relevant and interesting, they are not at the heart of what we are looking to create; that being learning.

Moving on to a related point, from a practical perspective, how does Bennett’s Model and the IDI help us perform our jobs. And I would perhaps offer that it does not and perhaps cannot. Our roles at our institutions are to varying degrees focused on building program, building and reviewing curricula, advising students and then developing the assessment processes that in essence inform whether we’ve performed these particular tasks well. So, if we accept the intercultural model as one of our programmatic goals, how are we then building programs and advising student in a way that’s aligned with the theoretical model? It seems that if we were to follow the model, we would be interested

in identifying the student's stage of intercultural development during the pre-departure stage and seek to match the student with programs that have been built with the intention of addressing their particular developmental stage. Shouldn't we be constructing programs that cater to particular stages of intercultural development with the intention of assisting the student in the development of another, "more advanced" worldview? Much like we do with language learning, shouldn't we be offering placement tests to the student, assigning a particular curriculum and then assessing the student's developmental stage at the conclusion of the program?

If you accept the basic premise of Bennett's Model which accepts that one of the core goals of education abroad is to foster intercultural competency, then in fact the programming, the advising, and the assessment of the programs should all be tied to the development model. Programs would have goal and objective statements indicating which stage they are designed to serve, advisors would speak to the curricular and co-curricular programming as intentionally producing development, and of course, the assessment results would hopefully indicate student progress; perhaps using the IDI in a pre- and post- format. In many ways, acceptance of this model makes many aspects of our work much easier. If you accept that the primary goal of education abroad is intercultural development, then you have your answer. You have your theory and you have your measurement instrument.

The challenge that we face at Arcadia, and perhaps many of you encounter is well, is that as sound and strong as the intercultural model may be, it may in fact be inadequate or incomplete for our purposes. As I mentioned earlier, we at Arcadia are primarily focused on student learning, and we seek measures and models that inform the development of programming and curricula in order to enhance the student learning. The intercultural model does not assist in this work, and therefore we are brought back to re-examining our theories and measures. Are we in fact devising programs and curricula that meet our learning goals? Or, should we re-write our goals to more centrally address development? I suppose each institution will address that differently.

My final point is one that so many of you in the room can speak to better than I, and that has to do with the nature of culture. What exactly is culture anyway? How you perceive culture, cultural identity and cultural formation informs a lot about your particular approach to learning and development. Bennett and many other cultural scholars argue that the pinnacle of cultural development is to rise above any one particular cultural identity and perceive oneself as multicultural; as he articulates in the integration stage. In the constructivist sense, one chooses in the final stage to adopt an identity that transcends particular cultural situations. It's quite a post-modernist view of identify and culture.

Some scholars, such as Sparrow and others, challenge aspects of this view, arguing that there is an assumption in this theory that individuals are able to choose their particular cultural identity. That is cultural lens is one that can be rehearsed and adopted. Sparrow and others argue that one is a product of their experiences, and therefore the cultural lens that you manifest is not one that you necessarily have chosen. There are other scholars who approach the topic of culture a bit differently, arguing that there is no such thing as culture. That in fact, culture is a concept that that is fluid, ever-changing and constantly in a state of tension. Therefore, to speak of culture in the sense of a nation, a group or even a person is to define it in a way that's fleeting, false and immeasurable. Adopting this particular view of culture largely nullifies Bennett's model, since the progressive continual and measureable nature of cultural development is incompatible with an abstract cultural definition.

Finally, there is also an inherent assumption that education abroad at its heart is a form of cultural studies. If you consider the way the education abroad is framed both in terms of its academic and programmatic promotion, you will discover that culture plays a central role. We present it as learning about, experiencing and appreciating culture. The assumed relationship between education abroad and cultural study is one that needs to be examined and perhaps challenged. All forms of learning occur in a cultural environment—there is a culture surrounding laboratory work, a culture related to a business internship, a culture involved in a first year lecture. All learning occurs within a cultural landscape. And yet, in those particular examples, the emphasis is not placed on understanding the cultural context, but rather on the content. Granted, education abroad programming occurs in interesting and dynamic cultural settings, and certainly the student needs to be prepared on how to successfully interact in the new environment. But, I challenge the notion that culture needs to necessarily be at the heart of all education programming. The fact that we as professionals have placed it in a central role speaks to our own bias and presumed adoption of the intercultural model.

So, I conclude my remarks here with the question of whether the field of education abroad is best served by a whole-scale adoption of Bennett's Model as the theoretical grounding of our work. I do not by any means suggest a rejection of the intercultural model. But I do believe that we should look beyond the intercultural model and begin to develop additional theories, measures and models that focus more directly on institutional mission, learning goals and inform the types of programming and curricular that we so earnestly build. Thank you.