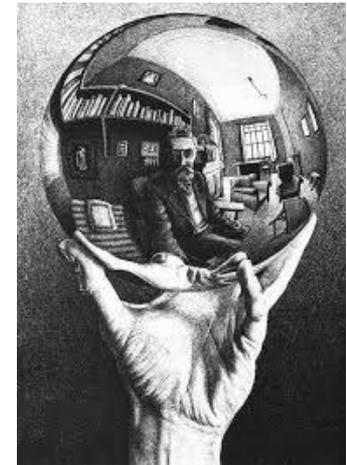


From the inside out: Transformative learning and teaching



Michael Vande Berg, Ph.D.

3 February, 2016

Warming ourselves up & introducing ourselves

In small groups, please discuss and then share with the group what “transformative learning away from home” means to you.

A century of intercultural learning abroad

- What is the *nature* of learning across cultures?
- What is the *process* by which humans learn across cultures?
- How can humans be *taught or trained* to do this?

*Vande Berg, M. & Paige, R. M. (2009). Applying theory and research: The evolution of intercultural competence in U.S. study abroad. In Deardorff, D. (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 419-437). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Three dominant narratives—our community’s “stories”—about learning across cultures

1. Humans become more *cultured* by learning superior ideas and emulating cultivated behavior.
2. Humans become more *culturally aware* through talking about and being immersed in cultural differences.
3. Humans *develop interculturally* through focusing on their own and others’ ways of making meaning, and by learning to respond effectively and appropriately to culturally different others.

Vande Berg, M., Paige, R. M., & Lou, K. H. (Eds.) (2012). *Student learning abroad: what our students are learning, what they’re not, and what we can do about it*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Story 1: Positivism

“Learning from the outside in”

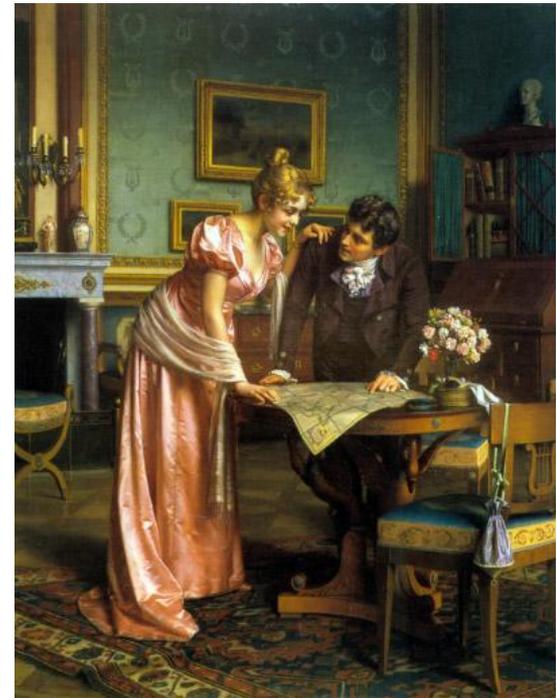


“... a real external world whose properties are definite and independent of the observer who perceives them. . . . things are what they seem, as perceived through our senses.”

(S. Hawking & L. Mladinow, 2012)

Story 1: Students encounter sophisticated, “civilized” people & places

- With the Grand Tour—this story’s signature program—learning occurs, in privileged places, through exposure to the new & different, and through modeling and imitation



Story 1 theories: The world is organized hierarchically



Students learn as we teach and expose them to an unfamiliar and privileged culture “out there”

- Students learn through exposure to the new and different in privileged places.



- Students learn when educators describe, talk about, culture-specific differences.



Story 1: Theories

We come to know through the scientific method

SCIENTIFIC METHOD

PURPOSE

State the problem.

RESEARCH

Find out about the topic.

HYPOTHESIS

Predict the outcome to the problem.

EXPERIMENT

Develop a procedure to test the hypothesis.

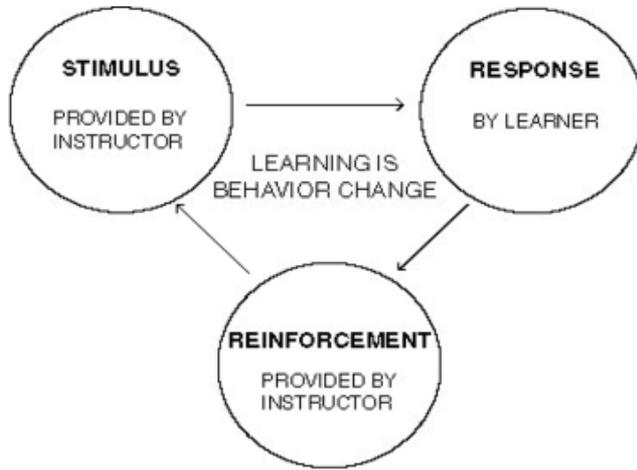
ANALYSIS

Record the results of the experiment.

CONCLUSION

Compare the hypothesis to the experiment's conclusion.

Story 1: Theories: Behaviorism



Story 1: The process of learning abroad, described

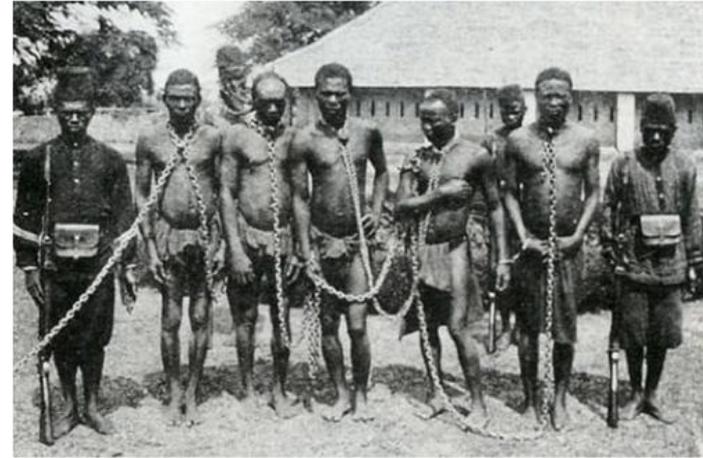
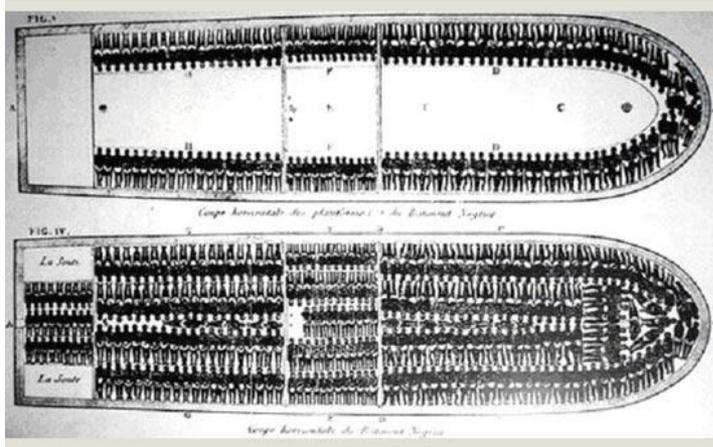
- 1. Acquire knowledge about a privileged place and people**
- 2. Directly experience the place**
- 3. Emulate the behavior of cultivated people there**
- 4. Return home more “cultured”—more knowledgeable and worldly**

Story 1 theory: Social Darwinism



“This **survival of the fittest**, which I have sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called ‘natural selection,’ or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life.”
(Herbert Spencer, 1864)

Doubts about story 1: Accelerating erosion of faith in hierarchy



Story 2: Relativism

“Learning from the outside in” —with a difference



Story 2 theory: Egalitarianism

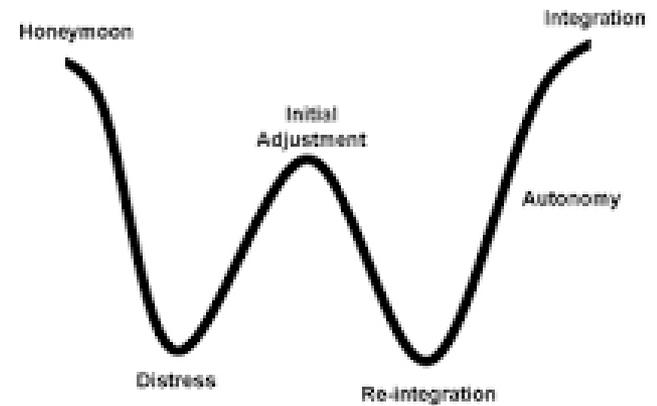
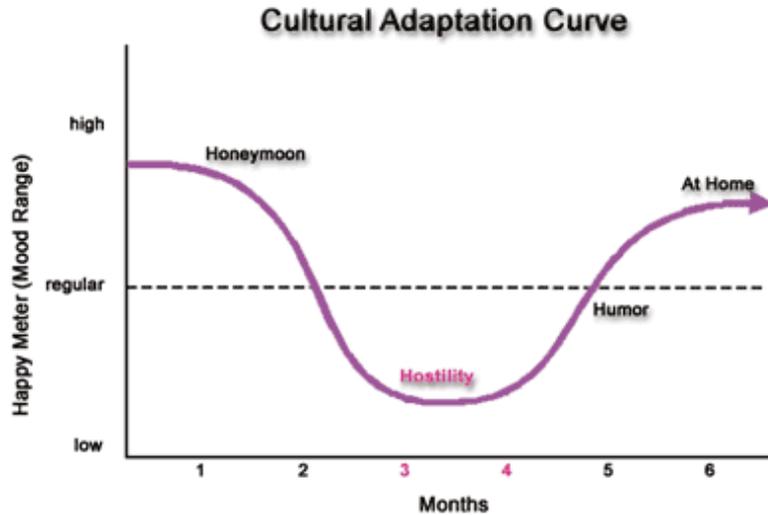


“The things we have in common far outnumber and outweigh those that divide us.” Walt Disney

Story 2 Theory: “Immersion”



Story 2 Theory: Culture Shock*



*U-curve: Oberg, 1955; W-curve: Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963

Story 2: Theory

“Contrast-culture” training approach

“Differences that make a difference”:

- Non-verbal (eye contact, personal space, touching)**
- Communication styles (direct/indirect)**
- Learning styles (concrete experience/abstract conceptual)**
- Cognitive styles (linear logic/spiraling logic)**
- Value contrasts (individualism/collectivism)**

Story 2: The process of learning abroad, described

- 1. Learn about and become aware of cultural differences
(contrast-culture learning)**
- 2. Immerse myself in the experience abroad—or educators
immerse me**
- 3. Return home more culturally aware, sensitive**

Question: How do educators act out story 2?

Question: To what extent does becoming more culturally aware allow us to cross cultural boundaries?

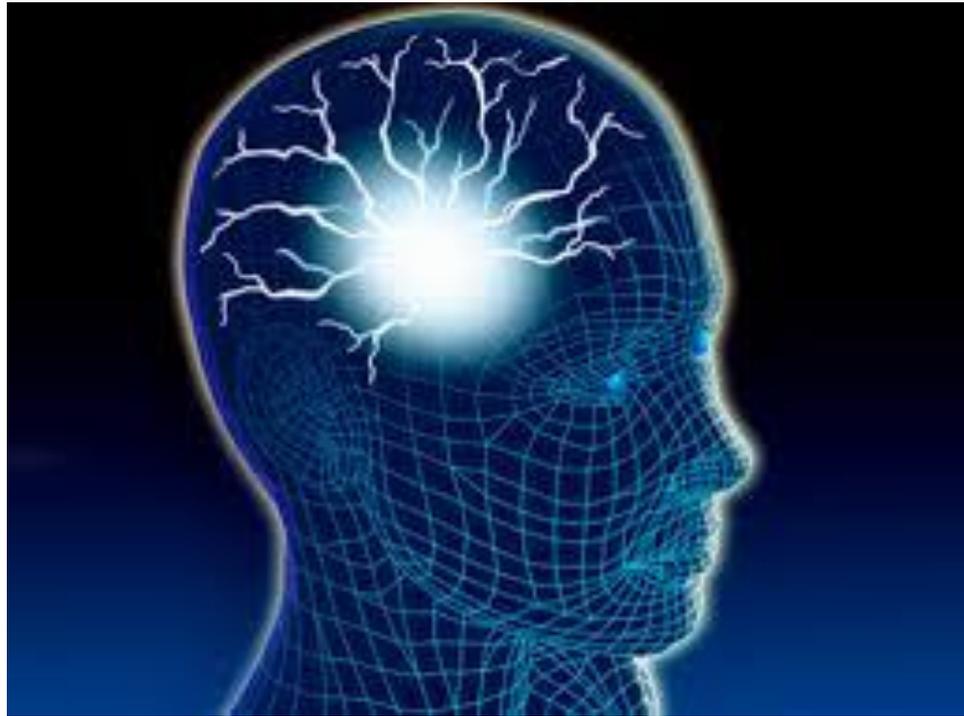
Georgetown Study findings*: Do traditional “immersion” practices foster intercultural learning?

- Take steps to improve language proficiency: Little impact
- Maximize contact with host nationals: No impact
- Enrollment in host school classes: No impact
- Carry out internships, service learning: No impact
- Be housed in home stays: No impact
- Send away for longer periods: **Yes—some impact**
- Pre departure cultural orientation: **Yes—some impact**
- Home stays: **Yes—when students engaged with host family**
- Cultural mentoring at sites abroad: **Yes—by far the highest impact practice in the study**

*Vande Berg, M.; Connor-Linton, J.; & Paige, R. M. The Georgetown Consortium Study: Intervening in student learning abroad. *Frontiers: the Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. Vol. XVIII, pp. 1-75.

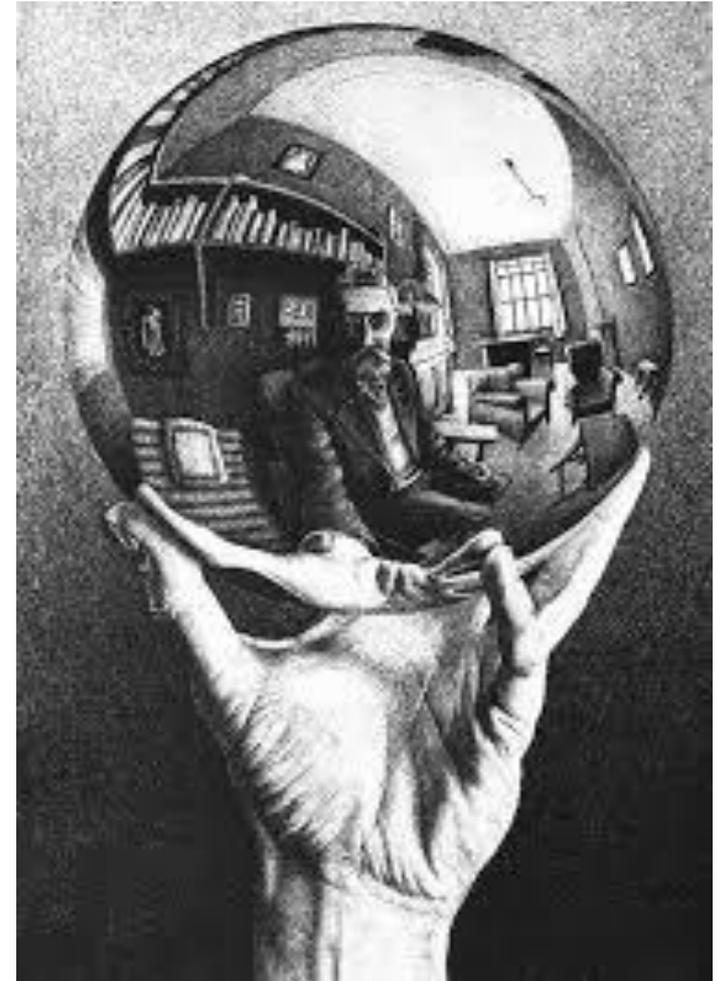
Story 3: Constructivism

Learning “from the inside out”: Acting on our awareness of our own and others’ sense-making



Story 3: Reflection and self awareness

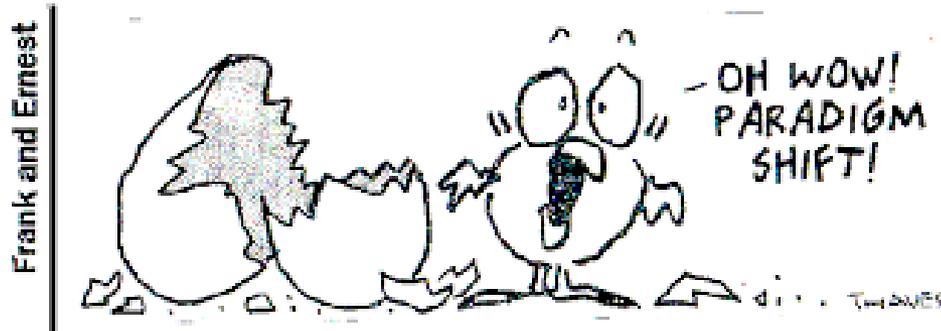
- “There is no way to remove the observer—us—from our perception of the world. . . . Our perception is not direct, but rather is shaped by a kind of lens, the interpretive structure of our human brains. . . . Our brains interpret the input from our sensory organs by making a model of the world.”(Hawking & Mladinov, *The grand design*, 2012)



- “People don’t learn through experience; we learn through *reflecting* on experience.” (Sivasailam Thiagarajan—“Thiagi”)

Story 3 Theory: “Paradigms”*

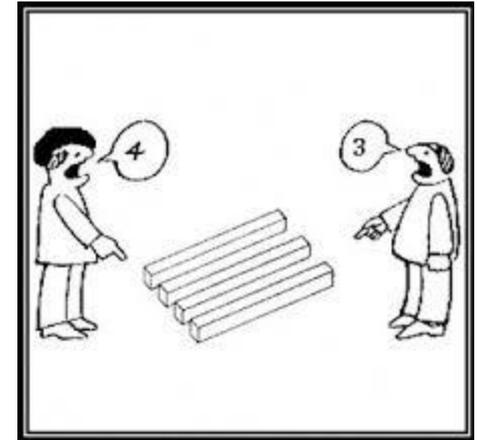
A paradigm shift “is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalizations, as well as many of its methods and applications. . . . When the transition is complete, the profession will have changed its view of the field, its methods, and its goals.”



* Thomas Kuhn

Story 3: Theory

Social construction of reality*



* Berger & Luckmann: We and other members of our cultural groups construct the world we perceive and live in.

Edward T. Hall (1994) & the foundational aim of crossing cultures: “Bridging the cultural gap”

- “[Not understanding the Navajo] drove me to look at my own culture, my own assumptions, those beliefs that are out of awareness.”
- “It is the out-of-awareness, tacit differences among us, which lie at the heart of the tremendous misunderstandings that plague our species.”
- “When cultures meet and start interacting with each other, even well-chosen words may not be enough to bridge the cultural gap.”



Narrative 3 theory to practice:

A four-phase transformative training program

- **Increasing awareness of our own characteristic ways of making meaning in familiar and unfamiliar cultural contexts;**
- **Increasing awareness of others' ways of making meaning in familiar and unfamiliar cultural contexts;**
- **Managing our emotions and thoughts in the face of ambiguity, change, and challenging circumstances & people; and**
- **Bridging cultural gaps between ourselves and others: Shifting frames, attuning our emotions and adapting our behavior in effective and appropriate ways.**

Phase I: Key concepts

- **Constructivism and meaning making**
- **Perception**
- **Holistic experience**
- **Objective and subjective culture**
- **Development and transformation**
- **Challenge and support**
- **Identity: Assumptions, values and behavior**
- **Mindfulness**

Phase I: Practices

- **Attend to the autobiographical “I”**
- **Attend to the mindful “Me”**
- **Recall my personal vision statement**
- **Recall my characteristic ways of responding to ambiguity and uncertainty**
- **Recall my assumptions about intercultural learning and teaching**
- **Attend to ways that my values and behavior play out differently in different contexts**

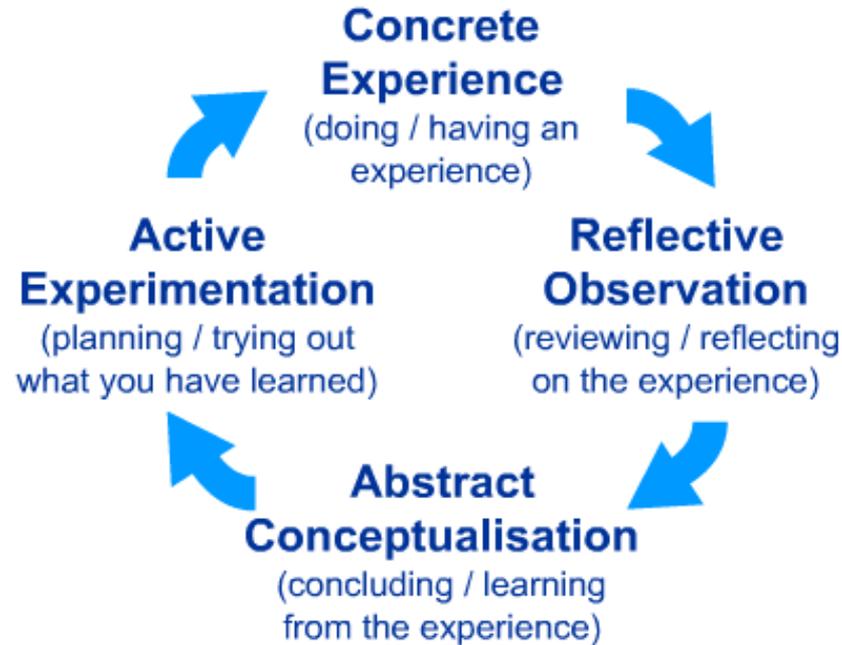
Phase II: Key concepts

- **Suspension of judgment**
- **Value formation**
- **Mindful perception**
- **Empathy**
- **Values and behavior**

Phase II: Practices

- **Perceive non-judgmentally**
- **Cultivate curiosity**
- **Generate multiple interpretations**
- **Listen & observe mindfully**
- **Inquire mindfully**
- **Attend to values & limitations of all perspectives**
- **Cultivate cognitive empathy**

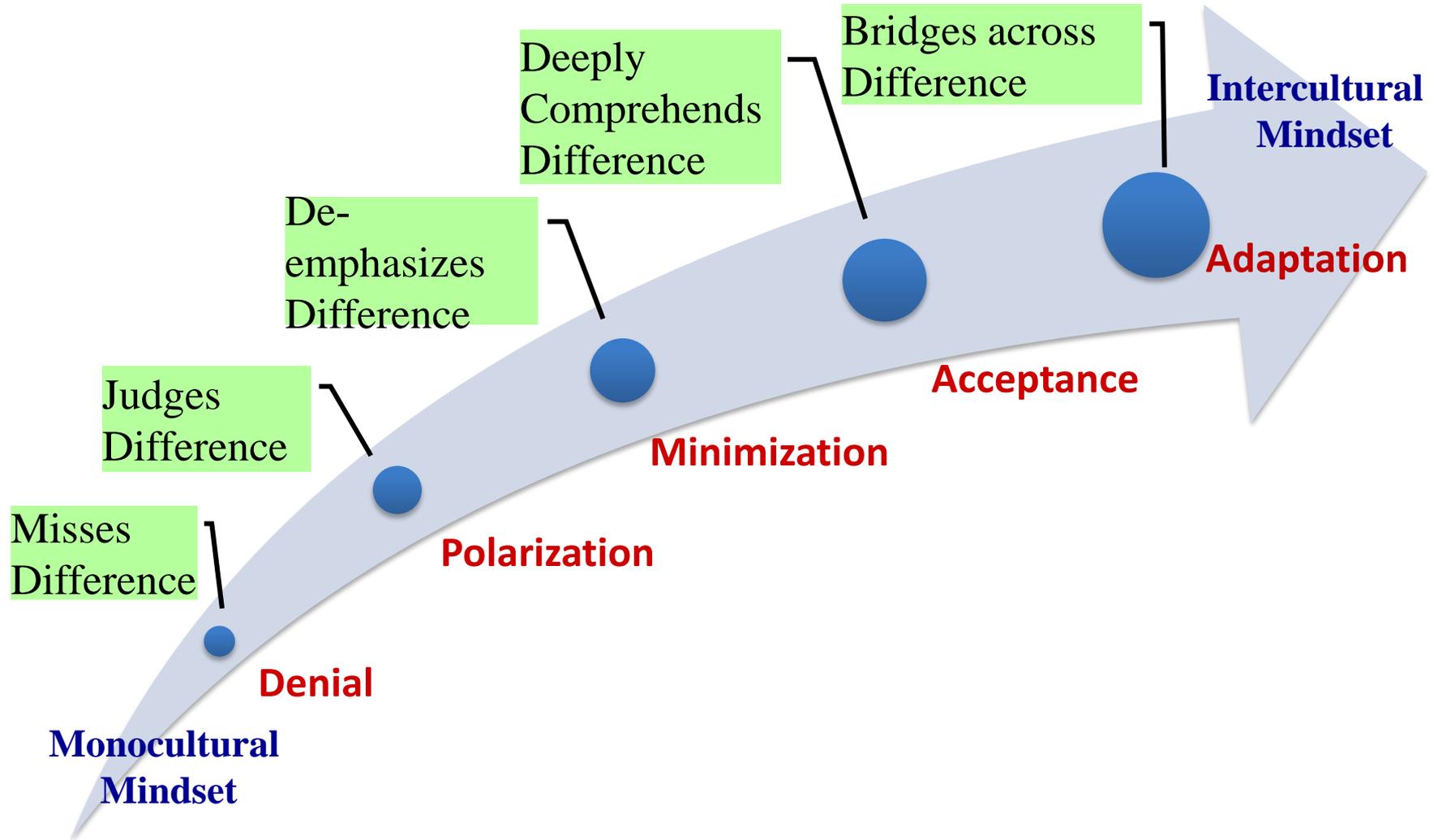
Learning is “the process through which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” (Kolb, 1984)



**“All knowing depends on the structure of the knower.”
(Maturana & Varela, 1992)**

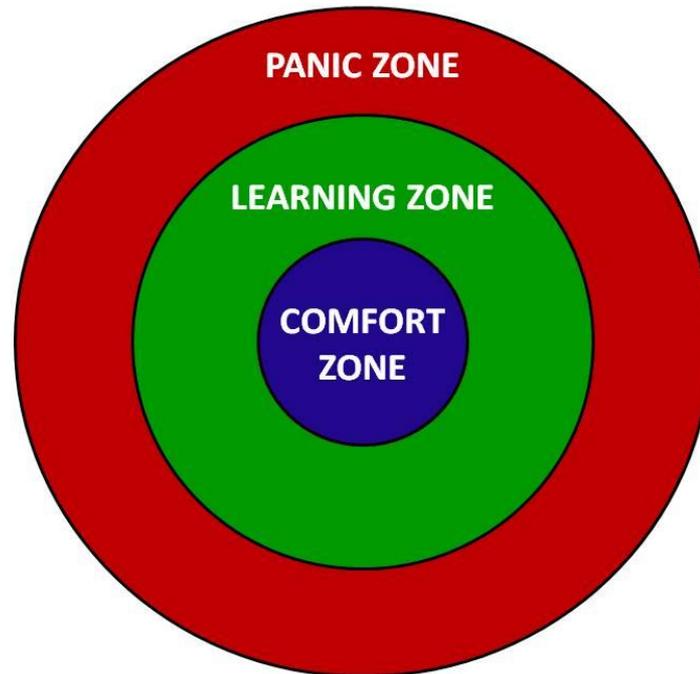
Also see Zull, J. (2002). *The art of changing the brain*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Another model describing “the structure of the knower”: The Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC)



Modified from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), M. Bennett, 1986

Another model offering insights into “the structure of the knower”: Challenge & support*



*Challenge/Support Hypothesis: Sanford, N. (1966). *Self and society: Social change and individual development*. New York: Atherton Press.

Introducing challenge and support:

Warm up questions*

- **What kind of environment do I need in this course/workshop/orientation so I'm able to get out of my comfort zone, yet not go into the panic zone?**
 - How can the teacher/trainer/facilitator contribute to getting me into the learning zone?
 - How can the other participants contribute to getting me into the learning zone?
 - What can I do to get myself into the learning zone?
- **What can I do, based on what I've just heard my peers say, to help others get in and stay in their learning zone in this workshop, much of the time?**

Intercultural teaching and learning resources

- WISE Conference (February)
- Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (SIIC, July)
- Winter Institute for Intercultural Communication (WIIC, March)

- Personal Leadership
- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

- Berardo, K. & Deardorff, D. *Building cultural competence: Innovative activities and models*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Cassidy, P. & Stringer, D. (2014). *52 activities for successful international relocation*. Boston: Intercultural Press.
- Storti, C. (1999). *Figuring foreigners out: A practical guide*. Boston: Intercultural Press.
- Stringer, D. M. & Cassidy, P. A. (Eds.) (2009). *52 Activities for improving cross-cultural communication*. Boston: Intercultural Press.
- Stringer, D. M. & Cassidy, P. A. (Eds.) (2003). *52 Activities for exploring values differences*. Boston: Intercultural Press.
- Thiagarajan, S. (“Thiagi”). (2004). *Simulation Games by Thiagi*. Bloomington, IN: Workshops by Thiagi.