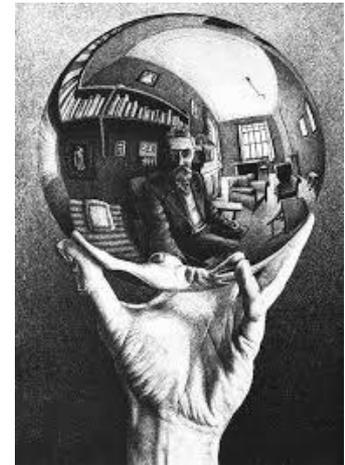


# From the inside out: Transformative learning and teaching



**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 interculturality* 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”

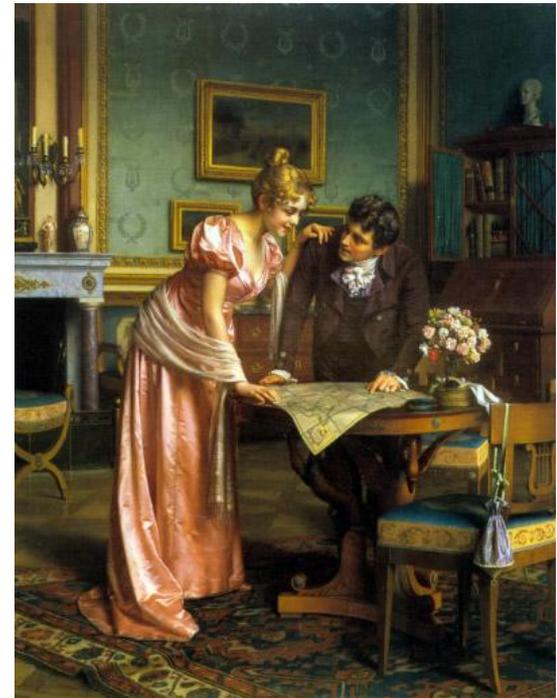


**“... a real external world whose properties are definite and independent of the observer who perceives them. . . . things are what they seem, as perceived through our senses.”**

**(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.

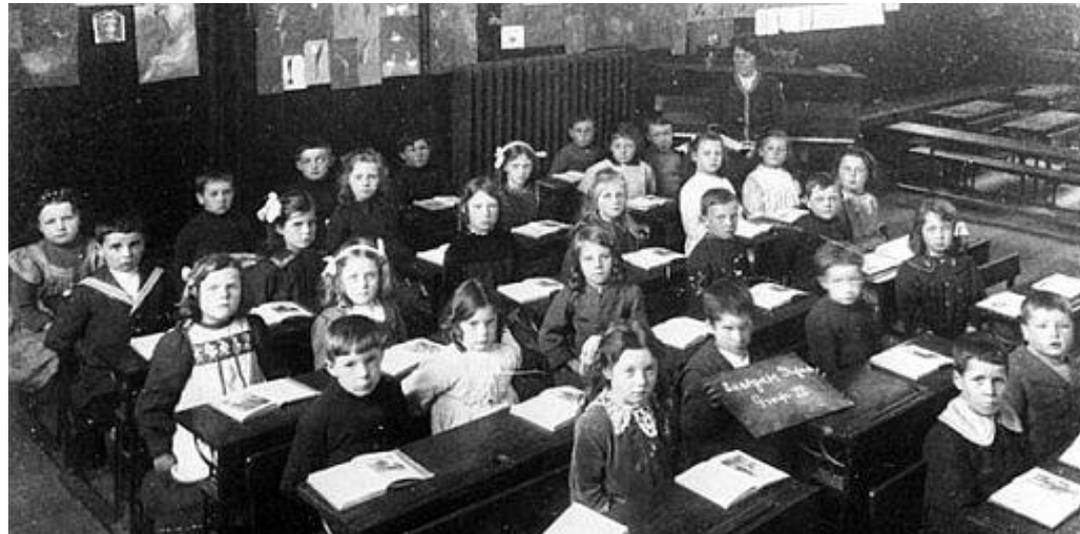
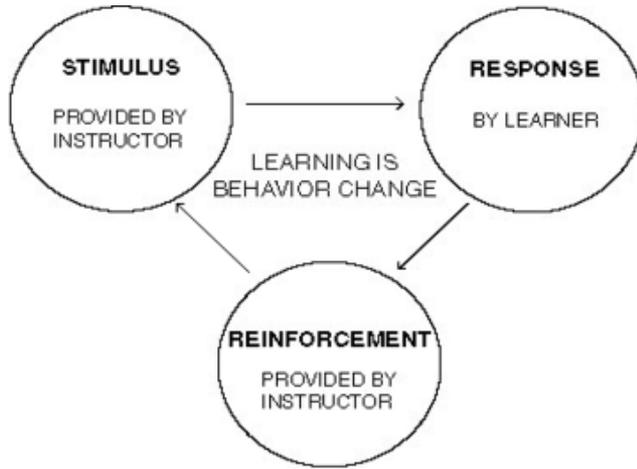
**ANALYSIS**

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**

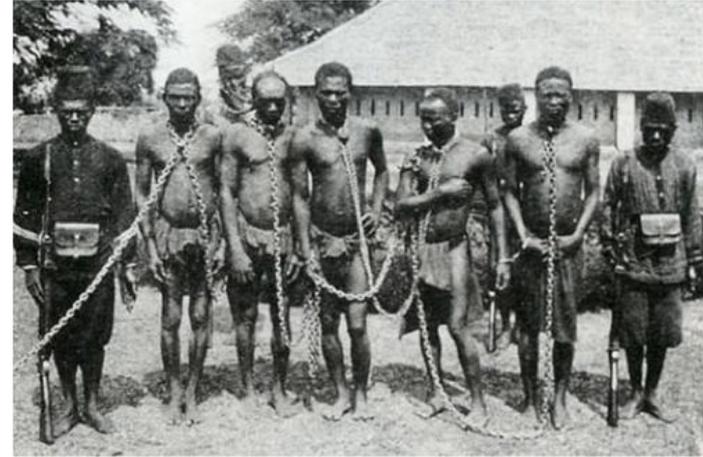
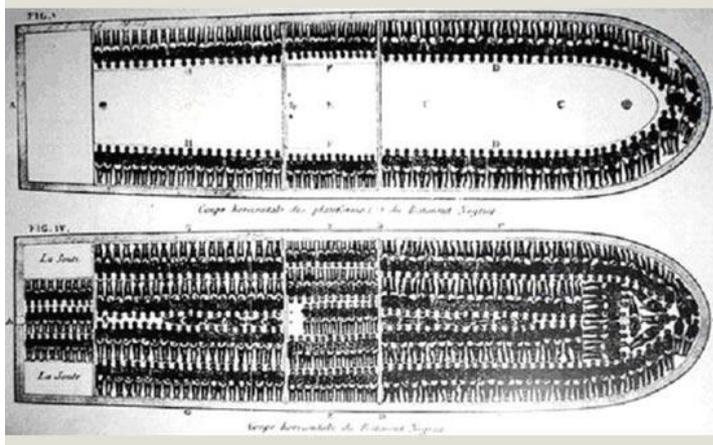
- 1. Acquire knowledge about a privileged place and people**
- 2. Directly experience the place**
- 3. Emulate the behavior of cultivated people there**
- 4. Return home more “cultured”—more knowledgeable and worldly**

# 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

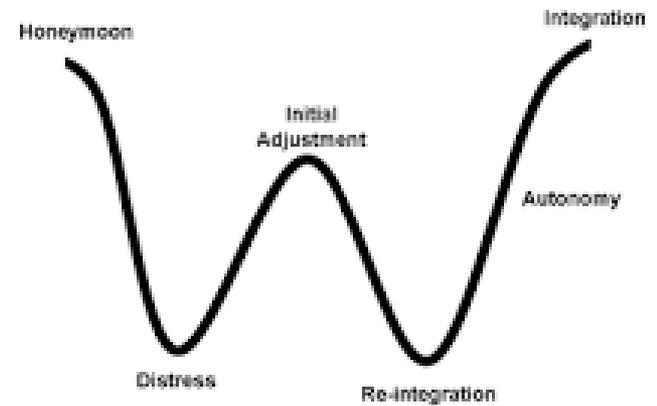
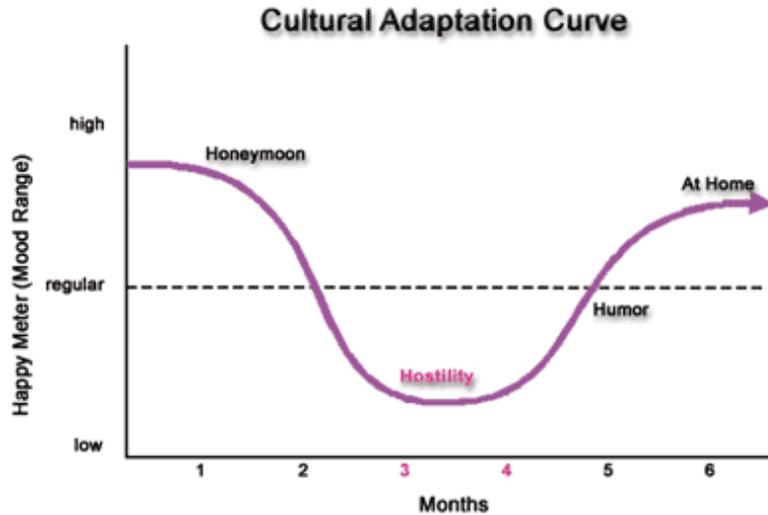


**“The things we have in common far outnumber and outweigh those that divide us.” Walt Disney**

# 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?

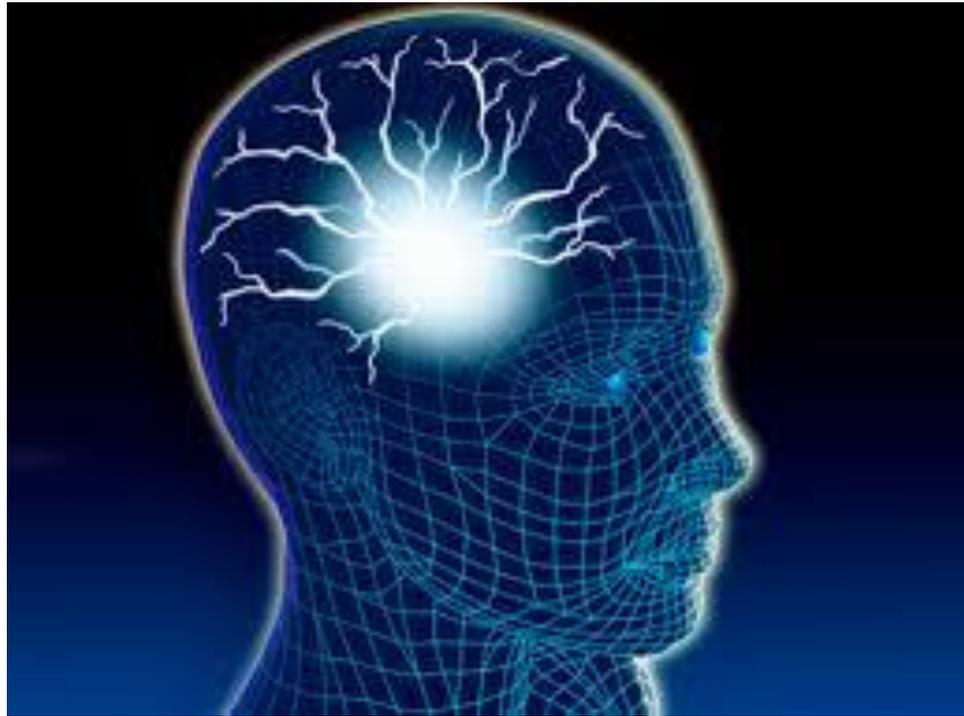
# Georgetown Study findings\*: Do traditional “immersion” practices foster intercultural learning?

- 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.

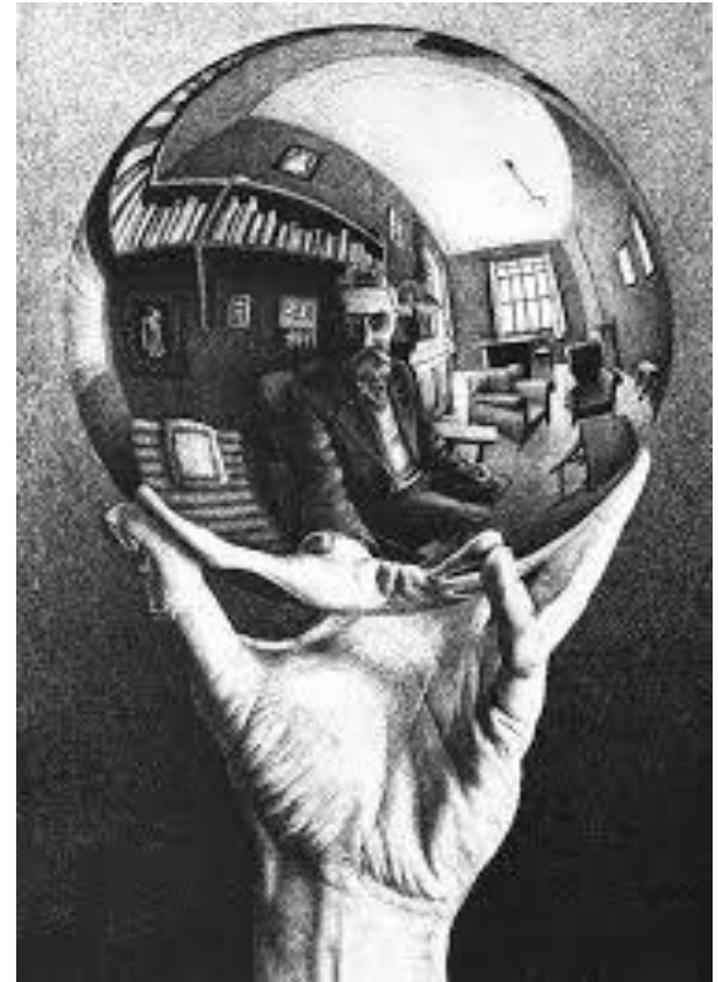
## **Story 3: Constructivism**

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



# Story 3: Reflection and self awareness

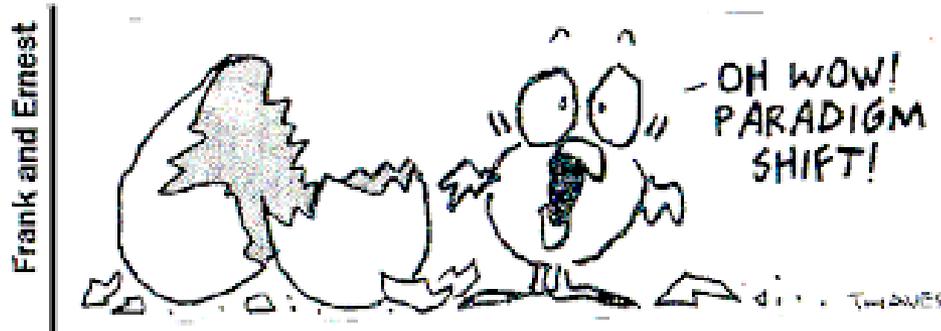
- “There is no way to remove the observer—us—from our perception of the world. . . . Our perception is not direct, but rather is shaped by a kind of lens, the interpretive structure of our human brains. . . . Our brains interpret the input from our sensory organs by making a model of the world.”(Hawking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



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

# Story 3 Theory: “Paradigms”\*

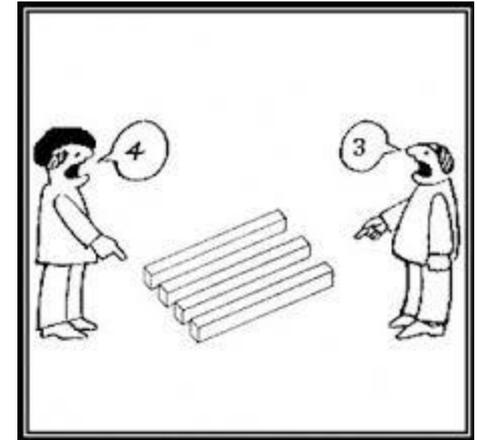
A paradigm shift “is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalizations, as well as many of its methods and applications. . . . When the transition is complete, the profession will have changed its view of the field, its methods,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

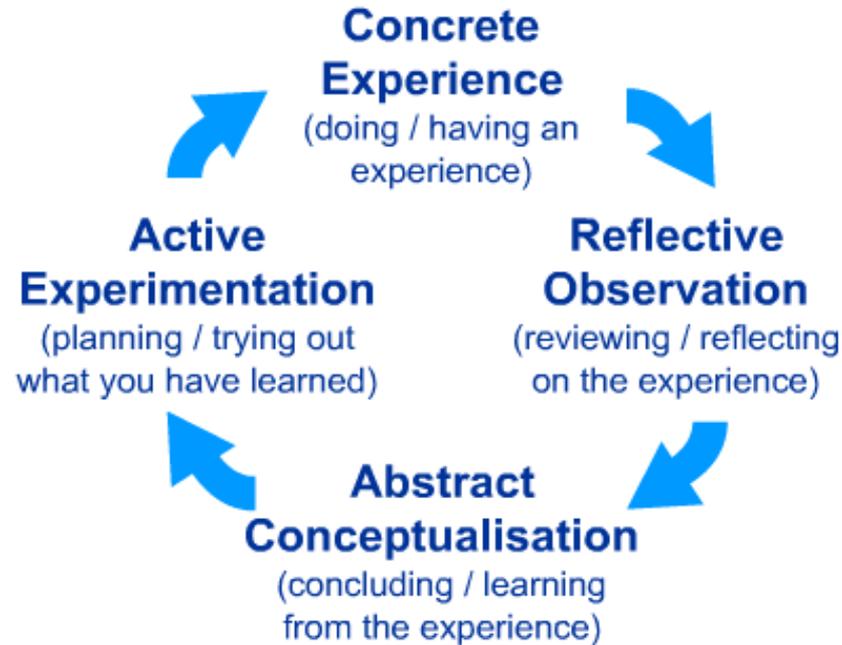
## **Phase II: Key concepts**

- **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**

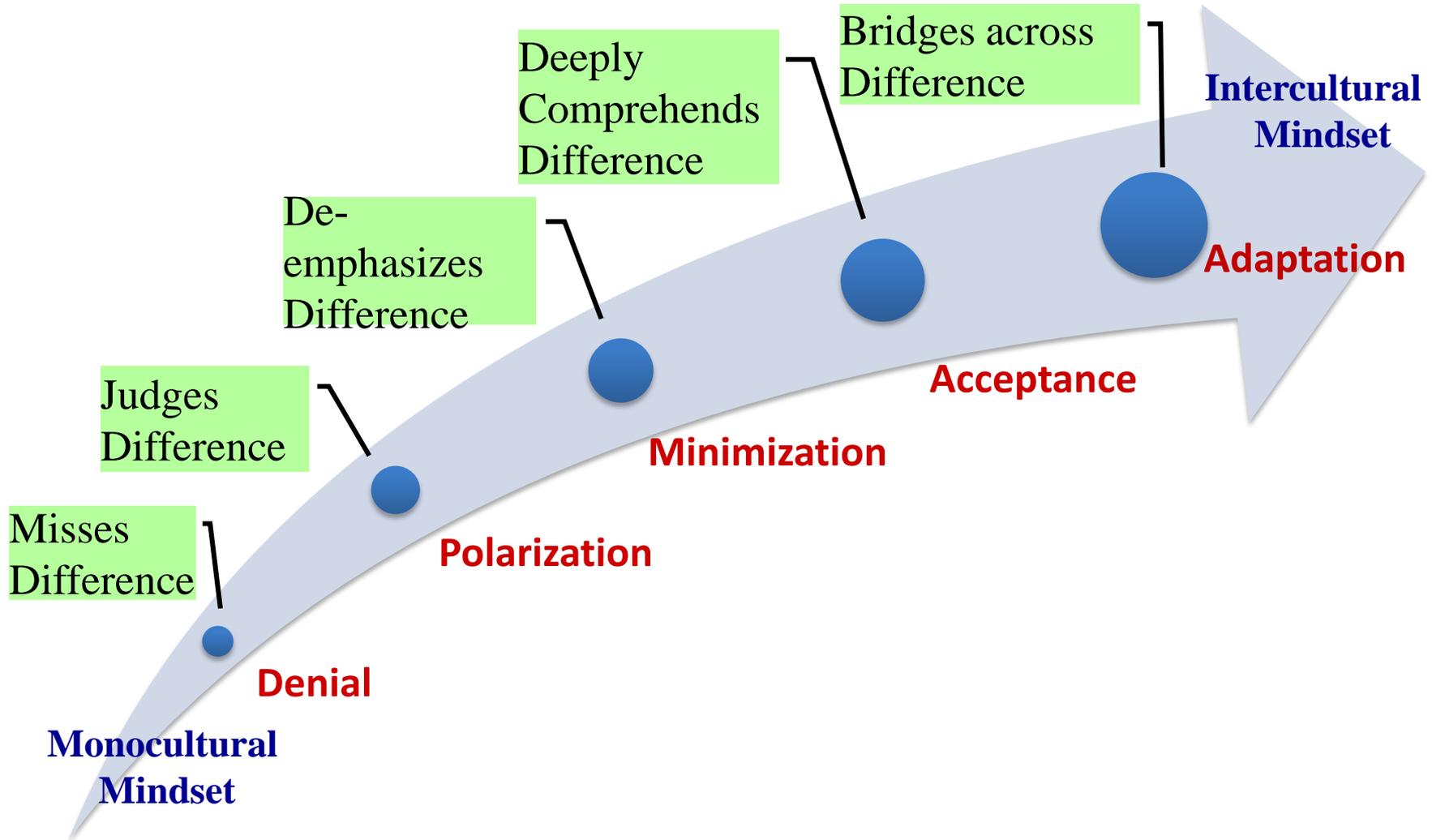
**Learning is “the process through which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” (Kolb, 1984)**



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

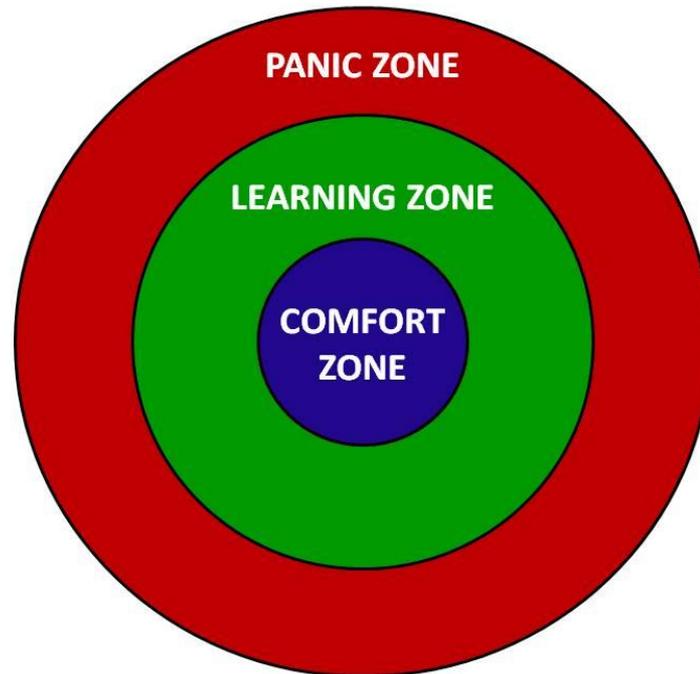
**Also see Zull, J. (2002). *The art of changing the brain*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.**

# 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.
- Cassiday, 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. & Cassiday, P. A. (Eds.) (2009). *52 Activities for improving cross-cultural communication*. Boston: Intercultural Press.
- Stringer, D. M. & Cassiday, 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.