

# Intensive Summer Fulbright-Hays GPA for Advanced Swahili and Intercultural Development<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article applies Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity to reflect on Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA) for Summer Intensive Advanced Swahili in Tanzania 2008-2016. Bennett and his associates have identified six stages of intercultural development: Denial of differences, Defense of one's culture, Minimization of differences, Acceptance of the new culture, Adaption of the new culture, and Integration into the culture. The first three stages, ethnocentric stages, characterize the reaction to a new culture as viewed from one's own culture. In the last three stages, a person views their culture as part of a complex of world cultures and worldviews. Experience with the Swahili GPA has shown that participants come to the program with different levels of preparedness and development. In Arusha, Tanzania, the participants of the program took classes, lived in dorms and with host families, visited cultural sites, wrote about their cultural experiences, and explored various subjects of their interest. This article presents anecdotes from GPA that demonstrate that we find our participants in all six stages. We propose a variety of activities and approaches that can facilitate the learners' development to integrate into Swahili culture. The activities involve developing awareness among the participants and assisting them in reflecting on their culture and the new culture.

**Keywords:** Swahili GPA, intercultural development, intercultural competence, study abroad.

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## 1. Introduction

With modern technology, people are increasingly connecting with other people of diverse cultural backgrounds, living together, working together, and interacting in business, academia, entertainment, culture, and in many other diverse ways. With this, we recognize the need to develop well-informed multicultural citizens who can work with people from multiple cultural backgrounds. Study Abroad programs are one of the means by which institutions and individuals seek to provide or acquire exposure that will provide a refined prism of a kaleidoscope of world cultures and skills to optimize intercultural opportunities. The overseas experience affects students' academic performance, personality, social adjustment, problem-solving skills, social engagement, and outlook on the world. Research has demonstrated that one's complexity of cultural competence has a significant impact on their ability to understand and engage in an intercultural relationship (Bennett, 1986; Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Competence in different cultures enables people to navigate relations and interact in ways that produce superior results. It is becoming abundantly clear that study abroad programs are not just about learning the subject matter which is learning the language. It is about developing intercultural competence. Increasingly, the focus is turning to various aspects of international education and the cultural experiences of the learners abroad (McLeod & Wainwright, 2009; Engle & Engle, 2003; Rexeisen et. al. 2008).

This article presents reflections on a particular study abroad program under the US Department of Education, the Swahili Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA), and provides anecdotes from the past eight years that speak of the intercultural development of the participants along Bennett's stages of intercultural development (Bennett, 1993). The Swahili GPA has had a long and successful history. However, some challenges need more reflection and draw lessons from studies on intercultural development. For example, GPA draws its participants from all over the nation and from diverse Swahili programs. Students join the program with different levels of cultural preparedness. Selection of participants has been based on applicants' scores in Swahili courses, African Studies courses, their general GPA, and the strength of their statement regarding the relevance of the program for their professional development. Come join the program unprepared in the first phase of Bennett's continuum of cultural sensitivity. More room needs to be made to probe the applicants' intercultural development. This should inform the orientation program, as well as the creation and modification of the

intercultural learning environment and mentoring. The paper also discusses many successes of the program, such as homestays. Families provide the cultural context in which participants experience life in East Africa albeit for only a short duration. Even this successful part of the program is not without challenges. Based on the anecdotes, the paper makes several recommendations for future programming.

The article is organized into 6 sections. Following this introduction, we present an overview of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity in section 2. In section 3, we provide a short narrative about the Swahili GPA followed by section 4 where examples and anecdotes that reveal participants in various stages of intercultural development are related. We discuss various proposals to help develop the participants' sensitivity in section 5 and present concluding remarks in section 6.

## **2. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)**

In this section, we define the central concepts in our study and provide an overview of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. This is the backdrop of our discussion of episodes in our engagement with students in study abroad.

The central concept that concerns us here is intercultural competence. Although it is widely used, the concept is not very well defined. It is identified with several concepts: intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural skills, global competence, multicultural competence, and cultural proficiency. A fairly good working definition is provided by Bennett (1993).

Intercultural competence can be defined as the capability to shift one's cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. .... This capability permits the successful navigation of the cultural differences, defined as those experiences, values, interpretations, judgments, and behaviors that differ between people and are learned and internalized from the groups one belongs to. (Bennett 1993:484)

Common in all the definitions that have been presented by various scholars is the need to be able to work with people from different cultures, reduce ethnocentrism, and build productive and positive relations in one's

own culture and internationally (Hammer M. R., Intercultural Competence Development, 2015). Study abroad programs are increasingly focusing on developing such competence. By examining the development among students, we may be able to design better programs and be of greater assistance in their efforts to adjust to the new cultures they encounter.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity provides one framework for examining students’ progress, designing curriculum, and evaluating cultural competence. The model was first developed by Bennett in a series of publications (Bennett 1993, 1986). It explains reactions and attitudes to experiences of differences in intercultural situations. The assumption is that more complex and sophisticated cultural experiences lead to greater intercultural competence. Intercultural development progresses in stages and steps. There are two phases of development, namely, the ethnocentric phase and the ethnorelative phase. The ethnocentric phase in which all new cultures are viewed from one’s own culture begins with the denial of differences, followed by the defense of one’s culture, and culminates in the minimization of differences in culture. In the Ethnorelative phase, a person views various cultures from multiple perspectives. It develops from acceptance of differences to adaptation and integration into the new culture. The model is presented below.

Development of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett & Bennett 2004:153)



Experience of Difference

Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
<b>Ethnocentric Stages</b>			<b>Ethnorelative Stages</b>		

The diagram represents a continuum of phases from left to right. Ethnocentric stages are characterized by a person encountering different cultures and viewing all differences from the prism of one’s own culture. This is a monocultural perspective that views one’s culture as central to the construction of reality. Ethnorelative stages, however, are characterized by a person viewing one’s own culture as one among many viable constructions of reality. Cultures are not viewed relative to one’s culture.

The cultural experiences that Bennett and associates studied occur in a multitude of situations and not just study abroad. They include work environments that involve people from different cultural backgrounds, the student body of multicultural and geographic origins, as well as international trade (see for example Earley & Peterson 2004; on manager at workplaces; Hernandez & Kose 2012; on diversity in schools; Kruse et. al. 2014 in health care services; and Hammer 2012 in study abroad). In describing the stages, we focus on examples that are more easily relatable to students' cultural encounters. The picture of the stages presented in this overview does not in any way imply they are the only kinds of reactions. The examples presented here are sampled from Bennett (1986).

The first stage is the *denial* of cultural differences in which a student new to the culture chooses not to engage with a new culture and prefers to stay in one's culture to protect her/his worldview. In this stage, a student may show no interest in experiencing other cultures. This lack of interest may be manifested in two other forms. One is to refuse to see or acknowledge the differences in culture. The other is to use wide categories of perceived differences. Here are examples of what such a student might say:

“All big cities are the same – lots of buildings, too many cars”  
“Do you ride camels to school?” “Do you have houses in your country?” (Bennett 1986:187)

Such statements show resistance to the new culture and unwillingness to explore and experience new realities. When differences are acknowledged, they are painted in very broad stripes such as American vs foreign resulting in the question that so irks and annoys foreign students, as the questions in the second line above clearly illustrate.

The second stage, defense, is reached when one acknowledges the differences in culture. However, his/her culture is central to worldview and is the measure against which all cultures are gauged. Cultures are evaluated as superior and inferior. One's culture is superior to all other cultures. Negative stereotypes occupy a prominent position in the description and evaluation of other cultures. Two examples of how this worldview finds expression are the following very common utterances.

“When you go to other cultures, it makes you realize how much better the US is.” (SUPERIORITY)

“I am embarrassed by my compatriots, so I spend all my time with the host country nationals.” (REVERSAL)

The first expresses the assumed superiority of one’s culture, while the second reverses the admiration to that of the new culture. The superiority is often focused on superficial differences such as different foods or different eating hours. With a focus on such superficial differences, one may reject one’s own culture as inferior to the new culture. This is considered a reversal of the defense stage.

Next, the student may trivialize cultural differences in an attempt to minimize the differences that they encounter. This has also been referred to as “enlightened ethnocentrism.” It suggests that an individual is familiar with differences, such as the differences encountered by students or businesspersons, for example, who have been abroad (Bennett 1993:190).

“The key to getting along in any culture is to just be yourself-authentic and honest!”

“If people are really honest, they’ll recognize that some values are universal.”

These statements suggest that it is not necessary to learn more and get engaged with the new culture. The emphasis is on similarities and claims of being ‘color-blind.’ When one says such things, one acknowledges the differences, but the differences do not matter if one sticks to their superior culture.

The fourth stage in this journey, acceptance of cultural differences, is in the *ethnorelative* phase. This stage is characterized by a broader recognition of the differences and increased curiosity about other cultures. An individual has come to a point where s/he understands that one’s culture is only one of many complex cultures of the world. Examples of expressions that capture this development include:

“The more cultures you know about, the better comparisons you can make.”

“I know my homestay family and I have had very different life experiences, but we are learning to work together.”

While the first statement expresses the recognition and appreciation of the diversity of cultures, the latter reveals a willingness to learn from the hosts and to find harmony in the new culture.

The fifth stage is an adaptation to cultural differences. At this point, a student immerses in the new culture consciously makes use of the different aspects of culture that are different between the two (or more) cultures that she has experienced. A familiar expression of this include:

“I greet people from my culture and people from the host culture somewhat differently to account for cultural differences in the way respect is communicated.”

“I can maintain my values and also behave in culturally appropriate ways.”

The student is not only familiar with the different cultures but makes use of the worldviews and seeks to behave in a manner appropriate for each different cultural context.

The final stage in the ethnorelative stages is sometimes combined with the stage of adaptation (Hammer 2011). At this stage, an individual has internalized bicultural or multicultural frames of reference. They embrace relativism and evaluate cultural phenomena using multiple frames. Such sentiments are expressed in the following examples.

“Everywhere is home if you know enough about how things work there.”

“Whatever the situation, I can usually look at it from a variety of cultural points of view.”

Such statements indicate the level of comfort the person has and that person’s readiness to different perspectives and get connected in different cultures. The person has created identities that enable her to become part of multiple cultures.

Our experiences with the Swahili GPA and other study abroad programs at MS-TCDC have revealed that participants come with a wide range of cultural sensitivity and development. They are found in all six stages, as the anecdotes presented in this article illustrate. Before we present the anecdotes, we provide an overview of the program.

### 3. The Swahili Group Projects Abroad

In this section, we present a brief history of the Swahili GPA thus providing the background and context for the discussion on the intercultural development of the participants. We also describe the main features of the program that are relevant to our discussion of intercultural development.

The Swahili GPA is offered as part of the Short-Term Projects and Advanced Overseas Intensive Language Training Projects funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the US Department of Education. It is part of the Fulbright-Hays program for international education. Grants for such projects are made to enable participants to study the language in its native country. Participants are required to study the language at the Advanced Level after they have completed at least two years of instruction in the language. The purpose is to maximize opportunities provided by institutions and environments in the countries where the language is spoken. Languages such as Swahili are not widely spoken in the US. This means students may not get adequate exposure and opportunity to use it outside classrooms. The program targets:

Graduate students, or juniors or seniors in higher education institutions who plan to apply their language skills and knowledge of countries vital to the interests of national security in fields outside of teaching, including government, the professions, or international development. (US Department of Education, 2012:)

This competitive program awards such grants to several institutions for various foreign languages. The first Swahili GPA took place in 1983 in Kenya under the directorship of Dr. Ann Biersteker then at Yale University. Since 1991, it has been taking place in Tanzania. The program operates under the oversight of the Association of African Studies Programs (AASP) and the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA). The US Department of Education awards a grant for GPA in cycles. The current cycle last four years. After AASP and ALTA agree on the institution and director, an application is entered into the competition for a GPA grant<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Past directors of Swahili GPA are Drs Ann Biersteker, Ivan Hoffman, Tom Hinnebusch, Eyamba Bokamba, Magdalena Hauner, Alwiya Omar and Lioba Moshi. We acknowledge other instructors involved in the Swahili GPA at MS-TCDC over the years. They include



In 2008 a grant was made to Michigan State University's African Studies Center and the College of Arts and Letters to run the program for the first cycle of 2008-2011. The second cycle award was made in 2012 for 2013-2016 to Michigan State University African Studies Center and Ohio University's African Studies Center. The grant was used to provide fellowships for students from all over the United States to study in Tanzania. The 2008-2011 cycle provided funding for 8 weeks for 12 to 16 participants. In the second cycle, from 2013 to 2016, the funding was for 10 to 14 participants for 7 weeks. For the period we are describing in this study, the program took place at the MS-Training Center for Development Cooperation in Arusha, Tanzania<sup>3</sup> (MS-TCDC). The objectives stated in the recruitment material are:

- to provide the participants with intensive advanced training in Standard Swahili in a Swahili-speaking environment;
- to develop conversational skills (i.e., listening, comprehension, and speaking) to an advanced level;
- to develop communicative competence to function in a Kiswahili-speaking community;
- to provide opportunities for the participants to experience East African culture.

The program consists of three phases, namely, (a) the pre-departure phase, (b) the overseas phase, and (c) the post-program phase. These are the preparation stages, in-country activities, and evaluation and reflections after the program.

The pre-departure phase included recruitment of participants, publicity, reviewing applications, and selecting participants, as well as the pre-departure orientation. The pre-departure orientation involves guidebooks, letters, emails, online material, and conference calls. A handbook was created as a guide to the program and an introduction to Tanzania. The handbook consisted of information about the program itinerary, registration at Michigan State University, preparations for travel, the host institution in Tanzania, consular services, health services, contacts, and security, as well as

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<sup>3</sup> MS is an abbreviation of Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke which translates as the (Danish) Association for International Cooperation. MS-TCDC was established by this NGO.

addresses concerns of the participants and their parents. In addition, it consisted of information about required readings, personal expenses, general knowledge about the host country, and cultural aspects of East Africa. The group then traveled to Arusha together for the program.

The overseas phase consisted of diverse activities. It started with a two-day on-site orientation. This covered familiarization with the facility, the neighborhood, and the city of Arusha. It also included an overview of the program discussions about expectations. Instruction commenced after the orientation. For six weeks, participants attended regular instruction in the morning for 4 hours. Participants had opportunities to practice in their small groups, share their daily experiences, address grammatical issues with instructors and make presentations. Afternoon sessions were mostly for activities outside the classroom including short excursions, guest lectures, scheduled conversations with native speakers, mini-project data collection, watching videos and plays, debates, as well as one-on-one tutorials. These activities were designed to take maximum advantage of the native environment of the language and to challenge the participants to interact and use their language skills in the community. One week was spent traveling to Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar to explore the rich history of the East African coast, interact with the Swahili people of the coast, and observe the diversity of culture and Swahili dialects. Short excursions were organized to expose the participants to the lives of farmers, herders, small-scale entrepreneurs, community centers, and even international organizations such as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the East African Community headquarters. Students wrote journals documenting their encounters with the new culture and frequently presented various aspects of culture and life.

In the post-program phase, we encouraged students to file their evaluation of the program with the Department of Education as well as provide feedback to the directors of the program. Generally, participants have rated the program very highly in most of its components. However, a common complaint is inadequate preparation for the cultural encounter. This problem is at the core of the issues of intercultural development, as anecdotes in the next section reveal.

## **4. Anecdotes of Intercultural Development and Suggestions of Activities**

The anecdotes discussed here are selected from various sources including their weekly journals, conversations, discussions as well as events that were either reported by the participants, instructors, or host family members. We present them according to our evaluation of the stages that they reveal. For each stage, we suggest some activities that can assist the participants in their adjustment.

### **4.1 Denial**

Apart from classroom activities, the program is designed to help participants have intense contact with the new culture. This is done through homestays, excursions to different parts of the area, and engagement in some social activities. We encourage them to engage with the new culture through interaction with people and through actively seeking information about the lives of the people they encounter. Such encounters provide ample opportunities to speak, listen and interact.

There have been program participants who have exhibited behaviors that show they prefer isolation to engagement in the culture. At different times we have had students who upon arrival at MS-TCDC Arusha revoked their commitment to stay with families. They preferred staying in the dorms by themselves. They were ready to incur personal expenses for that. Such refusal to engage in the new culture is also revealed in other aspects of their programs. Such participants would often not want to take part in any hands-on activities that characterize the native speakers. For example, on visits to farmers, some students would not want to even try some activities when the hosts urge them to do so. They would be standing on the side, aloof, and not even interested in taking notes about the activities that they would need to report later.

Denial may also take a disturbing form when participants choose to isolate themselves. In our attempts to provide immersion for the participants, we also placed them with families, but they may have been unwilling to learn and adapt to the new culture. There have been participants who preferred to lock themselves in their rooms all the time rather than interact with the host family. MS-TCDC once had a complaint filed against it because a study abroad student had dumped an amount of trash in a nearby stream. The trash

included beer cans and bottles, boxes, paper, food containers, and leftovers, all of which the host family did not know were stored in the guest's room before he dumped them. Unfortunately, someone witnessed the dumping and took a video with a phone camera. The host family was puzzled by this. To provide privacy for their guest, they did not enter his room and did not bother him when he was in the room. The trash showed that for weeks he brought alcohol, cigarettes, food, snacks, and soda that he did not share with anybody. He had isolated himself to the point of even not wanting to have his trash handled in the same way as other trash in the house.

It has become very clear that a softer landing into the culture needs to be a major feature in the orientation program and preparation to live with families. In one case, a student irked by constant visits of relatives, friends, and neighbors decided to take action at one time. On hearing a knock at the door, she told the host family to wait while she went to the door. She went to the door and rudely turned away the guest and banged the door in the guest's face. We can say that there are personality issues involved. But the student's action reveals a level of insensitivity that is quite astonishing and calls for more careful preparation.

Participants at this stage require much attention and support to develop cultural awareness and cultural diversity. The instructors and program leaders have the task of facilitating the development of awareness by designing activities that help them to connect with the symbolic aspects of culture. For example, music, attire, holidays, and literature. Activities that help them investigate and acquire more information about the target culture will be more beneficial.

## **4.2 Defense**

There have been many students who recognize the differences between their American culture and the Tanzanian or African culture they encounter but always evaluate them against the American culture. Their reflections especially on their homestay experiences are very informative. One of the common complaints about their homes is the lack of privacy and the invasion of relatives and neighbors. One participant complained about too many neighbors and relatives coming to visit to greet the guests and staying for dinner without an invitation.

One area where participants need to adjust in any culture is food. It is a natural example of our propensity to evaluate a phenomenon from the prism of our background. Preference for most foods is an example of socialization and acquiring tastes. When one eats food for the first time, there are certain expectations and wishes about it. One may hope it may taste sweet or like something else they are familiar with. Often, a person may encounter something totally unexpected. One may decide to try to understand the attraction that other people have for that food or may decide it is a bad or unworthy taste. A participant was overheard discouraging new people in the cafeteria from even trying *ugali* a corn grits-like food, popular throughout East, Central, and Southern Africa. He insisted he had tried it but found it to be tasteless. This staple food is cooked without sugar or salt. Locals never eat *ugali* by itself for it may not have flavor or taste. It must be eaten with fish, meat, vegetable, or other foods which may be salted. A person new to the food is likely to miss this most crucial part of the meal and try to find the taste of *ugali* by itself.

There are many cultural practices that American students consider an affront to their sense of decency or rights. For example, passionate arguments often arise on the question of bride price, a common practice with many ethnic groups in East Africa. The American will quickly pass judgment by saying this is a form of selling and buying a girl. This practice is different from American culture. This practice, which most Africans consider a symbolic token of appreciation to the family of the bride, is condemned as insulting to basic humanity. Such condemnation is passed without investigating what is involved in the whole process of a proposal to a wedding and how the families of the man and the woman engage in lengthy negotiations as they ritually position themselves to become one family. Often, members of the extended family of the bride end up sharing the bride price with most members getting as little as 5,000 Tanzanian Shillings (approximately \$2.5) of this token.

It is important to encourage and grow the curiosity of the participants by drawing attention to similarities between their own culture and the new culture. Assignments that require the students to find out about the origins or the reasoning behind certain aspects of culture or customs may go a long way to lowering their defenses.

### 4.3 Minimization

Some aspects of the process of language learning may even reveal the learners' attitudes to the culture and how they choose to engage or disengage with speakers of the target culture. One example of this is when a group traveled to the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro to learn about the life of coffee farmers. We engaged one farmer to show them how coffee is picked and locally processed. The participants' tasks were to take part in the demonstrations, pick up coffee, peel it, roast it, grind it, and make coffee. They were all expected to report back in class about the processes and activities. The farmer spoke no English and described all activities in Swahili. A pair of participants reported the processes using words they translated from English directly to Swahili. For example, they reported on *maharagwe ya kahawa* as a literal translation of 'coffee beans' instead of *punje za kahawa*. They said *kahawa inapigwa* for 'the coffee is ground' instead of *kahawa inatwangwa* or *kahawa inasagwa*. These may appear to be minor errors. However, one must remember that the learner was supposed to listen to the farmer, ask questions about how things are done, and learn new vocabulary that is appropriate for the activities. Underlying such translations is an implicit assumption that all languages express things the same way, you only have to get the equivalent words in a new language. For that reason, they do not want to be observant of the life they are trying to learn about.

Another example of minimization can be discerned in their choice of readings. Literature is an important part of a people's culture. For each program, participants are instructed to select a novel, novella, or play that is written in Swahili which they eventually present to the rest of the class and write a report about. Every now and then we find students preferring to read translations of English literature or abridged versions of English literature. One recent example is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in Swahili. That is all well and good if the idea is only to get the participants to present the plot using the appropriate grammar and vocabulary. However, such choices fail to recognize that there are different stories and narratives in every culture. It expresses a worldview of a particular community. Narratives and literature reflect a people's experience which has some uniqueness. It is also likely the case that they had read the English version and preferred an easier option that would not challenge them too much. In the same group that had a participant present a translation, other participants specifically sought Swahili classics like Shaaban Robert's *Adili na Nduguze* or even contemporary popular literary works such as Emmanuel Mbogo's *Watoto wa Maman'tilie*.

Since this is the stage where participants prefer to see superficial similarities and ignore the differences, activities that highlight the differences in a non-judgmental or confrontational manner may be very useful. For example, the group may study climate, and agricultural activities and link them to food cultures that distinguish American and African foods. Why, for example, do Tanzanians or East Africans in different locales have different staple foods? From areas of rice as a staple food, to bananas and plantains as the staple food, to corn staple food, will be linked to the environment and the diversity of climates.

#### 4.4 Acceptance

Curiosity is a major feature in this stage, as attempts to fit into the new culture in a sensitive way. Happily, most of the participants in GPA arrive in Tanzania with such curiosity and ask for directions on how to do things in culturally appropriate ways. One of the questions that often comes up is “how do I decline more food without offending the host?” Such a question reveals an understanding that one cannot take things for granted and do as they do in America. It is a potentially sensitive situation.

We also notice some mistakes that may be a result of misreading the new culture. At one point our group was invited to a party of the Swahili Society of the neighboring Tumaini University. Wishing to present themselves as fully immersed in the culture, a group of female participants in our study abroad group clad themselves in *kehangas*. They looked stunningly impressive. But they were the only women at the party that dressed that way. It became very clear to us that although we had talked about clothing and how to wear *kehangas* and *vitenge*, we had not taken the trouble to assist the participants to recognize how to use the clothes on appropriate occasions. However, such mistakes are a clear indication of the efforts the participants were making to immerse themselves in the new culture.

Not only are the participants curious about the cultural phenomena that they observe around them, but they also seek to know about other things that they may have heard and suspect there are going to be some differences. Their curiosity and desire to immerse themselves also manifested in their desire to know about customs and significant social events that take place. These are good occasions to provide a broader encounter with the new culture. A deeper analysis of the contrasts in culture may help in a better understanding. Often, participants initiate the kind of activities that will

expose them more to the culture. For example, one of the expectations that are often expressed when participants go to live with families is that they will get to learn and discuss about family life, chores, responsibilities, and various aspects of cultural practices. This is a door to introducing activities and assignments that lead to more investigation and a better understanding of culture.

#### **4.5 Adaptation and Integration**

We combine the last two stages of DMIS in this subsection as they encompass our goal for the learners. During these stages, students exhibit greater effort and ability to shift their frame of reference in ways that are appropriate in the cultural context. We can still think of integration stage as reminiscent of how a multilingual is able to shift from one language to another depending on the interlocutors and the culture. Such a person uses categories, expressions, and frames as appropriate with ease. In language, there are examples of this as models for integration. A fluent speaker of Swahili can easily shift from telling time in English where the 24 hours of the day begin at midnight and in Swahili where the day begins at daybreak. We do not believe that our participants can always easily shift in this way at the end of their short-term program. But we can see the desire to reach that stage with many of our participants.

Earlier on, we described a group of female participants in our GPA who dressed in African attire, but it was not appropriate for the occasion. The same group of girls that was enthusiastic about wearing African prints learned about attire, bought some more, and had some made for them by one of the host mothers. They asked her about how and when to wear them. And soon the colorful girls would go to occasions with culturally appropriate clothes and style.

Over time, we observe debates and discussions about various facets of the local customs and behavior and the adjustment or adaptation that the participants are engaged in. In several cases, we observed that some participants were not happy about the amount of control parents have over their children of the same age as our participants. They found life too constricted and without much freedom for themselves. The participants complained about mothers requiring to know about every step they made when they went out. Over time their resistance decreased as they discovered the strength of the host parents and how their support eased things during



their stay. They discovered that the parents in their old ways were there to protect them and that being new to the environment and being young, they were not familiar with all the environments, situations, and people. They came to terms with this type of close supervision provided by parents in Africa while experiencing more freedom when they return to the US.

At this stage, it seems appropriate to expose the participants to more nuanced forms of cross-cultural communication and more sophisticated language use. An intensification of the encounter with Swahili seems appropriate here. Homestays provide such exposure and intensity for the participants to experience and to consciously try to adjust to different situations.

## **5. Recommendations**

Through many years of our engagement with American students at MS-TCDC Arusha, we have made several observations that the DMIC has helped to clarify. The first observation is that learning a language and willingness to learn a foreign language does not in itself mean intercultural learning or development. As noted earlier, we have had participants who on arrival in Arusha refused to engage with the local people claiming to have interest only in the language. Such behavior often leaves the instructors confused because it is not clear what is the point of traveling all the way to study in Tanzania. One of the ideas behind language study abroad programs is to provide intensive contact with the culture and language. Instructors and program leaders need to be more aware that such contact does not necessarily lead to rapid progress or rapid development in intercultural competence. One can live in the culture and denigrate the people and the culture or even resent the fact that they came to this culture. In all, intercultural development is a complex process with many facets of which instructors, students, program leaders, and hosts need to be made aware.

One major component of any study abroad should be pre-departure orientation and preparation. In the last eight years, the pre-departure orientation involved: (i) a guide which was over 35 pages long; (ii) webinars and video conferences; (iii) individual telephone conversations. These can hardly cover enough about the culture and life of people in East Africa. Efforts must be made to have extended orientation. Many study abroad programs have an orientation program that consists of several meetings and activities lasting for a semester. However, this is only possible if the

participants of the program are known well ahead of time and are in the same locale. The Swahili GPA gathered participants from all over the country, such an extended program is not possible. Perhaps one or two days of pre-departure orientation should be a necessary component of the program. The orientation program should aim at inculcating a sense of preparedness, interest, and self-awareness. It should provoke curiosity on the part of the participants as they embark on this adventure. Bhawuk & Brislin (1992) made an apt observation when they said: “To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures.” (Bhawuk & Brislin 1992:416). Program directors and instructors need to find ways and design activities that cultivate their interest.

The study abroad program should put more emphasis on intercultural development by raising awareness of the various aspects of culture in the home country as well as in the host countries. A big part of this should be sensitizing them to the differences in culture and to the cultural diversity that exists in the world. Explicit and open exploration of various issues in their intercultural experience need to be integrated into the pre-departure orientation, during the program, and post-program. This exploration should include an exploration of some central concepts of culture and intercultural development, culture

Intercultural training needs to take a more prominent place in pre-departure programs and the study abroad program design. It is not enough to provide some country-specific information or the locales of the study abroad program. It is necessary to take into consideration various other aspects of intercultural development. Earley & Peterson (2004) explore a critical concept in intercultural development, namely, cultural intelligence. This is the ability to adapt across cultures which is a function of the ability to gather, interpret and act according to different cues of different cultures (Earley & Peterson 2004:105). They identify three elements of cultural intelligence: (a) thinking, learning, and strategizing – cognition and metacognition. On encountering a new culture, a person needs to be able to observe and identify various aspects of the culture and be able to reflect on what they encounter vs their own culture (b) Efficacy and confidence, persistence and value congruence and affect on the new culture – motivation. A new culture presents a multitude of signals and symbols that may be confusing and challenging. A person needs to have the motivation to persist

in the learning process. (c) Social mimicry and behavioral repertoire – behavior. A person needs to respond accordingly with appropriate actions and behavior. A study abroad program will most likely produce better results if these different facets are taken into consideration when designing. Instructors and program directors need to design activities that help participants become more aware of their culture and diversity. They should learn to identify differences in culture among communities in their own communities and prepare them to encounter the other culture.

For programs that aim at increasing the participants’ cultural competence, homestays are very crucial. In most households in Tanzania, English is not spoken. This goal places the participants in a real immersion situation (Paige et. al. 2004). In other words, homestays provide a very intensive contact situation in which they must develop their language skills very fast. Participants get to live with a host family and experience family life and participate as a member of the family. Homestays provide ample opportunities to speak the target language. Most of the homes were without the help of English at all. Participants learn specific family roles and chores as appropriate in the family. Participants get a support group that is useful in efforts to adjust to a new environment and in their intercultural development. The support group may involve making new friends and new connections. In short, homestays put learners in a situation with realistic challenges of life in the community: crowded public transportation, unreliable power supply, problems with water supply, etc. This way they learn how people negotiate their way around such challenges.

The experiences with homestays can be enriched with coordinated activities that instructors can schedule. From a list of activities or observations, the participants can be directed to some particular activities and tailor them with instructions. And this can be done in coordination with the host family. For example, an assignment on cooking a particular common dish could be synchronized with practice and activities like writing a recipe for the dish and how to give instructions. When they go home and ask for the recipe, they will discover very quickly that there are no written recipes for the local dishes. They will also notice that in this culture, most of the cooking and learning to cook is done in an apprenticeship style. In their presentations and discussion, the instructor can direct them to focus on this difference in food preparation and learn not to make judgments about unwritten recipes against written recipes.

There are some important aspects of the culture that participants may not easily encounter. For example, with one of the groups, we were lucky that one of the instructors had a wedding in the family. She invited the whole group to this elaborate cultural event. Not only did the participants enjoy the fanfare, but they had many questions and learned a great deal about weddings in Tanzania. This group was fortunate because the wedding was with the family of one of the instructors. However, weddings are not that rare. With planning and involving the community, it should be possible to always find such an event where the instructors and program leaders can arrange for participation or attendance. Instructors can plan ahead and find from among staff or in the neighborhood where and when such significant events will take place.

There is a growing body of studies using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity to study various aspects of study abroad (Bloom & Miranda 2015; Rexeisen et. al. 2008; Anderson et. al. 2006). The studies have revealed that a model is a powerful tool for investigating the experiences of participants of study abroad programs. There is a need to study intercultural development in study abroad programs in Africa. Such studies may inform program developers, instructors, and international educators. It will increase awareness about students' needs.

We have observed that on several issues, enacting or commenting on various aspects of intercultural contact leads to a greater awareness of the issues, the conflicts, and even resolution. For example, one participant always felt pressured by the host mother and father insisting at the table that he should have more food or juice. After a few days of agonizing about how he should refuse food when he was full, which he believed was impolite, he wrote a song that he brought to the class. This prompted a discussion among themselves since they had a similar problem. With the help of the teachers, they were able to come up with polite ways of declining offers of more food. We believe with such creative activities, participants can highlight several aspects of their intercultural encounters. For example, they can make skits or even mini-documentaries that portray their intercultural development. Instructors and program directors can make a documentary or instructional video dealing with various aspects of intercultural development. This will be a useful tool for instructors, participants, and other program directors.

## 6. Conclusion

This article set out to present reflections on our experience with Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad for Intensive Summer Swahili in Arusha, Tanzania. Although the program has a long history dating back to 1983, we focused our attention on the last two cycles from 2008 in which we have been deeply involved as directors, instructors, and coordinators. Our reflections were inspired by the Developmental Model of Intercultural Communication (Bennett & Bennett 2004; Bennett 1986, 1993; Hammer 2015). We believe study abroad programs are unique opportunities that provide participants with environments where they can develop intercultural competence.

In our reflections, we identified behavior and expressions that clearly indicate that participants have come to the program with different levels of sensitivity, from an initial denial of cultural differences to those who are gradually adapting and shifting frames of reference with relative ease. For this reason, we recommend program designs and execution that pay more attention to intercultural development. It involves greater awareness of the diversity of cultures as well as a better understanding of the differences between the participants' cultures and the cultures that they encounter. Apart from the many activities we suggest, we also propose that more research be conducted into the various cultural aspects of African study abroad programs and study abroad in general.

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