

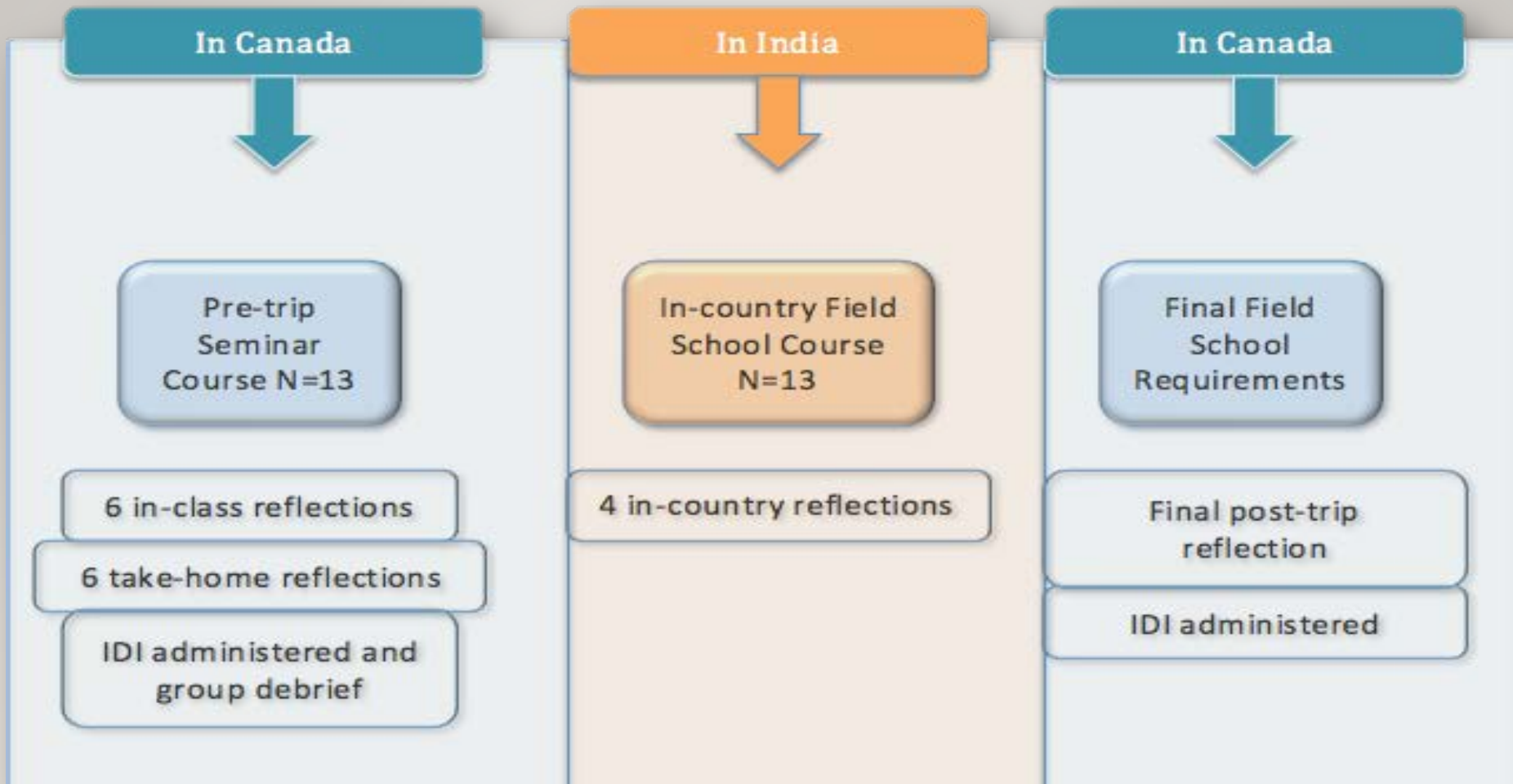
WHEN DIFFERENCE CREATES DISSONANCE

UNDERSTANDING THE ENGINE OF INTERCULTURAL
LEARNING IN STUDY ABROAD*



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INDIA FIELD SCHOOL DESIGN

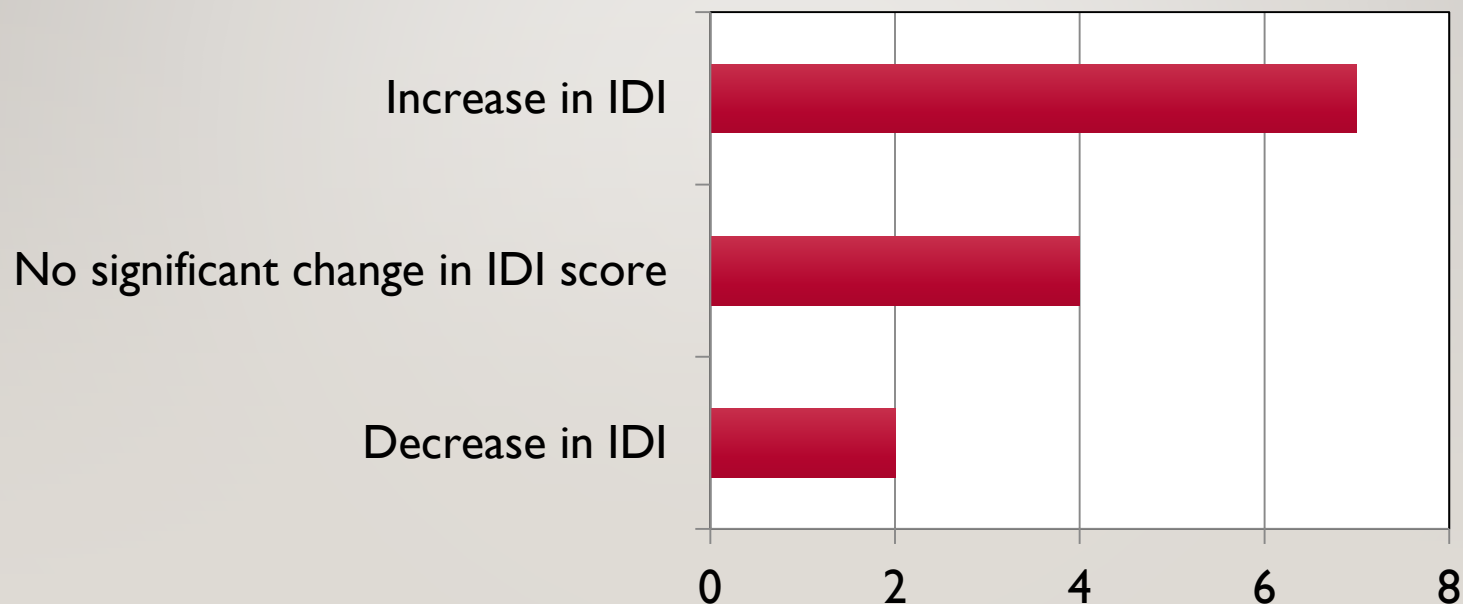


PRE-DEPARTURE SEMINAR

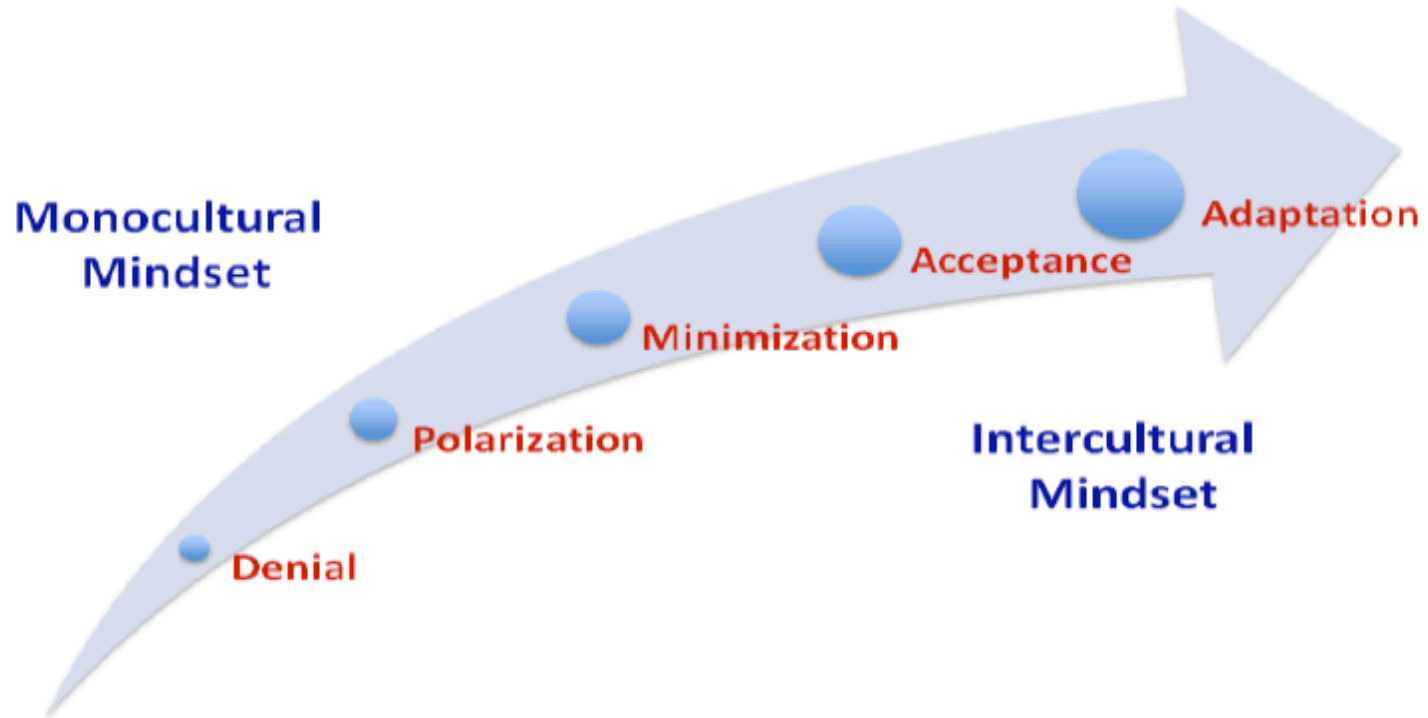
- The purpose of experiential learning and study abroad
- What is global citizenship?
- Critiques of voluntourism
- Unpacking privilege
- Intercultural competence
- Reflection and reflexivity
- Photography and representation
- Gender and development
- Indian and Tibetan politics

WE THOUGHT WE HAD A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO INCREASE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY...

Change in IDI Results



Intercultural Development Continuum



WHAT IS THE MECHANISM THAT MAKES INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE HAPPEN?

- Why do some students make intercultural gains abroad while others do not?
- Intercultural competence theory and transformative learning theory only provide partial answers
- What mechanism makes intercultural learning happen?
- So we looked to the literature on behavioural change...

WHAT IS COGNITIVE DISSONANCE?

Cognitive dissonance arises when an individual holds beliefs or follows behaviours that contradict each other, or when the external environment conflicts with the individual's beliefs or past experiences about that environment. (Festinger, 1957)



Resolution Method*	Description	Example
Values, Attitudes, Behaviours or Norms (VABN) Modification	Changing and adapting VABNs to incorporate those of the host culture.	
Perception Modification	Searches for new meanings or interpretations which reduce discomfort and increase understanding.	
Self-affirmation	Uses other positive aspects of self-image and behaviour to off-set discomfort	
Rationalization	Uses outside, 'beyond my control' factors to explain cultural behaviours that create cognitive dissonance.	
Confession-redemption	Reduces cognitive discomfort by confessing cultural wrongdoing and vowing not to do it again.	
Rejection of Host VABNs	Rejects host-culture VABNs and labels them as wrong, regardless of context.	

* From, Maertz, Carl P., Ahmad Hassan, and Peter Magnusson. 2009. "When learning is not enough: A process model of expatriate adjustment as cultural cognitive dissonance reduction." *Review of Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 108 (1):66-78.

WE FOUND EXAMPLES OF MOST OF THESE STRATEGIES AT PLAY WITH OUR STUDENTS

Feeling impolite when I heard
polite person (Logan)

Dissonance

I knew right away there was a great language barrier and I could tell my body language displayed my own cultural norms and instincts... as well as reactions I received from the public.

Personalization

Resolution

It became much more conscious of how I spoke in spaces so as to avoid overpowering, marginalizing, or distancing others in their 'home' setting...

CONCLUSIONS

- Acquisition of intercultural competence requires a willingness among educators and students to engage directly with challenging cultural situations and dissonance.
- Teaching strategies should not be focused on avoiding "culture shock," but engaging with cultural disorientation in ways that are productive for learning.
- Educators should learn to identify and respond to different strategies for resolving dissonance.
- It is possible that certain methods of cognitive dissonance resolution lead to better intercultural competence outcomes. (future research to determine the link)