

The Role of Faculty Study Abroad Directors: A Case Study

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Introduction

According to a special issue of *Academe*, the first regularly occurring faculty-led study abroad program at a U.S. university began in 1923 at the University of Delaware (*Academe*, 1995, 21). Since that time, observers have noted the rise of short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs and, thus, the growing importance of the faculty role in leading students abroad. In her 2001 dissertation, Rasch determined that “faculty members are being asked to create new on-site courses abroad and to serve in greater numbers as faculty directors of these U.S. sponsored programs” (9). Barnhart, Ricks, and Spier, in *NAFSA’s Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators* (1997), observed “At many [U.S.] institutions study abroad is [now] synonymous with faculty-led programs” (42).

In this article, faculty members who physically travel abroad with student participants to facilitate a study abroad program are identified as “study abroad faculty directors” (FDs). As the number of short-term study abroad programs at U.S. colleges and universities has increased, many of these led by faculty, the study abroad faculty director role has become increasingly critical (Barnhart, Ricks, & Spier, 1997, 42). Even on short-term programs, faculty must wear multiple hats when they lead students abroad, from teacher to counselor to administrator (O’Neal, 1995, 28; Rasch, 2001, 75). The many demands of the FD role highlight the issue of faculty training and preparation for serving as FDs. There is also the question of the importance of intercultural development in the FD role. How interculturally competent or sensitive do FDs need to be and how concerned should they be about facilitating their study abroad students’ intercultural development?

This study explores the issues facing FDs at one undergraduate, liberal arts college in the United States; referred to in this article as ‘North American College’ (NAC). This particular college was selected because it had been successful at recruiting its students for study abroad programs: 70% of the graduating class of 2005 studied abroad at some time during their years at NAC (‘NAC’ Off-Campus Studies office Web site, *Participation in Off-Campus Studies, Class of 2005*).

Rationale and Purpose of the Study

In the literature, there exists some analysis of the FD role at U.S. colleges and universities (Barnhart, Ricks, & Spier, 1997; MacNally, 2002; Rasch, 2001; Sunnygard, 2002). While the existing research has explored the multiple dimensions of the FD role, there has been less analysis of the place of intercultural development in the role. This study sought to fill this gap in the research literature by examining the FD role and focusing on how intercultural development, which is frequently named as one of the primary goals of study abroad programs, informs this role.

The overarching purpose of this study was to explore the role of study abroad faculty directors at one undergraduate, liberal arts college in the United States—focusing, in particular, on the intercultural dimension of the role. In this study, answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. How do study abroad faculty directors conceptualize their role?
2. How well do faculty's formal and informal experiences prepare them to serve as study abroad faculty directors?
3. What degree of intercultural development do the study abroad faculty directors at 'North American College' have?
4. How do study abroad faculty directors conceptualize their role in the intercultural development of their study abroad students?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this article, a study abroad program is considered a structured learning experience in which the student participants are required to live and learn in another country. Intercultural development is defined as “the construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference” (Bennett, 1993, 24). Bennett also defines “ethnocentrism” and “ethnorelativism”; in this study these terms identify the FDs' and their students' varying degrees of intercultural development. On one end of the scale, ethnocentrism is defined as “assuming that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality” (Bennett, 1993, 30). On the other end of the scale, ethnorelativism is defined as “the assumption that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context” (Bennett, 1993, 46). In Bennett's work, and in the literature of intercultural development theory in general, ethnorelativism is considered the goal toward which a person should develop (Bennett, 1993, 22).

NAC Background Information

NAC is a private, liberal arts college in the United States that enrolls 2,000 male and female students who come from throughout the United States and from almost 40 other countries ('NAC' Web site, *Information for International Students*). NAC currently has a total of 182 faculty members, including tenured and non-tenured faculty in a variety of academic disciplines ('NAC' Web site, *Fast Facts*).

As of January 2006, NAC offered 18 of its own study abroad programs in the following countries (this list excludes 'domestic' study abroad programs): Australia, Austria, China, Cook Islands, France, Germany, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Mali, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Spain, and the United Kingdom ('NAC' Off-Campus Studies office Web site, 'NAC' *Programs*). Each of these programs is one trimester in length, essentially short-term in nature. NAC's academic schedule follows a system where each academic period—Fall, Winter, and Spring—spans approximately 2 ½ months; in addition, some NAC study abroad programs are during the 'winter break' or the summer months. An average of 20 students participated in each of the NAC study abroad programs during the 2004–2005 academic year ('NAC' Off-Campus Studies office Web site, *Participation in Off-Campus Study, Academic Year 2004–2005*).

As stated above, a large proportion of NAC students study abroad, either on NAC or non-NAC programs. 63% of the class of 2005's study abroad students participated in NAC programs, while 37% enrolled in non-NAC programs ('NAC' Off-Campus Studies office Web site, *Participation in Off-Campus Studies, Class of 2005*).

During the 2004–2005 academic year, 13 NAC faculty led study abroad programs for the College ('NAC' Off-Campus Studies office Web site, *Participation in Off-Campus Study, Academic Year 2004–2005*). Historically, the majority of NAC's study abroad programs have been faculty-driven, in that the faculty themselves initiate the program and are then supported by the Off-Campus Studies (OCS) office (Director of 'NAC's' Off-Campus Studies office, presentation, 8/4/04). The OCS office issues a call for new program proposals every October and proposals are due the following January (Interview, Director of 'NAC's' Off-Campus Studies office, 12/8/04). Typically, the OCS office receives no more than two proposals for new trimester-long programs each October, while it tends to receive a greater number of proposals for new winter-break programs (Interview, Director of 'NAC's' Off-Campus Studies office, 12/8/04). The OCS Committee, which includes NAC administrators and faculty, reviews each of the proposals and decides whether to approve them (Interview, Director of 'NAC's' Off-Campus Studies office, 12/8/04).

Methodology

Research Strategies

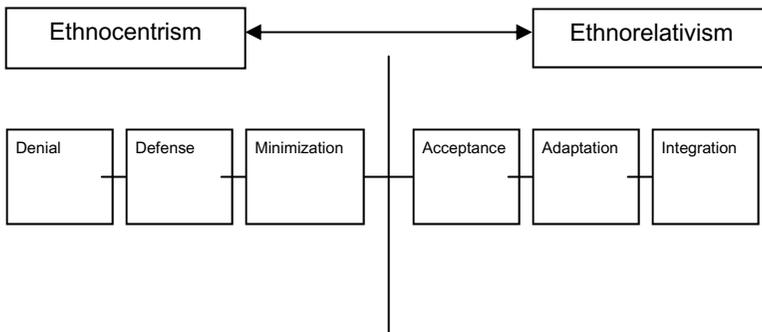
Two research strategies, one qualitative and one quantitative, were used to complete this case study: (a) individual interviews with FDs at NAC; and (b) administration of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a standardized instrument that measures an individual or group’s intercultural development, to FDs at NAC. The interviews were employed to explore all of the research questions, and the IDI was utilized to further investigate research question #3.

Before the study began, an interview with the Director of the OCS office was conducted and online NAC documents were reviewed to explore the general context of NAC’s study abroad programs.

Bennett’s “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity”

The IDI is based on Milton Bennett’s “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.” Bennett described his model, which provides this study’s definition of “intercultural development,” as “a continuum of increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural difference, moving from ethnocentrism through stages of greater recognition and acceptance of difference, here termed ‘ethnorelativism’” (Bennett, 1993, 22). Here is the researcher’s graphic representation of Bennett’s model:

Figure 1. Bennett’s “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.”



Bennett argued that intercultural development is not “natural” to humans; in other words, attempts to progress toward ethnorelativism require one to work against the grain of typical human behavior (Bennett, 1993, 21). He also maintained that “it is not assumed that progression through the stages is one-way or permanent” (Bennett, 1993, 26–27) — hence the two-way arrow in Figure 1. Bennett emphasized that his model is a dynamic process capable of accommodating movement toward ethnorelativism and a reversal toward ethnocentrism.

Beginning at the ethnocentrism end of the model, “denial” is the stage in which a person fails to “consider the existence of cultural difference” (Bennett, 1993, 30). The next step, “defense,” is defined by a fixation on “specific cultural differences perceived as threatening” (34). “Minimization,” the final ethnocentric stage, is marked by “an effort to bury difference under the weight of cultural similarities” (41). Moving into the domain of ethnorelativism, “cultural difference is both acknowledged and respected” in the first stage, “acceptance” (47). In the second ethnorelative stage, “adaptation,” a person develops “skills for relating to and communicating with people of other cultures” (51). Finally, a person in “integration,” the most interculturally developed stage of the model, is able to “integrate disparate aspects of one’s identity into a new whole while remaining culturally marginal” (60).

Data Collection Procedures

Utilizing purposive sampling, in December 2004 an invitation letter was sent to every NAC faculty member who had led at least one NAC study abroad program in the previous four academic years (2000–2001, 2001–2002, 2002–2003, 2003–2004), as well as faculty who had directed a program during the Fall 2004 trimester and the winter break of 2004. This subset of the NAC FDs was sampled because their recent service in the FD role would allow them to recall the experience quickly. The letter was sent to a total of 34 FDs; eight volunteered to participate in the study. The study participants were contacted via e-mail to schedule the interviews and IDI administrations for January 2005.

During the interviews, which were tape-recorded, the researcher wrote down major points that the interviewees made as well as key quotations. These notes helped the researcher recall the content of a particular interview during transcription and they also served as a back-up measure in case the taping process failed. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Each interview was followed by the IDI administration for that participant; the interviews and IDI administrations were conducted one-on-one. The IDI asks participants to use a “5-point response set ranging from ‘agree’ to ‘disagree’” to respond to each of the 50 items (Hammer, 1999, 62; Paige, 2004, 99). While administration of the IDI sometimes includes an interview portion, that component was not used in this study. It took the participants no more than 25 minutes to complete the IDI.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the interviews by recording the data in 15 tables, one table for each interview question. Each table contained the interview data for that question from all eight interviewees, allowing the researcher to compare the answers. The data for each interviewee were coded with a unique number (“01” through “08”) so that the researcher could keep track of which interview a particular piece of data had come from. Also, a column on the right side of each table was added to make observations about particular data and to note emerging patterns and themes. Once transcription of the interview data was complete, the researcher read through each of the tables multiple times to determine key patterns and themes. These themes were then matched up with the relevant research question(s); thus, the interview data were used to respond to the four key questions that had germinated the study.

As with the interviews, the IDI data were analyzed in aggregate form. Each participant’s IDI responses were entered into a software program that was capable of generating a group profile. The group profile included an overall assessment of the intercultural development of the study participants—notably, where this group fell on the continuum of Bennett’s model and on each of the IDI’s five scales. Interpreting a group IDI profile integrates the participants’ results into a rich understanding of the group’s intercultural development. The patterns and themes in their profile were then matched up with the relevant research question—question #3, which asked about the intercultural development of FDs. The IDI patterns and themes were also compared with the interview patterns and themes for question #3 to determine if similar findings had emerged from the two strategies. While the interview strategy addressed this research question by asking the FDs to relate anecdotes about their intercultural development, the IDI strategy directly and quantitatively measured the “degree” of the FDs’ intercultural development.

Research Findings

Research Question #1: How do study abroad faculty directors conceptualize their role?

Earlier in this article it was reported that the literature describes the FD role as multifaceted, with a wide range of aspects and dimensions (O’Neal, 1995, 28; Rasch, 2001, 75). The faculty in this study portrayed the FD role in a similar fashion, emphasizing its multiple dimensions. In general, the FDs in this study described four dimensions of the role: (a) the “Dean of Students” dimension, (b) the logistical dimension, (c) the intercultural dimension, and (d) the academic dimension.

Table 1. Dimensions of the NAC Study Abroad Faculty Director role (faculty perspective).

Faculty Director Dimension	Responsibilities
<i>“Dean of Students” dimension</i>	Student social life, student group dynamics, student mental health, student physical health, student safety, and student alcohol use.
<i>Logistical dimension</i>	Program logistics: scheduling, administration, staff management, and budgeting.
<i>Intercultural dimension</i>	Familiarity with the study abroad program sites ahead of time, and intellectual insights about the culture of the sites to share with students.
<i>Academic dimension</i>	Curriculum development, teaching, grading, and academic mentoring.

“Dean of Students” dimension. More than the other dimensions, the FDs at NAC emphasized what they called the “Dean of Students” (DoS) dimension of their role. All of the responsibilities the FDs listed for this dimension would typically be handled by the Dean of Students office on the NAC campus (‘NAC’ Dean of Students office Web site, *Frequently Asked Questions*). One FD described this dimension as “attentiveness to students on a personal level”—this definition is used throughout the article as it effectively synthesizes the faculty’s various perspectives on the DoS dimension. The FDs included a wide range of responsibilities and concerns in the DoS dimension: student social life, student group dynamics, student mental health, student physical health, student safety, and student alcohol use.

A number of faculty discussed the challenge of nurturing students in these various areas while also asserting themselves as authority figures. One FD noted that he had struggled “to strike the proper balance between [my] role as an adult—a responsible figure on the program...yet [I] want to have good relationships with the students in the program.” In their on-campus role as professors, the faculty in the study pointed out that they were not accustomed to handling DoS issues because students could seek the assistance of NAC administrative staff who were there for that purpose. On a study abroad program, however, FDs become “an extension of the [NAC] Dean of Students office” and they are suddenly faced with the challenge of responding to students’ social, mental, and physical concerns. “On campus, we have a whole support system that helps take care of students’ personal lives, social lives, emotional lives,” said one faculty member, “and suddenly being responsible for all of that is

tricky.” On the other hand, these FDs made clear how much they valued the close relationships they had formed with their study abroad students and they stated that these relationships were often more intimate than their connections with students on campus. Some of the faculty mentioned that they had maintained relationships with their former study abroad students long after they were graduated from NAC.

Logistical dimension. The FDs at NAC also talked about the logistical dimension of their role, which included program scheduling, administration, staff management, and budgeting. The faculty utilized a number of resources to assist with these operational duties, including the OCS office at NAC, on-site support from local educational exchange organizations, as well as program assistants (either from NAC or the study abroad program site). Many of the faculty stressed the importance of planning far ahead so that important details were not left to the last moment. At the same time, they noted that last-minute logistical issues—such as an airline going out of business, students withdrawing from a program, or books going out of print—as well as on-site logistical issues—such as a student misplacing their passport, students getting lost, or students getting pick-pocketed—had regularly occurred. While the FDs highlighted the need to invest time in planning and organizing the details of a study abroad program, they also stressed the importance of building sufficient flexibility into the program structure. One FD said: “If you try to organize it all ahead of time, and not let it have a life of its own, you’re going to be ruling too much out.”

Intercultural dimension. When asked to describe the FD role, the faculty said little about its intercultural dimension. Those who did talk about the dimension mentioned the importance of becoming familiar with the study abroad program sites ahead of time and having intellectual insights about the culture of the sites to share with students. Some of the faculty discussed the intercultural challenges they had encountered in the role, including a FD who had led students in Russia and found it difficult to adjust to the deference his female colleagues showed him.

Academic dimension. The FDs also spent limited time discussing the academic dimension of the role and pointed out that this dimension most closely resembled their on-campus responsibilities, with one FD referring to it as the “traditional academic function.” The duties they associated with this dimension included: curriculum development, teaching, grading, and academic mentoring. Some of the faculty discussed the challenge of balancing structured academic assignments with time for students to explore the study abroad sites.

Research Question #2: How well do faculty's formal and informal experiences prepare them to serve as study abroad faculty directors?

Formal preparation. One of the issues highlighted in the literature is the lack of formal preparation that faculty receive for serving in the FD role (Rasch, 2001, 13; Snider, 2001, 66). In this article, a "formal" experience is defined as one that is specifically designed to prepare faculty for the FD role, while an "informal" experience is defined as one that coincidentally provides knowledge that faculty might be able to use in the role. In regard to formal preparation, the faculty reported no such experiences other than NAC's "Faculty Directors' Workshop." For example, none of the NAC FDs' terminal degree programs (either Ph.D. or M.F.A.) had supported them in thinking about the possibility that they might one day lead students abroad. One political science professor observed that "there is no concept of training an academic as an administrator of an off-campus program" in the doctoral programs of his discipline.

The NAC faculty expressed positive views about the formal workshop offered by NAC: the "Faculty Directors' Workshop" had provided the only structured preparation that these FDs had experienced before directing a study abroad program, and it is notable that many U.S. colleges and universities do not offer similar opportunities for faculty (Rasch, 2001, 13). Most of the faculty in the study were able to articulate the FD-related knowledge they had gained from NAC's annual, half-day workshop, which the OCS office holds each November (many of the faculty had attended the workshop more than once). The FDs identified the practical and logistical tips they learned in the workshops, as well as the advice of more experienced FDs, as among the most useful aspects of the workshop; also, some of the faculty highlighted the "coaching" they had received from the OCS office, as well as advice about FDs' legal responsibilities. Each iteration of the workshop has differed somewhat from the last because the OCS staff tailors the training content to the information needs of the attendees (Interview, Director of 'NAC's' Off-Campus Studies office, 12/8/04). Among the topics included in the 2003 and 2004 workshops were: the multiple dimensions of the FD role, the NAC resources available to FDs and students when they are overseas, and student health and safety. While the theme of student intercultural development was addressed in the 2003 workshop, and a one-time session on the intercultural aspect of study abroad was offered in the spring of 2004, content related to intercultural development has not consistently been built in to each version of the workshop (Interview, Director of 'NAC's' Off-Campus Studies office, 12/8/04).

The OCS office has also provided FDs with two handbooks—one of which takes a faculty member from OCS approval of their program to re-entry after the program is finished, and the other of which focuses on the FD role during the program itself (Interview, Director of ‘NAC’s’ Off-Campus Studies office, 12/8/04). Many of the faculty commented on the strength of NAC’s FD support structure, especially the OCS office and the NAC Business Office (which assists FDs with study abroad program budgeting). One FD said that “the support system of [NAC] for a faculty director is unbelievable.”

Informal preparation. As concerns informal preparation for the FD role, some of the faculty described intercultural experiences that had helped equip them to lead students abroad. “Intercultural experiences” are defined in this article as “communicating and interacting with culturally different others” (Paige, 1993a, 1). While domestic intercultural experiences can be valuable for faculty, this article focuses on *international* intercultural experiences. For one faculty member, a personal trip to India—during which he found himself overwhelmed by an unfamiliar culture—gave him valuable insight into how his students might feel when they participated in a study abroad program. Another NAC FD portrayed her intercultural experiences as useful in comprehending how her study abroad students felt when they were away from home: “I would say that every trip that I’ve taken to Europe—to other places, too—has really helped me to understand how one might feel in a new place far away from one’s usual support systems.”

At least five of the eight faculty in the study reported intercultural experience in each of the following areas: (a) participated in study abroad as a high school and/or university student, (b) attended an overseas seminar for university faculty, (c) studied a foreign language overseas, (d) worked or volunteered in another country, (e) conducted research abroad, and (f) attended an international conference overseas. Examples of the faculty’s intercultural experiences included attending a short-term faculty seminar in Turkey, Hungary, and Spain; studying French and German in Luxembourg; and working as a translator and nanny in Moscow.

For many of these FDs their first trip abroad (in some cases, as children) had been significant in initiating a life-long interest in other cultures and languages, and in opening their eyes to the complexity of cultures. One FD traced her decision to lead students abroad back to her first time overseas, when she participated in a study abroad program in Europe. “It was such a powerful experience,” this FD recalled, “that when I was looking for colleges to teach at [NAC] appealed to me because it had a strong off-campus program and that

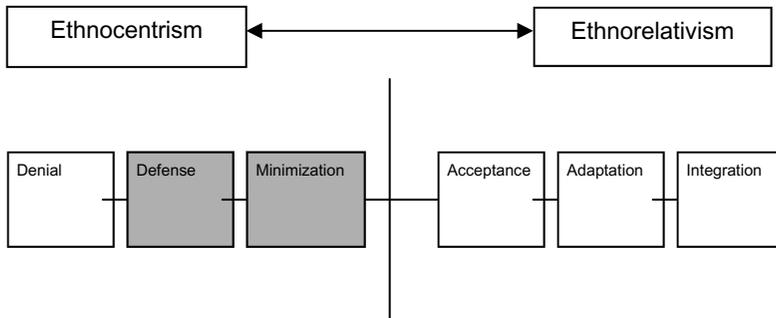
seemed like something that you [as a faculty member] were encouraged to be a part of.”

Although many of the NAC faculty in this study placed importance on the intercultural experiences they had prior to serving as FDs, three of them stated that the experience that was most helpful in their preparation for future FD service was their first time in the role. As one of them put it: “There’s nothing like being a director to learn about being a director.”

Research Question #3: What degree of intercultural development do the study abroad faculty directors at North American College have?

The NAC faculty’s intercultural development was assessed objectively by their “overall *developmental* [original italics] intercultural sensitivity” IDI profile, and subjectively by their “overall *perceived* [original italics] intercultural sensitivity” IDI profile and their comments during the interviews.

Figure 2. NAC FDs’ IDI results (Bennett’s model).



From statistical analysis of the NAC FDs’ “overall *developmental* intercultural sensitivity” IDI profile, it was found that this group of faculty was “in transition” on both the *minimization* (M) and *reversal* (R) scales of the IDI. “In transition” signifies that an individual or group is still working through the issues associated with a particular worldview. In regard to Bennett’s “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity,” these results located the faculty in the *minimization* stage (see Figure 2)—characterized by “an effort to bury difference under the weight of cultural similarities” (Bennett, 1993, 41). For example, six of the eight NAC faculty agreed in their IDI responses with this statement: “Despite some cultural differences, it is more important to recognize that people are all alike in their humanity” (IDI Item #30). While individuals

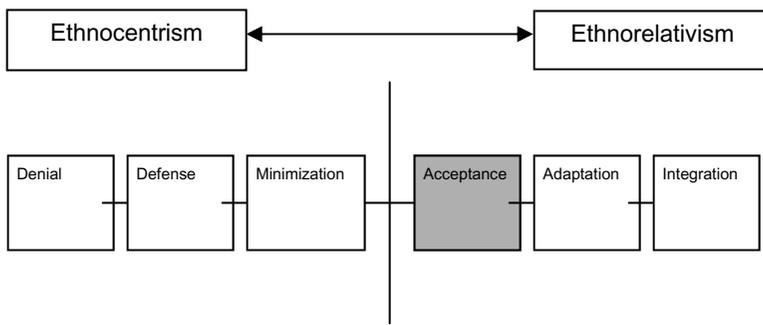
in minimization are “aware that other cultures exist” they emphasize cultural similarities over differences (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 7). It was determined that the FDs in this study were struggling more with the “similarity cluster” of the minimization scale than the “universalism cluster”: this means that the faculty generally believed that other cultures were fundamentally similar to their own culture. The FDs’ IDI results also placed them in the *reversal* sub-stage (see Figure 2), which is defined as an aspect of the “defense” stage that “involves a denigration of one’s own culture and an attendant assumption of the superiority of a different culture” (Bennett, 1993, 39). For example, six of the faculty expressed at least some agreement with the following statement: “People from our culture are less polite compared with people from other cultures” (IDI Item #24).

In addition to the finding that these FDs were in transition on the M and R scales, it was also demonstrated that the faculty were just beyond “in transition” status for the “cognitive frame-shifting” and “behavioral code-shifting” aspects of the acceptance/adaptation (AA) scale. This finding implies that the faculty’s skill in adjusting their thinking and behavior from one culture to the next was not optimal. Finally, this group of faculty’s results for the encapsulated marginality (EM) scale—“a worldview that incorporates a multicultural identity with confused cultural perspectives” (Intercultural Communication Institute) showed that they had resolved the issues associated with this worldview. However, based on the group’s belief that similarities between cultures are more important than the differences, it is possible that these FDs had “not experienced [profound] cultural identity issues at all” (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 3).

It is important to note that, while five of the eight faculty who participated in the study had individual IDI profiles that aligned with the group profile, two of the faculty had profiles that showed they were struggling more than the group as a whole with issues associated with the denial/defense (DD) worldview. For example, it was found that these two FDs were less interested in cultural differences than the rest of the group. On the other hand, another FD’s profile found her to have advanced beyond the minimization stage to “acceptance.” For example, it was determined that this FD was more skilled than her colleagues at “behavioral code-shifting” between cultures. The interview comments of the two faculty who were struggling with the DD worldview, and those of the faculty member who appeared to be more interculturally developed than the others, do not readily provide an explanation for their divergence from the group profile.

While the IDI “overall *developmental* intercultural sensitivity” profile for the NAC FDs conveyed that the faculty were experiencing issues associated with the minimization and reversal stages of Bennett’s model, analysis of the faculty’s “overall *perceived* intercultural sensitivity” profile found that they understood themselves to be in the *acceptance* stage of Bennett’s continuum—the first of the ethnorelative stages in which “cultural difference is both acknowledged and respected” (Bennett, 1993, 47). (See a graphic depiction of the NAC FDs’ perceived intercultural development in Figure 3.)

Figure 3. NAC FDs’ perceived intercultural development (Bennett’s model).



Some of the faculty’s interview remarks demonstrated their belief that they were in the acceptance stage, as aware of the differences between their own and other cultures as they were of the similarities. For example, one FD said that “cultural differences do matter, and they matter in very unpredictable ways, in the meaning of words, certainly, but also in the meaning of certain ideas.” At the same time, some faculty statements revealed perspectives that fit within the minimization and reversal stages. One of the faculty declared that his international travels had led to his belief that “human beings around the world really are very similar on a very basic level—there’s a core decency to most of the people that I’ve known.” This comment emphasized varying cultures’ fundamental similarities (minimization), implying that cultural differences are not as important as common values such as “decency.” Another FD critiqued U.S. consumer culture, including “the size of automobiles over here [and] the wasteful helpings of food,” stating that she found Europeans to be much more “sophisticated” than U.S.-Americans. Her portrayal of the United States as unsophisticated when compared with European cultures seemed to divulge a negative bias toward her own U.S.-American culture (reversal).

Research Question #4: How do study abroad faculty directors conceptualize their role in the intercultural development of their study abroad students?

Student intercultural challenges and outcomes. While the NAC FDs' IDI results pointed to a limited degree of intercultural development, during their interviews the FDs were able to discuss their students' intercultural challenges and the intercultural development outcomes they wanted their students to achieve. In particular, the FDs highlighted students' struggle with the nature of cultural difference. In this article "intercultural challenges" are defined as situations in which a learner's own cultural experiences or values do not align with the experiences or values of the host culture. "Intercultural development outcomes" are defined as the effects of an intercultural experience on a learner. The FDs in the study had observed that students often encountered a different degree of cultural difference—fewer differences in some cases, and more differences in others—between their home and host cultures than the students had expected. For example, one faculty member noted that her study abroad students had assumed that British culture would be indistinguishable from U.S.-American culture, and they were confused by their discovery that this was not the case: "The students are quick to assume that the English are just like us because we speak basically the same language. But I think they learned that the English are not just like us, that they're different." At the other extreme, another FD found that some of his students arrived in Russia expecting a culture that was void of Western-style consumerism; in fact, they came to realize that this was not true—one student was upset to find a Benetton clothing store in Moscow. Regarding student intercultural development outcomes, one of the faculty said he wanted his students to be able to see both the similarities and the differences between their home and host cultures. Many of the faculty also emphasized the importance of students being able to reflect on their study abroad experiences within the cultural context of the study abroad site, not just a U.S.-American cultural framework.

The NAC FDs also related that their students had been challenged by culture-bound interpersonal interactions with natives of the study abroad sites, and they expressed a hope that students felt more at ease in the cultural context of the sites by the end of their program. The faculty gave examples where their students had encountered cultural differences in gender relations and in regard to academics, but they focused on the intercultural challenges their students had faced in homestay situations—including dietary, personal hygiene, personal space, and family dynamics issues. In terms of intercultural development outcomes, the

FDs stated that they wanted students to feel more comfortable interacting with their host families and locals in general by the end of their study abroad program so that they would consider returning to the study abroad sites later in life.

FD role in student intercultural development. While the FDs at NAC gave specific examples of their students' intercultural challenges and identified the intercultural development outcomes they wanted their students to realize, the faculty were considerably more abstract when discussing the role they played in their students' intercultural development *process*. When asked to describe the intercultural skills that were critical to the FD role, most of the faculty talked about the need to have cultural knowledge of the study abroad sites and to be at least somewhat conversant in the local language(s). In relation to cultural knowledge, one faculty member said it was important for FDs to spend time at the sites of a study abroad program before leading students there. Regarding FD language skills, another NAC faculty member remarked that FDs must have the ability and patience "to connect, to have conversation with locals" when leading students abroad. One of the faculty in the study was unable to identify any intercultural skills that he felt were fundamental to the FD role because he did not believe that the program he had led was a "culture program" (the program was based in a European country where English was not the primary language, but the program's classes were taught in English).

Many of the NAC FDs voiced the belief that their study abroad students would approach them if they were struggling with intercultural challenges and needed support in the intercultural development process. Most of the faculty had relied on informal interaction with their students as the primary venue for offering them assistance in this regard—these informal occasions included sharing a meal, time spent in transit, and gatherings at which the faculty handed out *per diem* funds to students. One of the faculty held "office hours" during which students could meet with her if they wished, and another FD invited small groups of students to her living space for social interaction.

None of the faculty reported that they had regularly included the topic of intercultural development in their informal discussions with students. One of the FDs stated that faculty needed "to be supportive, to be ready to coach, to talk, to listen—to not react with some kind of knee-jerk reaction that's culture-bound to some North American frame of reference," but he was not able to provide concrete examples of how he had assisted students in their intercultural development process. Some of the faculty said that they felt they could strengthen the role they had played in student intercultural development. One of the FDs remarked: "I suspect that I could do a better job [of facilitating

student intercultural development]. I'm sure that there are more challenges that give students difficulty that I'm not aware of." Another faculty member made this observation: "I imagine that a lot of the misunderstandings, socially, occur at night when the students go out and they really get an opportunity to engage socially with other Europeans, and I'm not there all the time to observe that."

Two of the faculty utilized, at least partly, a didactic approach in making their students aware of the cultural differences between their home and host cultures. One FD shared that he had "very directly" told his students: "Well, in Europe this is what you should do and this is probably what you should not do." Another NAC faculty member remarked that she had urged her students "to announce their presence when they come home [to their host families], and they should bring flowers periodically...Americans just come in the door and slam the door, and don't say 'hi folks' and just go up to their room with their head-phones on, and you can't do that [in Europe]—you have to interact with the family." The faculty who used the didactic technique in guiding students on intercultural matters appeared to be concerned that their students would say or do the "wrong" thing, given the cultural context.

Individual FD profile. In this section one of the NAC FDs who participated in the study is profiled in order to highlight how some of the key findings reported in this article play out in the case of an individual faculty member. This particular faculty member was selected because she is typical in many ways of the other FDs in the study. Dr. Smith (a pseudonym) was U.S.-born (like all the faculty in the study), held the rank of a full professor (like all but one of the faculty), and had earned a doctorate in her academic discipline (all of the faculty in the study had achieved the terminal degree of their field, either a Ph.D. or M.F.A.). Smith had somewhat less FD experience than most of her colleagues, however, having led two NAC study abroad (language arts/humanities) programs to the same major European city.

In regard to her description of the FD role, Smith placed great emphasis on the DoS dimension and was among the most articulate in discussing this aspect of her FD responsibilities. Although she considered the DoS dimension a significant challenge in her role as a FD—observing that she had "to be a sort of camp director and counselor all in one"—she was enthusiastic about the "family" dynamic of her relationships with study abroad students.

Smith, like many of the NAC faculty in the study, had participated in multiple OCS "Faculty Directors' Workshops," and she also talked about intercultural experiences that had informally prepared her for the FD role.

Before serving as a FD, Smith's primary intercultural experience had been a year-long study abroad program in Europe that involved culture and language studies. She also said that the most critical experience for her in preparing for the FD role was her first time leading students abroad.

This FD's individual degree of intercultural development mirrored the group profile of her colleagues, as did her own perception of her intercultural development. Her IDI results placed her in the minimization stage of Bennett's model, and she was found to be in transition on both the minimization and reversal scales. Smith displayed enthusiasm for the culture of her study abroad program's site, and she also made comments during her interview that demonstrated a reversal mindset; for example, she stated that the natives of her program's host country were generally more open-minded than U.S.-Americans.

In terms of her perspective on student intercultural development, like most of her NAC colleagues Smith was able to identify some of the intercultural challenges that her students had faced. She noted that her students had gone abroad "expecting none [no intercultural challenges] and then they were surprised to discover that they work on several levels," even though they were studying in an English-speaking country (the United Kingdom). In regard to intercultural development outcomes, Smith hoped that her students would learn that cultures have "reasons for the ways they behave" and would find themselves desiring exposure to other cultural contexts.

Like all of the faculty in the study, however, Smith was not able to articulate concrete ways in which she actively supported students in their intercultural development process. Although she said it was important for her to display enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, the host country's culture, Smith did not view the intercultural aspect of her role as a critical dimension. "I know that there are a lot of people who take students to a program that is more foreign, who spend a lot of time talking about these [intercultural] kinds of issues," she said, "but because it's [an English-speaking country] I don't spend as much time talking about them because they don't seem as much of an immediate issue." Smith did share that she was thinking about devoting more time to explicit discussion of intercultural issues with her study abroad students before the start of her next program.

Discussion

The Intercultural Dimension of the Faculty Director Role

Although the NAC faculty infrequently mentioned the intercultural dimension when giving an overview of the role, it was clear from the data that—of all the dimensions of the FD role ("DoS," "logistical," "intercultural,"

and “academic”)—the faculty were most significantly challenged by the intercultural dimension. It appears that one of the primary reasons why the FDs in this study did not have much to say about this dimension is that they were so focused on the DoS and logistical dimensions and they had little energy to devote to the intercultural dimension. The faculty emphasized that the duties associated with the DoS dimension were far removed from their on-campus responsibilities as professors. One of the FDs pointed out that she and her colleagues had received “very little training in terms of the social dynamics of really dealing with college students day-to-day, that kind of ‘Dean of Students’ role.” The faculty also spent considerable time discussing the logistical dimension of the role and talked about how time-consuming it was to manage the logistical arrangements so that a given study abroad program ran smoothly. Considering the faculty’s initial lack of familiarity with the DoS dimension and the time-intensive nature of the logistical dimension, it is no wonder that the FDs found themselves preoccupied with these duties to the exclusion of a significant focus on the intercultural dimension.

The FDs’ formal preparation for the role—the Faculty Directors’ Workshop—could have done a better job at educating the NAC faculty about the intercultural dimension of the role. The Director of the OCS office explained that the content of a particular workshop is largely determined by what topics the faculty state they would like to see covered (Interview, Director of ‘NAC’s’ Off-Campus Studies office, 12/8/04). One can assume, therefore, that the deficiency of intercultural content in some of the workshops is due to a lack of faculty awareness about, and interest in, this dimension of the role: If this is the case, it would seem all the more critical that each iteration of the workshop include uniform content on the intercultural dimension of the FD role. Lastly, a note about the faculty’s informal preparation for the FD role: while some of the FDs’ intercultural experiences were clearly of great personal value to them and they believed that these experiences had helped to equip them to serve in the role, it was apparent that the faculty had struggled to utilize what they had learned during their own intercultural experiences in playing a more active role in student intercultural development.

In addition to a lack of preparation for the intercultural dimension of the FD role, it was found that the NAC faculty had a limited degree of intercultural development—which, as previous research has determined, affects FDs’ ability to foster intercultural development in their study abroad students (Bachner, 2001, 27; Krueger, 1995, 34; Rasch, 2001, 76). It is not surprising that this group of faculty, which was in the minimization stage of Bennett’s model, had

not made it a priority to facilitate their students' intercultural development. Because individuals in the minimization stage emphasize similarities between cultures and neglect to fully identify and explore the differences (Bennett, 1993, 41), it seems likely that these FDs failed to play a more active role in their study abroad students' intercultural development because they were not sufficiently aware of the differences between U.S.-American culture and the host culture(s). The NAC faculty's informal, passive approach toward student intercultural development is perhaps also due to the FDs' belief that they had moved into the ethnorelative stages of Bennett's model. The gap between the FDs' *actual* (as measured by the IDI) and *perceived* (as measured by the IDI and the interviews) intercultural development revealed that the faculty had overestimated their degree of intercultural development.

If one considers the various data from this study that provided information about the NAC FDs' relationship with the intercultural dimension of the role, it becomes evident that this was *the* dimension that the faculty knew the least about and struggled with the most. Given the faculty's intense focus on the DoS and logistical dimensions of the role, their lack of formal preparation, their limited degree of intercultural development, and their informal approach to student intercultural development, it seems important that these FDs receive more comprehensive training for the intercultural dimension of the role.

Recommendations for Faculty Director Training

It is the recommendation of this researcher that FDs need consistent, significant, and explicit content that supports them in examining their own intercultural development and exploring how they can help facilitate their study abroad students' intercultural development. It is commendable that NAC offers the half-day "Faculty Directors' Workshop" in its current form, as many U.S. colleges and universities do not provide faculty with any formal preparation for the FD role (Rasch, 2001, 13). To better prepare NAC faculty to lead students abroad, however, the OCS office could add workshop content that speaks more fully to the intercultural dimension of the role, in addition to the workshop's historical focus on DoS and logistical issues. Although some NAC faculty might resist the idea of increasing the length of the "Faculty Directors' Workshop," it seems that including sufficient intercultural content would necessitate expanding the workshop to a full day or scheduling a separate half-day session that addresses exclusively the intercultural dimension.

The literature that describes the key competencies required for intercultural trainers, including faculty leading students on study abroad programs, states that

trainers must be 'self-aware' (Paige, 1993b, 191–192). Paige (1993b) said that trainers must “be confident in their own identity and ... possess a high level of self-awareness” (191). Therefore, it seems that the first step in preparing NAC faculty for the intercultural dimension of the FD role should be to help augment their self-awareness, in particular, awareness of their degree of intercultural development. If time permits the IDI could be administered to faculty who are going to participate in an upcoming “Faculty Directors’ Workshop” and feedback could be given to them regarding their results. Alternatively, the OCS office staff could explain Bennett’s model to the faculty during the workshop and ask them to reflect on the concept of intercultural development in their role as a FD. Because the faculty in the study believed themselves to be more interculturally developed than their IDI results showed, it would be particularly important for the NAC FDs to gain awareness of their actual degree of intercultural development before considering how they might support their students’ intercultural development.

Once the NAC faculty understand their own degree of intercultural development, they can begin to articulate the role they might play in their study abroad students’ intercultural development process (Bachner, 2001, 27; Krueger, 1995, 34; Rasch, 2001, 76). Paige (1993b) argued that self-awareness on the part of intercultural trainers—e.g., FDs—allows them to “serve as models for learners, be more open and honest in their relationships with them, and more effectively help them deal with the issues of culture learning [intercultural development]” (191). He also said that training programs such as NAC’s “Faculty Directors’ Workshop” should include content related to “the construction of specific [intercultural] learning activities” (Paige, 1993b, 195). It was clear from the NAC faculty’s interview comments that they had not given much thought to formal, structured ways in which they could challenge and support students in the intercultural development process: it would be beneficial to NAC’s study abroad students if their FDs acquired concrete suggestions for intercultural “learning activities” during the faculty workshop. One strong curricular option is the “Maximizing Study Abroad” series, offered by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota. These guidebooks provide learning activities and contextual information for both faculty and students (CARLA Web site, *Maximizing Study Abroad*). The “Maximizing Study Abroad” series could be introduced during NAC’s revamped workshop and the FDs could be encouraged to utilize the guidebooks.

The recommendation for NAC to include consistent, significant, and explicit intercultural content in its “Faculty Directors’ Workshop,” content that is focused on FD self-awareness and on exploration of the FD role in student

intercultural development, is based on the relationship between key intercultural trainer competencies and trainer effectiveness (Paige, 1993b, 170–171). Giving NAC’s faculty an opportunity to develop their intercultural trainer competencies (i.e., self-awareness, and the ability to facilitate student intercultural development) will allow them to become more effective in the FD role.

Limitations of the Study

Because FDs at only one undergraduate U.S. higher education institution were the focus of this study, the findings are not generalizable to all colleges and universities in the United States. In addition, although the researcher would have liked to interview all NAC FDs, not all of the FDs at the institution who were invited to participate in the study chose to do so.

Opportunities for Future Research

While this study explored the faculty perspective on the FD role, it is recommended that research be conducted on the student view of the role as well. For example, study abroad students (at NAC, or at other colleges and universities) could be interviewed and/or surveyed in order to create a picture of the support they need in regard to intercultural development. By carrying out research on the student *and* faculty perspectives on the FD role, best practices could be identified and implemented to the benefit of both parties.

Conclusion

Using qualitative interviews and administration of the quantitative IDI, this study explored the issues associated with the FD role at NAC. It was reported that the FD role had multiple dimensions (DoS, logistical, intercultural, and academic), that the NAC FDs lacked formal preparation for the role, that the FD sample had a limited degree of intercultural development, and that they did not have adequate training to support their students’ intercultural development process.

In closing, it is important to note that every one of the faculty who participated in the study demonstrated genuine passion for leading NAC students on study abroad programs. One of the FDs in the study—a professor who had led a total of 17 NAC study abroad programs—choked back tears as he described how strongly he felt about his service in the FD role. Another faculty member stated that a FD must have “clear vision and a clear passion” for the program he or she directs, and *all* of the faculty in the study shared stories about deep bonds they had formed with their study abroad students. Indeed,

it was clear that these FDs were doing the best they could with the energy, preparation, and training that they had. With the recommended changes to the “Faculty Directors’ Workshop” and continued efforts on the faculty’s part, the FDs at NAC can take significant steps toward even more effective performance in the FD role.

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