



PERGAMON

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

SCIENCE @ DIRECT®

International Journal of Intercultural Relations
27 (2003) 445–465

International Journal of
INTERCULTURAL
RELATIONS

www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

Do university-sponsored international cultural events help students to appreciate “difference”?

Thomas Klak^{a,*}, Patricia Martin^b

^a *Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056 USA*

^b *Department of Geography, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309, USA*

Abstract

Hosting large-scale events that celebrate the diversity of global cultures is one way that colleges and universities are responding to the imperative of increasing students' intercultural sensitivity. The effectiveness of such cultural events for promoting an appreciation of cultural difference remains unclear, however. This research examines shifts in students' attitudes toward cultural difference while students participated in one such celebration that focused on Latin American cultures and was held at Miami University (Ohio) during the fall semester of 1996. Our research question is “Was there a correlation between student participation in the Latin American Celebration and positive change in the same students' intercultural sensitivity?” By employing a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity and an associated survey instrument, we measured students' attitudes toward cultural difference and how they changed following intercultural exposure. Our preliminary results indicate that the Celebration may have helped to deepen students' intercultural appreciation. Students' attitudes shifted on several dimensions of intercultural sensitivity in the predicted direction of greater openness to other cultures. The most notable shift was toward greater engagement with and Acceptance of cultural difference. These were in fact among the central messages of the Latin American Celebration. Although producing fully “intercultural global citizens” is realistically beyond the scope of most on-campus education, the research suggests that progress toward greater intercultural understanding seems possible through a combination of special events, related courses and a supportive campus environment. Our study also suggests that campus activities aimed at promoting diversity will be more successful when they extend from an understanding of the cognitive processes leading individuals toward or away from increased intercultural sensitivity.

© 2003 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Intercultural sensitivity; Cultural diversity; Cultural events; Latin America; Ethnocentrism

*Corresponding author. Fax: +1-513-529-1948.

E-mail address: klakt@muohio.edu (T. Klak).

1. Introduction

At Miami University's 1996 convocation, President James Garland invited the university community and the Class of 2000 to "celebrate the majesty of Latin American culture". This presidential invitation was followed by a convocation address by Dominican author Julia Alvarez, whose book, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (1992), was the summer reading selection for first-year students. These addresses initiated a yearlong campus-wide series of cultural and intellectual events that focused on Latin America. The dozens of events comprising the LAC covered a great range. They included large performances, such as those of *Diablolomundo*, an Argentine puppet troupe, and *Inti Illimani*, a world-renowned Chilean musical group, and small, but no less significant, events such as a weekly showing of a Latin American film. A central component of the celebration was a series of lectures and discussions hosted by the Spanish and Portuguese Department. Each Wednesday at noon, a Miami University faculty member led a "charla" that offered academic and personal perspectives on Latin America. These discussions were complemented by week-long residencies by preeminent Latin American scholars, and by visits from Fulbright scholars from El Salvador and Costa Rica. Similarly, the Department of Art and Architecture offered a series of lectures focusing on Latin American architecture. The Department of Spanish and Portuguese, in conjunction with the Latin American Studies Program, offered special courses on contemporary Latin American culture, politics, and society. Without a doubt the highlight of the year, however, was a campus visit by Guatemalan Nobel Laureate for Peace, Rigoberta Menchu Tum. This wide range of events provided a forum for intellectual debates extending beyond the classroom and concerning the opportunities and challenges facing Latin America in the world. The Celebration took on a life of its own, created its own momentum, and generated impromptu discussions across campus.

While celebrations such as the one at Miami University fall under the traditional purview of university life, recent trends in higher education give an added imperative to such large-scale events aimed at increasing global cultural and political awareness. The reality and rhetoric of increasing global interdependence has fostered a growing sense that higher education needs to incorporate greater international understanding. The American Council on Education has called "for major changes in how colleges and universities educate their students about the world" (ACE, 1995, p. 4). The first recommendation was that "the educational experience must be infused with some degree of *intercultural competence*" (ACE, 1995, p. 5, emphasis added). Moreover, as national borders become increasingly permeable to global economic processes (Ohmae, 1995; Adler, 1995; World Bank, 2000), such calls for international intercultural competence dovetail with the longer standing emphasis on the need to diversify college curricula in response to domestic pluralism/multiculturalism (Takaki, 1993). The American Association of Colleges and Universities recently published a report highlighting the unique position of higher education to address the tensions inherent in pluralistic democracies. The report credits universities for creating more inclusive and tolerant campus environments in recent years, but concludes that they still fall short of their potential. Campuses provide unique

opportunities to go further by linking the ideals of diversity to debates and discussions of “the greater public good” through which a more inclusive democracy can be fostered (Minnich, 1995, p. xvi). The reports from these organizations in higher education illustrate how recent calls for greater intercultural understanding are often linked pragmatically to societal and economic realities, goals, and imperatives.

Events such as Miami University’s LAC provide a forum for discussing and addressing global and national concerns about cultural difference. Events that offer the depth, diversity, and range of topics as in the LAC can foment discussion of a wider range of cultural issues. Indeed, in a recent accreditation report, the university administration highlighted the LAC as a component of a larger university effort to improve the “climate for diversity” (Miami University, 1997, p. 2). These connections make sense to us because, as Dey (1997) demonstrates, the process of socialization in higher education is such that broader social contexts greatly influence the attitudes and values of particular students. Since the LAC permeated the university environment, it undoubtedly fostered an atmosphere more conducive to increased intercultural understanding.

While we believe that celebrations of this type are inherently valuable, we also hold that their impacts can be better understood and enhanced if accompanied by the appropriate conceptual and methodological tools. For this reason, the authors pursued a research project during the fall semester of the LAC year aimed at conceptualizing and measuring the Celebration’s impact on students’ intercultural understanding. Numerous studies measure intercultural competence among specific populations. However, prior research has paid particular attention to the impacts of undergoing intensive intercultural training (e.g., Bird, Heinbuch, Dunbar, & McNulty, 1993; Gannon and Poon, 1997) or to intercultural differences in values and communication styles (e.g., individualism versus collectivism; Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992; Millhouse, 1996). We believe that the research presented here represents the first time that a large-scale university event has been evaluated in terms of the potential impacts on students’ intercultural views. The event’s format created both a research challenge and an element of relevance to other institutions of higher learning. On the one hand, unlike most previous studies of intercultural views, the content of the “intervention,” i.e., the LAC, was multi-faceted, diffuse and largely out of our control as we sought to measure its impacts. On the other hand, our research evaluates a situation approximating a typical institutionally sponsored educational and cultural experience at any university.

To be clear, the authors realize that from the perspective of research design, isolating any specific impacts on students’ attitudes from the LAC, as compared to the university’s broader social-educational context, is extremely difficult. We cannot make claims, therefore, about direct causality from the Celebration to the students’ attitudes. We can only suggest, as we do below, that there is a correlation between students’ engagement with the LAC and changes in their intercultural attitudes. The experience of the students we evaluated was clearly influenced by their courses in Geography and other departments. Attendance at a range of events and reflective written evaluations of these events were a requirement of these Geography classes. In

addition, Geography lectures and other course activities regularly incorporated the LAC. The instructors thereby consistently heightened the students' awareness of both their own attitudes as well as more dominant and pervasive societal attitudes toward other cultures and cultural difference. Given the degree to which the LAC was incorporated into the course material, the authors can state with confidence that students were clearly engaged with events occurring on campus and that these events provided students the opportunity to think about how to interpret cultural difference. However, isolating the impact of the LAC from the Geography courses, or from the students' other experiences during the semester, would be nearly impossible. While the results that are presented here should be understood as preliminary, they present a valuable introduction to a large research agenda that would examine how well different kinds of university programs and events foster intercultural understanding.

2. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity

This research employs a theoretical framework for intercultural sensitivity developed by Bennett, M. (1993). There were several reasons for this selection. First, the LAC planning committee, on which the first author served, used Bennett's framework as a conceptual backdrop while it planned the year's events. Second, Bennett's model is a product of his many years of experience in analyzing attitudes toward other cultures and training people to be more interculturally sensitive. Third, and most notably, Bennett, together with Mitchell Hammer, have developed a survey instrument that extends from the framework and is designed to locate individuals along a spectrum of intercultural understanding. This instrument, therefore, provided the means to evaluate systematically changes in students' cultural attitudes before and after direct involvement with the LAC.

Bennett has created a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity to explain people's varied responses to similar experiences with cultural difference. The model posits that (1) intercultural understanding is learned, not innate, (2) people and cultures are dynamic and highly differentiated, and (3) intercultural competence refers not to "objective knowledge" (e.g., knowledge gained through studying a particular culture's history) but instead to "phenomenological knowledge," in which an individual's experiences help her/him to develop skills for interpreting and understanding direct intercultural interactions.¹

Bennett's model distinguishes between ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. In an ethnocentric worldview, individuals conceive of their own cultural perspective as representing "reality." Ethnocentric people are monocultural; they have not internalized perspectives emanating from other cultures. In contrast, ethnorelative people can appreciate cultural perspectives other than their own. They recognize "that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular

¹ While Bennett develops his framework for *culture*, he argues that it could be applied to other kinds of "difference," including gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity.

behavior can only be understood within a cultural context” (Bennett, M., 1993, p. 46).

The model further distinguishes between stages of ethnocentrism and ethnor-elativism through a continuum of intercultural orientations (Fig. 1). Bennett’s model is developmental, meaning that, given certain kinds of experience, all individuals *can* move through the stages, although it is unusual to reach the most developed stage of ethnorelativism (*Integration*). Furthermore, while the model implies that ethnor-elativism is preferable to ethnocentrism, it also suggests that the early ethnocentric stages, which can be associated with virulent forms of intercultural hatred, bigotry, and racism, should be comprehended and constructively engaged rather than simply condemned.

The most extreme form of ethnocentrism is *Avoidance*, characterized by either a genuine lack of awareness of other cultures or an active attempt to separate oneself from people thought of as “different.” While the former invokes the image of a people living in *isolation*, it can also characterize a “modern” yet homogenous community. The latter form of *Avoidance*, on the other hand, involves the overt

<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Stages of Bennett’s Model</i>	<i>Constructs in the Survey Instrument</i>
<i>Ethnocentric</i>	1) Avoidance A. Isolation B. Separation	1) Avoidance
<i>Ethnocentric</i>	2) Protection A. Denigration B. Superiority C. Reversal	2) Protection
<i>Ethnocentric</i>	3) Minimization A. Physical Universalism B. Transcendental Universalism	3) Reversal 4) Minimization
<i>Ethnorelative</i>	4) Acceptance A. Behavioral Relativism B. Value Relativism	5) Acceptance
<i>Ethnorelative</i>	5) Adaptation A. Empathy B. Pluralism	6) Adaptation
<i>Ethnorelative</i>	6) Integration A. Contextual Evaluation B. Constructive Marginality	7) Contextual Evaluation 8) Cultural Marginality

Fig. 1. The stages of Bennett’s model and their operationalization in the survey instrument.

construction of spatial and social barriers for the *separation* of different cultural groups. While the South African system of apartheid provided the most crystallized form of such separation, the permissibility of the ghettoization of cultural groups in US cities exemplifies a more local example.

In the second stage of ethnocentrism, *Protection*, an individual recognizes the existence of other cultures but does so by casting her/his own culture as superior. *Protection* has three sub-stages. *Denigration* involves overt negative stereotyping. A slightly less pernicious form of the Protection stage is *superiority*, where one openly promotes one's own culture without explicitly denigrating others. As Bennett suggests, the ideology of economic modernization, where “less developed” countries are told to strive to become developed by following the North American and European example, “often embodies the assumption of superiority” (Bennett, M., 1993, p. 37). The final form of *Protection*, *Reversal*, is illustrated by people who have lived abroad and then reject their own culture. Peace Corps volunteers are prone to this form of reverse cultural *Protection*.

Bennett's model calls the most developed form of ethnocentrism *minimization* whereby individuals maintain the centrality of their worldview by asserting that all cultures have more similarities than differences. These assertions can take two forms, *physical* or *transcendental*. The first form is illustrated by claims that, biologically speaking, all humans are the same. As Bennett argues, however, “while some of the assertions of ethnology and physical universalism in general may be accurate, for intercultural communication, they are trivial. They fail to address the culturally unique social context of physical behavior that enmeshes such behavior in a particular world view” (p. 43). The second form of *minimization* refers to more abstract, philosophical calls to universality and sameness. Here Bennett includes certain versions of religion such as Christianity and Islam which consider all people as potential members, and certain economic development frameworks associated with Marxism and economic liberalism which presume to have universal relevance and explanatory power.

The three remaining developmental stages are ethnorelative because they recognize that all worldviews are culturally embedded and therefore can only be understood in relation to one another. *Acceptance* is the first of these stages. A simple form of *Acceptance* is *behavioral* and acknowledges that communication often differs across cultures. A more sophisticated form of *Acceptance* recognizes that *values* are also culturally contextualized, as gender relations illustrate.

Adaptation is the second ethnorelative stage. “Culture” is no longer considered a static, personal possession. Instead, individuals move between more than one cultural frame of reference to gain understanding of intercultural issues. A more temporary form of *Adaptation* is expressed through *empathy*, whereby an individual can imagine, understand, or support the perspective of another. *Pluralism*, a more permanent, holistic, and perhaps less conscious, form of *Adaptation*, involves employing more than one fully developed cultural frame of reference. This kind of cultural competence often requires extended immersion in another culture. And because people that are culturally plural “wear more than one hat,” so to speak, respect for “difference” becomes respect for oneself and one's viewpoints.

The final stage of Bennett's model is *Integration* and is also attainable only through sustained intercultural interaction. In other words, the final two stages are largely beyond the scope of a typical university education, a point worth recognizing as universities set their goals for intercultural education. In *Integration*, individuals are able to transcend cultural frames. *Contextual Evaluation*, the first of two forms of *Integration*, represents "the ability to analyze and evaluate situations from one or more chosen cultural perspectives" (p. 61). A deeper form is *constructive marginality*, which signifies that a person has moved beyond all cultural frames of reference. The cultural and identity "void" associated with constructive marginality can produce feelings of "great discomfort and dysfunction" (pp. 63–64). The remedy is systematic reflection on the nature of the cultures encountered and one's relation to them. Then, constructively marginal people are empowered, because they better understand themselves, cultural practices, and how to act sensitively in different cultural settings.²

Bennett argues that each stage corresponds with educational steps for moving toward greater ethnorelativity. The reverse is also true: if a person is ill prepared for a particular experience associated with more developed intercultural stage, s/he may move in a negative direction. For example, an individual expressing *Protection* through cultural superiority may react negatively to ideas of cultural ethnorelativity, while they would be appropriate for someone in the *minimization* stage.

Rather than thinking of Bennett's model as a perfect reflection of reality, it is better seen as a heuristic device for systematically examining perceptions of cultural difference. It is unlikely, for example, that any individual's attitudes would be located exclusively in one stage. An individual's worldview is likely to have a predominant orientation associated with one of the stages, while at the same time exhibiting a range of other intercultural attitudes, some interconnected, others that may be contradictory. Furthermore, Bennett's model rests implicitly on the notion that individuals engaging a new cultural context are doing so from an equal or superior position of power. The model is less applicable to someone experiencing ongoing cultural oppression because s/he may have less choice in determining how to engage and react to cultural difference.

Despite these qualifications, Bennett's model offers a way to operationalize the process of intercultural understanding and connects with the contemporary educational mandates highlighted earlier. The model provides concrete steps for increasing intercultural understanding while avoiding descent into fragmented cultural relativism which invokes the specter of "culture wars." Finally, two other points regarding the application of Bennett's model to students' experience of the LAC should be noted. First, the Celebration offered a continual mix of events in terms of type and premise. It was not organized chronologically to reflect movement through the developmental stages. Second, at most events, students were vicarious observers in the audience, rather than being active participants.

²Bennett, J. (1993) explains how *Cultural Marginality* can potentially be both disempowering and destabilizing, and empowering and constructive.

Whereas the six stages of Bennett's model are based largely in theory, Bennett and Hammer's survey instrument is organized around eight constructs derived from an empirical exercise. These researchers collected 500 statements about cultural differences from people of different cultures, and from those, factor analysis identified the eight constructs. Four constructs correspond with developmental stages in Bennett's model. The other four constructs represent subcategories of the two remaining stages (see Fig. 1). The next two sections of the paper examine that survey and the results from pre- and posttests of a group of Miami University students.

3. Method

3.1. *The survey instrument*

We measured students' attitudes toward intercultural issues through a 70-question survey instrument called the "Intercultural Development Inventory" (IDI) created by Bennett and Hammer. Individuals to whom the eight-page IDI is administered encounter an introductory coversheet that makes four main points: (1) responses are confidential, (2) "there are no right or wrong answers, nor 'good' or 'bad' responses" (note that this point is underscored by the survey's neutral title), (3) the items in the questionnaire are "actual statements made by people from many countries throughout the world," and (4) subjects should respond to each question regardless of "whether you believe a certain type of statement should or should not be made." These introductory points are designed to encourage honest, accurate, and complete responses. However, a clarification is necessary regarding the second point. How can educators committed to enhancing intercultural appreciation claim to be neutral regarding which responses are preferable? While Bennett, J. (1993) is unabashedly pro-cultural sensitivity, at the same time he does not condemn ethnocentrism. Instead he conceptualizes it as natural, normal, logical, and understandable. Ethnocentrism is based on limited or negatively perceived intercultural experience. In this way intercultural awareness can be seen as a path along which we all walk.

The IDI contains seventy statements about intercultural issues followed by seven Likert-scaled response options, ranging from one "strongly disagree" to seven "strongly agree". Fig. 2 provides examples of questions contributing to each of the eight constructs.

3.2. *The sample of students*

We asked students enrolled in two geography courses taught by the first author if they would be willing to complete the survey. The second author was the teaching assistant in one of the courses, "GEO 111: World Regional Geography," which is taught at a first-year level and enrolled 85 students. GEO 111 fulfills several graduation requirements at Miami and draws students from a wide range of majors and from all four undergraduate levels. Our experience with teaching GEO 111 over

Ethnocentric constructs:	Example statements from the IDI:					
1. Avoidance	I see no compelling reason to pay attention to what happens in other countries.					
2. Protection	The rest of the world should look to my culture for answers in solving their problems.					
3. Reversal	I have very little respect for people from my own culture.					
4. Minimization	People are the same despite outward differences in appearance.					
Ethnorelative constructs:						
5. Acceptance	It is appropriate that people from other cultures do not necessarily have the same values and goals as people from my own culture.					
6. Adaptation	When I come in contact with people from a different culture, I find I change my behavior to adapt to theirs.					
7. Contextual Evaluation	Sometimes I evaluate situations in my own culture based on my experiences and knowledge of other cultures.					
8. Cultural Marginality	I do not feel I am a member of any one culture or combinations of cultures; I do feel I am something else.					
Response options:						
Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Slightly Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Slightly Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7

Fig. 2. Example statements contributing to each of the eight constructs on the IDI, and the response options.

the years is that it enrolls students that are fairly representative of student body. The second course is a junior-level offering entitled “GEO 304: Geography of Latin America” with an enrollment of 30 students. Because of its more specialized and advanced subject matter, GEO 304 draws some students with a regional focus and considerable intercultural experience. At the same time, however, GEO 304 also attracts students earning a degree in geography, substituting regional courses for a language requirement, or seeking an elective. Both courses, therefore, have diverse enrollment. We therefore believe that the courses, taken together, provide a reasonable approximation of Miami students in terms of background, intercultural experiences, age, years in school, and degree pursuits. Sixty-three students, i.e., those

completing pre- and posttests that could be matched by social security number, comprise the sample we analyze. An additional 40 completed one test or the other, and/or their surveys could not be matched. Table 1 summarizes key attributes for these respondents.

3.2.1. Procedure

Students were asked to complete the IDI at the end of a class period, once near the beginning and again near the end of the fall semester. Students were unaware that they would be asked to retake the same survey later in the term until they were presented with it. In a brief cover letter signed by the first author, we provided the students with additional introductory information specific to our use of the IDI: (1) their participation was voluntary and had no bearing on their course grade, (2) the questionnaires would remain unexamined until after course grades were filed, and (3) they should either sign on the introductory page indicating their willingness to participate, or simply place the uncompleted questionnaire in the box provided by the administrator. Other faculty administered the questionnaires. To further emphasize the voluntary nature of the survey, all students placed their surveys into the same boxes so that at that time, their choice regarding participation could not be easily detected.

During the 2 months after completing the pretest, and as part of the course requirements for GEO 111 and 304, students were given a variety of instructional materials and assignments aimed at increasing intercultural awareness and appreciation. These included readings on intercultural difference and an accompanying lecture and discussion. Students were also required to attend several LAC events (five for GEO 111 and six for GEO 304 students). Each student selected her/his preferred events from the extensive list in the Celebration calendar. One-page commentaries on the attended event and its intercultural significance were due 1 week afterwards. Students could also submit additional commentaries for bonus credit. In this way, the course provided the basis through which students could

Table 1
Attributes of students in the courses and the sample of respondents

	GEO 111	GEO 304	Total
No. completing only pre- or posttest, or for which pre- and posttests could not be matched	43	6	49
No. completing neither pre- nor posttest	2	1	3
No. completing both pre- and posttests	40	23	63
No. completing courses	85	30	115
White, not Hispanic (%)	89.7	95.5	91.8
Have lived mostly in the US	94.7	91.3	93.4
Female (%)	55.0	34.8	47.6
Mean age	19.2	22.8	20.5
Over 22 (%)	0	21.6	8
Never been abroad (%)	66.7	34.8	55
Lived abroad 3 or more months (%)	19.9	29.9	26

choose events that appealed to them and become actively engaged in the campus-wide LAC.

Students included in the research were twice willing to give up 20–30 min of their time to complete the survey. What types of students volunteered to participate? The evidence, although incomplete, suggests that there was some self-selection bias in favor of students that were relatively motivated to learn about intercultural issues. Evidence of this bias can be found by comparing the average scores for the eight constructs for those completing both rounds of the survey to those completing only one round (Table 1). The statistical procedure is analysis of variance. On the one hand, there are no statistically significant differences in scores between students completing only the pretest compared to those completing both pre- and posttests. This suggests that, at the beginning of the semester, participants in the study held similar intercultural views compared to other students in the two courses. On the other hand, there are statistically significant differences in construct scores between those completing both rounds and those completing only the posttest. Three constructs (*Avoidance*, *Acceptance*, and *Adaptation*) were significantly different at the 0.01 probability level. A fourth one (*Protection*) approached statistical significance (the probability level is 0.10). In all four cases, the average scores of those completing only the posttest were more ethnocentric than for those completing both tests. One could logically speculate that scores from students who chose not to complete either survey would have been more ethnocentric still.

So the data suggest that while participants began the study with intercultural views representative of their classmates (and therefore broadly representative of Miami University), they did not conclude the study that way. The differences in posttest scores have implications regarding the population that the sample represents (Moore and McCabe, 1993, p. 508). The 63 participants in the study were relatively motivated to engage in intercultural training. This raises a curricular question (beyond the scope of this study) of what might be done in the early stages of exposure to intercultural issues to motivate students to take initiative. These findings highlight the point that progress toward ethnorelativism requires personal commitment toward that goal.

3.2.2. *Limitations*

It is important to note that a control group was not used in this research. There were several important pedagogical and practical reasons behind this decision. Having a control group would have required asking another professor who was teaching comparable geography classes to participate in the study, and such participation would have exerted a great deal of influence over those classes and students. The students (as well as the instructor) in a control class would have been prohibited from participating in any activities associated with the LAC. This restriction would have been contrary to the principal of open public access to campus events, to the rights of any tuition-paying student, and potentially to student learning. The restriction would also be pragmatically difficult given the pervasiveness of Celebration activities across campus, and given the fact that exposure could have come via other instructors and courses the students were taking. Further, creating a

control group would have required the other geography professor to dedicate a half an hour of class time near the beginning and again end of the semester to administer the surveys, with yet another professor coming in to serve as the administrator. The helpful faculty member that agreed to her/his class being the control group might well feel s/he was being set up to be the goat—i.e., the one whose students did not become more interculturally sensitive. Finally, the most desired outcome of such a research design is intrinsically problematic. As researchers, we would want the control group students to exhibit less growth in interculturally sensitivity, but such a result would have been a negative educational experience for both the control group professor and her/his students. This is contrary to the spirit of the research questions and associated pedagogical interest. We are most concerned with how to provide the best campus-wide environment for intercultural education in a university setting. Having no control group may not have been the best decision based on strict research criteria, but the authors' believed that it was the best choice given pedagogical, departmental and university-wide considerations.

4. Results and discussion

Given that there were some differences in the background of the students enrolled in GEO 111 and GEO 304 (Table 1), it is appropriate to ask whether they entered the study with significantly different intercultural views. If so, they should be analyzed separately; if not, they can be treated as if they were drawn from the same student population. This issue can be gauged by comparing their scores for the eight constructs on the pretest. For this purpose, we use one-tailed *t*-tests for independent samples with unequal variances. The *t*-tests reveal no significant difference ($p = 0.05$) between the two classes on seven of the eight constructs on the pretest. The students' scores for the ethnocentric construct *Protection* (Fig. 1) provided one minor exception to the rule that the two classes entered the experiment with similar intercultural views. While both groups rejected the notion that their own culture should be considered better or a model for others to follow, GEO 304 students were more emphatic (the difference in scores is statistically significant, $p = 0.05$). However, given that this statistical difference is relatively minor when considered conceptually, and that the groups do not differ on the other seven constructs, the two classes are combined in the remainder of the analysis.

4.1. Scale reliability

Next we assessed the reliability of the measurement instrument. Table 2 shows that the value of alpha coefficients is 0.60 or more for all 16 pre- and posttests constructs. This means that all measures have an acceptable level of reliability.

4.2. Analysis and interpretation of the IDI scores

Fig. 3 displays the mean scores for all eight constructs. Scores near the middle—i.e., in the range of three to five—indicate issues about which the person feels some

Table 2
Measurement reliability, construct scores, and significance tests

		Reliability alpha	Mean score	<i>t</i> -value & signif. level ^a		
<i>Ethnocentric constructs</i>						
1. Avoidance	Pretest	0.80	1.84	2.80 (0.01)**		
	Posttest	0.82	1.68			
2. Protection	Pretest	0.91	2.10	1.29 (0.10)		
	Posttest	0.83	1.99			
3. Reversal ^b	Pretest	0.74	2.73	0.11 (0.46)		
	Posttest	0.80	2.72			
4. Minimization	Pretest	0.81	4.21	1.10 (0.14)		
	Posttest	0.86	4.10			
<i>Ethnorelative constructs</i>						
5. Acceptance	Pretest	0.80	5.71	-2.45 (0.01)**		
	Posttest	0.84	5.87			
6. Adaptation	Pretest	0.74	4.34	-1.71 (0.05)*		
	Posttest	0.84	4.50			
7. Contextual evaluation	Pretest	0.83	4.56	-1.68 (0.05)*		
	Posttest	0.92	4.69			
8. Cultural marginality ^b	Pretest	0.64	3.04	-0.10 (0.46)		
	Posttest	0.81	3.05			
<i>Response options</i>						
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Agree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Significant at the 0.05 level.

**Significant at the 0.01 level.

^a 1-tailed significance is measured through a paired sample *t*-test.

^b Construct is measured with a five-item scale; all others have 10-item scales.

uncertainty or ambivalence with regard to her/his intercultural experiences and views about that construct. In contrast, those constructs on which scores fall near the ends of the seven-point continuum—i.e., around two or below or around six or above—signal issues about which subjects feel more strongly. They represent issues that are central to the subjects' current intercultural perceptions and evaluation.

As can be seen in Fig. 3, students felt most strongly about (i.e., strongly rejected) the early stage ethnocentric constructs of *Avoidance*, *Protection*, and *Reversal*, and

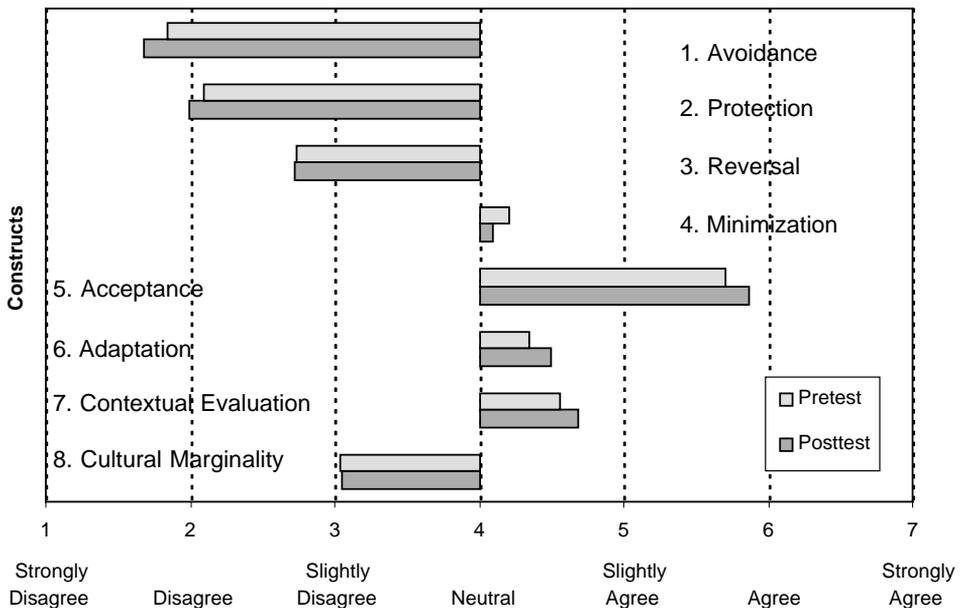


Fig. 3. Bar graph of the mean scores for pre- and posttests constructs.

their responses were more ambivalent for the ethnorelative constructs. This is not surprising. Most students in this sample have had limited intercultural exposure and therefore they have stronger views regarding the more basic dimensions of ethnocentrism, but more uncertainty about the more advanced intercultural stages. One first works through the simpler notions of intercultural relations before moving on to engage more complex ones. Note that the students strongly rejected *Avoidance* and *Protection* and supported *Acceptance*. Students felt relatively neutral toward issues associated with constructs six (*Adaptation*) and seven (*Contextual Evaluation*). These issues are ones to which students have not had much exposure, and so they reacted more to the statements' inapplicability than to their inappropriateness. Students on average evaluated the eighth and most intercultural sophisticated construct, *Cultural Marginality*, in a slightly ethnocentric way (the pre- and posttests mean scores approach three out of seven, with seven representing the most ethnocentric position; see Fig. 3). This is understandable. Students as a whole have not had the extended intercultural experiences that would be necessary to conceptually separate themselves from culture. Such notions are alien to the average student, who therefore reacts somewhat ethnocentrically.

The scores on constructs three and four, *Reversal* and *Minimization*, support the view that students in the sample are making a transition between Ethnocentrism and Ethnorelativism. Scores for *Reversal* are predictably low and those for *Minimization* are comparatively high. This suggests these students are beginning to move into the ethnorelative stages, but are still dealing with *Minimization* issues.

Their worldviews appear to be highly transitional between Ethnocentrism and Ethnorelativism.

Bennett's model distinguishes *Reversal* from the other constructs because it "occurs only in certain cases" and is therefore "not an inevitable stage of intercultural development" (Bennett, J., 1993, p. 35, 39). In other words, people can by-pass it. If they were to skip over it, their scores for *Reversal* would be relatively neutral, as in our results. Further, our own intercultural and teaching experiences raise the question of whether *Reversal* should be considered the third of eight stages. Rather, we suspect it is a more advanced stage. As in the example of Peace Corps volunteers drawn by Bennett, we too have observed students returning from extended stays abroad who express sentiments that suggest *Reversal*—e.g., marveling at the richness of a foreign culture in comparison to their own. We have also noticed *Reversal*-type attitudes among students following more advanced analysis of US foreign policy or the export of US culture—e.g., critiquing US global influence for its apparent imposition abroad (Leslie, 1995). Students holding such views would score strongly on *Reversal*, but on the high or ethnocentric end of the scale. Indeed, scores for *Reversal* exhibit the second largest standard deviation (*Minimization* is first) among the constructs, a pattern that is consistent with such an interpretation with multiple meanings. All but four students completing the pre- and posttests had scores for constructs one (*Avoidance*), two (*Protection*), and five (*Acceptance*) that were on the ethnorelative end of the scale. In contrast, scores for constructs two (*Reversal*) and three (*Minimization*), located between them on the continuum, are scattered throughout the scale. Our main point is to suggest how and why student reactions to statements concerning *Reversal* were relatively heterogeneous. Such heterogeneity would account for its deviation from the general pattern across the construct continuum in Fig. 3.

Three issues related to measurement and conceptualization may account for the neutral scores for *Minimization* (Fig. 3). First, as noted above, its comparatively large standard deviation indicates heterogeneity of responses across the student sample. No attitudes toward *Minimization* statements prevail in the student group. Second, *Minimization* is distinctive in terms of the number of students who, despite instructions to the contrary, failed to provide complete responses. For the other seven constructs, complete pre- and posttests could be matched for 61 or more of the 63 students in the study. In contrast, *Minimization* had only 54 test pairs. Students clearly had more difficulty making judgments on its contributing statements. If some students felt unable to make judgments, it seems reasonable to surmise that those who did respond would provide relatively neutral answers. Third, the concept of "Minimization" itself presents one of the toughest conceptual challenges regarding issues of difference. For example: Should we put our differences aside and unite around common goals, or should we celebrate our differences? The culturally sensitive answer is to be up-front about differences *and* to seek unity, but in practice that is a challenging combination. Recent struggles over issues ranging from coalition politics to Third World/First World feminisms suggest that appropriate stances on "*Minimization*" issues are not obvious. The heterogeneity of responses may well be reflecting such ambiguities. Our main point here is to suggest that the

statements, appropriate positions, and results are least clear for *Minimization*, and that this lack of clarity can account for its deviant scores compared to the general pattern in the construct continuum.

How much change in intercultural sensitivity occurred between the pre- and posttests, and was the change in the predicted direction? The second answer is easier: yes—the mean scores for all eight constructs in the posttest are in the direction of greater intercultural sensitivity and appreciation compared to the pretest. That is, the posttest mean scores for all four ethnocentric constructs are *smaller* than the pretest mean scores, while the posttest mean scores for the ethnorelative constructs are *larger* than the pretest mean scores (compare the pre- and posttests mean scores in Table 2). However, the difference between pre- and posttests scores, when measured by a one-tailed paired sample *t*-test, is not statistically significant for all constructs. They therefore must be examined individually beginning with the first one, *Avoidance*.

In the pretest, the mean score for *Avoidance* indicates that students were predisposed to “disagree” with its ethnocentric statements. *Avoidance*’s pretest mean score is but 0.84 from the end of the seven-point continuum, indicating that the students entered the experiment feeling the most strongly about this of all the constructs (Fig. 3). In essence, students believed that it is a bad idea to isolate oneself from other cultures. The posttest score indicates significantly more disagreement (significant at the 0.05 level). The LAC activities reinforced and strengthened the average student’s predispositions that intercultural knowledge and interactions are valuable and worthwhile.

The pre- to posttest changes in average scores for constructs two through four are not statistically significant (Table 2). Given the conceptual or methodological problems of *Reversal* and *Minimization* discussed earlier, the lack of significant change in scores for these constructs is not surprising. *Protection*, however, requires its own interpretation. Recall that *Protection* concerns judgments about whether one’s own culture is “better” than others (Fig. 2). This construct taps most directly into issues of comparative international economic development, an important theme in some LAC events and especially in course material for GEO 111 and GEO 304. Bennett, J. (1993, p. 37) reads the worldview emanating from the United States Agency for International Development as the embodiment of notions of US cultural superiority, for it holds that other countries should evolve toward the US model of development. The first author’s experience working for USAID concurs with Bennett’s interpretation (Klak, 1992). Mean scores for both the pre- and posttests indicate that students reject this protectionist view. In statistical terms, however, the change cannot be distinguished from a chance occurrence. We can only speculate as to why the average student changed little.

One intriguing explanation draws from current trends in the global political economy, trends that are linked to USAID and its allies. The Cold War is over, capitalism reigns supreme, US cultural influences pervade, free market policies dominate, and, as Margaret Thatcher once defined the policy options, “There is no alternative”. The news media stress the seeming inevitability of these trends. Notably, the authors did present GEO 111 and GEO 304 students with alternative

conceptualizations to this unilinear development model for the world (Klak, 1998). At the same time, the hegemony of globalization and neoliberalism, led by powerful interests from the United States, was appropriately described and acknowledged in the courses (Arce and Daniel, 1999). Some students could well have been impressed, and their worldviews influenced, by the apparent global convergence toward US-styled development (Fukuyama, 1990). For such students, one would expect scores for *Protection* to become more ethnocentric (i.e., higher values in the posttest), as did occur for some respondents.

The positive change in the mean score for the fifth construct, *Acceptance*, is significant ($p = 0.01$). Individual scores are plotted in Fig. 4. A considerable majority of the students gave more ethnorelative responses on issues of *Acceptance* in the posttest than in the pretest (i.e., those plotted above and to the left of the diagonal in Fig. 4). The plot also shows that ten of the 63 students were less ethnocentric in the posttest, and this demonstrates how individual responses can vary. The one outlier near the bottom of Fig. 4 illustrates marked *Reversal*. This student's scores on statements about cultural Acceptance went from four (indicating neutrality) in the pretest, to 2.8 (indicating moderate disagreement) in the posttest. Unlike the rest of the group, this student may have been ill prepared to embrace and enjoy cultural difference. For the sample as a whole, scores indicate an increase in students' strong agreement with statements that cultural difference is to be understood and respected, whether or not one still prefers one's own cultural attributes. For example, the cultural intricacies of Mexico's Day of the Dead celebration, which one campus event featured, are to be valued even though a person from the United States may

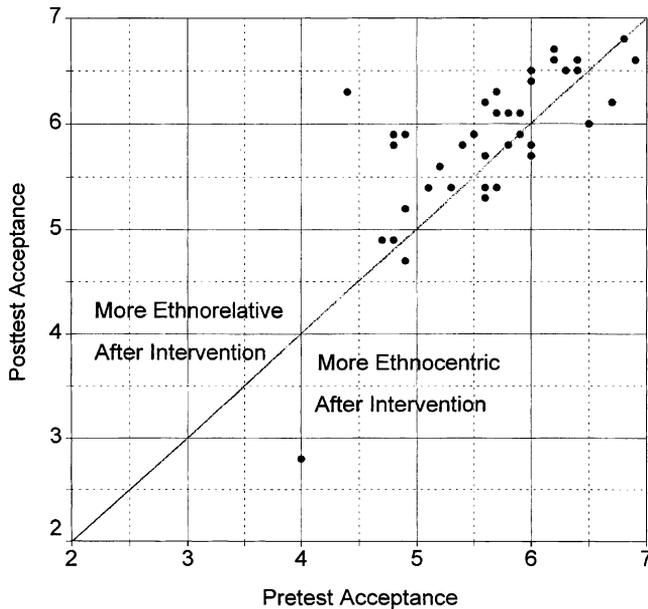


Fig. 4. Pre- and posttests scores for acceptance.

still feel more comfortable with and prefer Halloween activities. The significant movement in the ethnorelative direction on *Acceptance* for most students could be expected given the nature of the Celebration events. So many of the yearlong activities, beginning with convocation, introduced intriguing and enjoyable elements of Latin American society, and urged students to embrace them.

The movement in the average scores for *Adaptation* and *Contextual Evaluation* from pre- to posttest is significant at the 0.05 level (Table 2). The average student moved somewhat away from a relatively neutral position toward ethnorelativism. The posttest scores indicate that students were beginning to shift out of their original cultural value system and toward that of other cultures, as the situation they face demands. That students showed signs of *initial* engagement with these more advanced intercultural constructs is as much as could be hoped for under the circumstances. Neither the LAC nor class activities stressed such advanced intercultural training. Likewise, they did not demand substantial behavioral change. Typically this is a process undergone during extended periods of living in another culture. The results suggest that the campus-wide context promoted by the celebration contributed modestly to an enabling effect for students who were afterwards better prepared to go abroad and benefit fully from the cultural experience.

Average scores for the eighth construct, *Cultural Marginality*, reveal no significant change over the study period. This is not surprising. This construct is the least relevant to the average student's worldview and is largely beyond the scope of the LAC and campus activities more generally. Culturally marginal people are "outside all cultural frames of reference" (Bennett, J., 1993, p. 63). Individuals would not normally engage in the process of separating themselves from culture until after they have mastered the seven previous stages in the model, and after extended and deep experience living in other cultures.

5. Summary and implications for planning university events

One way that colleges and universities can respond to the need to increase students' intercultural sensitivity is by hosting large-scale events which celebrate the diversity of global cultures. This was precisely the intent of Miami University's LAC. However, the nature and extent of the effectiveness of such events to help students appreciate difference is neither well understood nor well documented. In response, we conceptualized and assessed the potential impact of the Celebration on the intercultural understanding of Miami University students. We measured students' initial locations on a multidimensional inventory of intercultural attitudes, and how they changed during a semester in which they were exposed to a variety of Latin American cultural events that were integrated into their courses. The sample population consisted of students in first- and third-year geography classes who voluntarily participated in the study.

The results show that students began the term with strong ethnorelative views on three of the eight constructs measuring intercultural sensitivity (Fig. 3 and Table 2).

Students believed that cultural engagement, not isolation, is important (*Avoidance*), that notions claiming that their own culture is superior to others are misguided (*Protection*), and that cultural difference is interesting and propitious (*Acceptance*). During the semester, students' attitudes shifted in a positive way that was statistically significant ($p = 0.01$) for two of these constructs (*Avoidance* and *Acceptance*). Attitudes toward cultural *Protection* did not change significantly over the term. This is an unsurprising result given the mixed messages students receive from various sources about how the United States stacks up against other countries. There were more modest positive attitudinal shifts (significant at 0.05) for the more advanced ethnorelative constructs of *Adaptation* and *Contextual Evaluation*. We view the students' positive shift for these constructs, on which they began the study with neutral attitudes, as representing an initial step in the direction of engaging cultures and their meanings at a deeper level in the future.

Changes in attitude toward the other three constructs were insignificant. We attribute these results to certain conceptual and methodological concerns (for *Reversal* and *Minimization*) or to the constructs' inapplicability to both the typical students' cultural cognition and the messages of the LAC (for *Cultural Marginality*, the most advanced construct).

The results presented here might lead one to argue that such campus-based celebrations are of little value because students already held strong views against *Avoidance* and in favor of *Acceptance* prior to the special events. However, this view underemphasizes the point that the development of intercultural sensitivity is an ongoing process of adjudicating between a great number and range of messages about cultural difference. Any strengthening of ethnorelative convictions on one intercultural construct increases the likelihood of greater cultural sensitivity regarding other constructs. Such strengthening has positive effects on the process by which a person constructs her/his total vision of human difference. For us, and for the many academic bodies that have been calling for more intercultural awareness and appreciation in higher education, the students' shift in the ethnorelative direction is welcome news and a hopeful sign that campus activities can make a contribution.

We conclude with some observations and suggestions for planning campus activities. Our observations suggest that, for the purpose of increasing students' intercultural appreciation, a large-scale series of university events concerned with international cultures, such as Miami University's LAC, offers several advantages. First, the flexibility provided by the wide range of events allows students to pick and choose ones appropriate to their current intercultural perspective. Students are able to engage other cultures in settings and through events with which they feel comfortable. Growth in intercultural sensitivity is an incremental, individual, and phenomenological process. We also believe that it is important that instructors incorporate into their syllabi extracurricular events, such as those of the LAC, when they are relevant to course content. Indeed the attitudinal shifts we found were more than likely encouraged by an interweaving of materials and discussions from both courses and the Celebration. Instructors should also give students options regarding what activities to engage in so that they can set their own pace. Note that it is more

precise to say that our research involved a “constrained” flexibility. We required students to attend and write commentaries on five or six events that they chose from a longer list.

Second, when such cultural events are at a large enough scale to permeate the university, and indeed even the off-campus community, as was the case with the Celebration, they generate their own momentum, lead to impromptu discussions, and help to open opportunities for engaging other types of difference. They therefore contribute to creating a campus climate in which diversity in its broadest sense can be examined, fostered and embraced.

Third, celebrations of this kind provide an appropriate vehicle for engaging students whose attitudes fall in the mid-range of intercultural sensitivity, which is precisely where the average student in our sample was located. S/he began the term with strong ethnocentric views on *Avoidance* and *Acceptance*, and the Celebration significantly extended those positions. During the semester the average student moved incrementally in the direction of Cultural Marginality.

Finally, less typical students should not be ignored, although they would appear to be best served by interventions other than Celebration-type events. On one end of the continuum, students exhibiting attitudes of *Avoidance* may intentionally choose not to attend the intercultural events. Such students may hold xenophobic views, which would call for a more elemental intervention concerned with exploring attitudes of bigotry. On the other end of the continuum are students whose attitudes reflect advanced ethnocentrism. For them, on-campus events may not propel their intercultural understanding any further. Students who are approaching *Cultural Marginality* would be best served by programs involving immersion in another culture.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Reed Anderson, Chuck Crespy, Don Fritz, Mitch Hammer, Jeanne Hey, Michael Paige and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier drafts. The authors also wish to thank Delilah Morris for her assistance with processing the questionnaires and organizing the data.

References

- American Council on Education (1995). *Educating for a world in flux: Ten ground rules for internationalizing higher education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education (or as an EDRS Document, Eric No.: ED 383 165).
- Adler, N. (1995). Competitive frontiers: Cross-cultural management and the 21st century. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 19(4), 523–537.
- Alvarez, J. (1992). *How the Garcia girls lost their accents*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Arce, M., & Daniel, G. (1999). The political economy of the neoliberal transition. *Latin American Research Review*, 34(1), 212–220.
- Bennett, J. (1993a). Cultural marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training. In R. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

- Bennett, M. (1993b). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S., & Brislin, R. (1992). The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16, 413–436.
- Bird, A., Heinbuch, S., Dunbar, R., & McNulty, M. (1993). A conceptual model of the effects of area studies training programs and the preliminary investigation of the model's hypothesized relationships. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 17, 415–435.
- Dey, E. (1997). Undergraduate political attitudes: Peer influence in changing social contexts. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68(4), 398–413.
- Fukuyama, F. (1990). *The end of history and the last man*. New York: Fress Press.
- Gannon, M., & Poon, J. (1997). Effects of alternative instructional approaches on cross-cultural training outcomes. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 21, 429–446.
- Klak, T. (1992). Excluding the poor from low income housing programs: The roles of state agencies and USAID in Jamaica. *Antipode*, 24(2), 87–112.
- Klak, T. (Ed.). (1998). *Globalization and neoliberalism: The Caribbean context*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Leslie, D. (1995). Global scan: The globalization of advertising agencies, concepts and campaigns. *Economic Geography*, 71, 402–426.
- Miami University (1997). Miami University Progress Report to the North Central Association Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, December.
- Minnich, E. (1995). *The drama of diversity and democracy: Higher education and American commitments*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities (or as an EDRS document, Eric No.: ED398 781).
- Moore, D., & McCabe, G. (1993). *Introduction to the practice of statistics* (2nd ed.). New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Ohmae, K. (1995). *The end of the nation-state*. New York: The Free Press.
- Takaki, R. (1993). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.
- World Bank (2000). *Global economic prospects for developing countries 1998/99: Beyond financial crisis*. Washington, DC: The World Bank (the full text of this publication is available on line at: <http://www.worldbank.org/prospects/gep98-99/full.htm>).