

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

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There are six stages of intercultural sensitivity. The stages of intercultural sensitivity include “Denial of difference”, “Defense against difference”, “Minimalization of difference”, “Acceptance of difference”, “Adaptation to difference”, and “Integration of difference” (Bennet, 1993). The different stages interact with culture in different ways. The first three have a more negative or basic interaction with culture. People who are in “Denial of difference” have simplistic reactions to culture, have not considered how culture impacts their lives, and may ask naive questions and appear tolerant (Bennet, 1993). People who are in “Defense against difference” feel attacked and threatened by other cultures (Bennet, 1993). These first two have a more negative interaction with culture. Once reaching “Minimalization of difference” there is a more positive interaction. People who are in “Minimalization of difference” are at the cusp of intercultural sensitivity believing that we are all human and there are little differences (Bennet, 1993). Though this third stage is not as negative as the previous two, it is still negative because it is belittling other cultures. I do not fall into any of these stages because I have an overall positive interaction with culture and understand diversity.

The final three stages have a more positive interaction with culture. I am unsure which of these three I fall under. People who are in “Acceptance of difference” acknowledge that there is value in different cultures (Bennet, 1993). This resonates with me because this is something that I believe. People who are in “Adaptation to difference” show acceptance, proper interaction, and natural behavior towards different cultures (Bennet, 1993). This stage takes acceptance further and creates empathy. People who are in “Integration of difference” tend to be bicultural or multicultural and have interaction with many cultures (Bennet, 1993). I am half-Filipino and half-white, so growing up I was exposed to Filipino culture. Even though this lives as part of my

identity, I do not feel I have enough understanding of Filipino culture and other cultures to say I belong in this stage.

I fall in “Adaptaion to difference” because I try to empathize with other cultures, but I acknowledge that there is more that I need to learn. The other day I was scrolling through TikTok and there was this video of a Muslim couple answering the question of if he saw her face before they go married. This was not really something that had crossed my mind previously, but I understand why it would intrigue others. They explained how sometimes, if the groom wishes, he will have his mother or other female relative view the brides face before the wedding and they would know his preferences and whether or not he should marry her. I was interested in learning this as well as her reasons for wearing the niqab. My previous understanding was minimal to just understanding it was religious, but she explained how she wore hers because it made her feel closer to her religion. I can liken that to how I used to always wear a saints bracelet in middle school because it made me feel closer to my religion.

Another example of why I fall into “Adaptation to difference” is in my interactions with my ex-boyfriend’s mom. My ex-boyfriend’s mom came from Bosnia. During the war, she turned to Islam and adopted parts of it. Even though she did not practice, it was still something she held with her. When she learned I was raised Catholic, she held some reservations about me. However, when interacting with her, I held no hostility or made any attempts at pushing my beliefs onto her, so she shared with me her thoughts. She taught me some prayers and traditions that she followed and I participated where appropriate.

A third example is when I was working my first job at Ben & Jerry’s. I worked with people from the Philippines, Russia, and Serbia. I was frequently on the same shift with the Filipinos. One day, they came in and were talking to each other in Tagalog. After seeing me, the

manager, a Filipina, told them that it was inappropriate to be speaking Tagalog in front of me because they were in America and it makes people uncomfortable. I explained to her that it was not a problem with me because my grandparents were from the Philippines and I was used to them speaking to each other in tagalog all the time. I knew that English was not their first language, so it made sense for them to communicate in Tagalog, especially if they were just talking to each other.

Bennet's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity tries to explain how people interact with culture. Knowing how different people might respond to culture is something that I would hope to get out of this class. It can make it easier to interact with others and culture if I understand different ways they might interact with culture.

Additionally, this assignment made me reflect on my own interaction with culture. Something I hope to gain from this course is a deeper understanding of cultures and cultural interactions. This assignment made me reflect on where I stand now and will remind me to look back on it after taking the course.

Reference

Bennett, M. J. (1993): Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Aus: Paige, RM, 21-71.