

Cultural Immersion Experience

Alicianna Flores

I. Description of the “plunge” experience & II. Bibliographical Sketch

- ▶ My interviewee is an young Indian woman who follows the Hindu religion. She is twenty years old. Both her heritage and religion mean a great deal to her, and impacts the way she lives her life. For the sake of her privacy I am going to refer to her as “Jane Doe”.
- ▶ Although I was not able to participate in a plunge due to the COVID 19, I was able to conduct an interview with “Jane Doe“. I feel that I learned a great deal from this interview.

III. Content of the interview

- ▶ For Jane, group membership is extremely important, during the interview she stated that both her religion and ethnicity greatly affects the way she lives her life.
- ▶ Jane states that it is not important to “feel” that she belongs, because she knows she does. She believes that the most important thing about group membership is the feeling of belonging she has and how it ties her to other individuals whose life experiences are similar to hers.
- ▶ A source of pride of being in these groups are both her religion and cultural traditions. She said that she believes that her religion brings her closer to what she believes to be her true gods. Also, she says that her cultural traditions give her pride.
- ▶ Jane stated that a negative aspect of her group membership is that she can often be misunderstood and judged because she is minority due to both her ethnicity/race and religion.

III. Content of the interview (Continued)

- ▶ Jane shared that group membership can affect social life especially. In her culture parents hold rigid expectations for children, expecting excellence in school. She also shared that her beliefs and customs can be misunderstood and seen as too different from the norm. She shared that while she had friends in school growing up, she was much closer with family friends who grew up with similar backgrounds.
- ▶ When it comes to choosing careers, Jane said that parents expect their children to obtain a higher education, and preferably move on to specialized study such as . Careers such as doctors, lawyers, business, etc. are highly respected.
- ▶ Jane said that she does not believe that her group membership affects her housing/Geographical location?
- ▶ Jane said that she has not seen that her group has much influence on movement in society, in the larger community, or political activity. She shared that while she is a minority group like many in the United States, the number of individuals sharing group membership is not as big as other groups such as African-Americans or Latinos.
- ▶ Jane shared that should would like human service professionals to know that although her group may be similar in various aspects, there is a large number of variations that occur due to the diversity India has a an overall country. There are thousands of languages spoken and traditions/customs can vary based on region/municipality.

IV. Compare and Contrast: generalizations and stereotypes

- ▶ I personally had a stereotype of this group before interviewing. I was under the impression that this ethnic group did not receive as much racism or oppression as compared to other groups such as African-Americans or Hispanics. I saw them as privileged because every person in this group I have previously met was either middle or upper class. This idea that I had changed when I heard Jane talk about how she has heard people call her religion “mythology”, how people have called her a terrorist, and how she sees little to no representation of her people in the media or politically. She said at times she feels like an “invisible minority”. Hearing Jane talk about her negative experiences was really heartbreaking, and I no longer have this stereotype of this group.

V. Possible Intersections: Oppression

- ▶ As previously stated, Jane is of a minority group here in the United States when it comes to both religion and ethnicity. Jane said that at times it is difficult because she feels that her group of membership has no representation in the media or politics.

VI. Factors for counseling

- ▶ Respect this groups beliefs even if they are different from their own.
- ▶ Understand that not everyone's experience is the same.
- ▶ Use active listening skills.
- ▶ If you do not have a good understanding of the clients background, inform yourself! Research.
- ▶ Remember that this group has a great deal of cultural diversity.
- ▶ Respect the ties of tradition and family.

VII. Connection to class material

- ▶ In this class we were taught how to counsel various groups of people. I feel that this project was beneficial because it exposed me to a group that I have never interacted with before. I have gained a great deal of respect for this groups struggles, and also gained an understanding of the general culture. Through learning about the diversity this ethic group has, this has just helped show the importance of treating everyone as an individual. Not everyone shares the same experiences. I now look forward to treating clients with diverse backgrounds, and feel comfortable coming out of my comfort zone.