

Acceptance of Diversity

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Acceptance of Difference is the intercultural sensitivity stage that I most identify myself with. From my understanding of the reference given, this level of intercultural sensitivity includes but is not limited to people who embrace, welcome, and/or acknowledge cultural differences and similarities. In this case, “acceptance” is defined as not placing judgement on another’s culture. Acceptance does not translate to one’s culture as being righteous or as the “correct” culture to follow. Instead, acceptance is merely recognizing the fact that there are other cultures besides your own. In conjunction with what was previously stated, one should be respectful of another person’s culture.

I chose this stage of intercultural sensitivity because of my upbringing. I was taught to be respectful of others and their cultures, no matter how similar or different they may be from my own culture. Also, at an incredibly young age, I was exposed to different and various cultures and subcultures primarily due to frequent travel. I have always thought of myself as respectful and mindful of others. I try not offend anyone intentionally or mistakenly with my words or actions. In fact, words cannot express how much I enjoy learning about different cultures. This love of learning allows me to be more culturally aware, open-minded, and knowledgeable. Knowledge is a powerful tool, and I firmly believe having knowledge of other cultures will play a fundamental role in my life, especially regarding communicating well with others.

I see diversity as a form of normalcy. For example, there have been times where I sat next to someone who has a different cultural worldview than mine. In this instance, it was a girl who identified herself as Rastafarian. Her religion dictated that she cover hair, and therefore wore headwraps to school. She had a different diet than I did, as many foods I ate, she was not allowed to eat. I accepted her and cultural worldview without hesitation. We would talk in class about

school and discuss our future plans. We were members of a group project, which allowed us to discover more about each other. We became great acquaintances as we were in a semester class and friends later on. As time went by, she would often offer our classmates some of her food, and we would be eager to try it as a means of adventure!

Another example of acceptance of difference I experienced happened when I first moved to Virginia. I had never lived the U.S. mainland, prior to this move. Therefore, I did not know what to expect in a school setting. When I relocated to Virginia, I was unaware of some of the social norms which included how some people spoke and behaved. At the high school I attended, it was the norm to use language that was offensive, which included racially charged words like the n-word and its derivatives. I may not have agreed with this norm, but I accepted it as their norm. I cannot change one's choice of words. So I accepted it and got used to tuning people out when their word choices were not the best in my opinion. I would communicate with them as I hoped one day they would decide to use other non-charged words to express themselves.

Of course, I knew that if I attended college that I would encounter people from many diverse backgrounds. For example, in my freshman year at ODU, I had two foreign exchange students in one of my classes. I thought the whole experience was exciting! Needless to say, I accepted them and their cultural backgrounds. We would talk about upcoming assignments and once studied together for a midterm exam. In addition, my professors were all from different cultural backgrounds. I accepted them and learned from their lectures and personal experiences when often shared.

Oh! How could I have possibly forgotten? When I was in preschool, my best friend was racially and culturally different from me. Some people believe that young children do not know the difference between races. However, I knew that there was a difference and accepted her,

nonetheless! We would play in school as well as spend time away school, as our parents allowed us to see each other outside of school. Often times we would go to Disney movies on the weekends or spent time at the beach.

This assignment aligns with my expectations of what I hope to gain from this course, because it showed me how accepting or non-accepting, I am of diversity. It allowed to me arrive at the conclusion that I am acceptant of differences. Therefore, it reinforces where I stand with others who are culturally different than me.

The conclusion of this finding will play a vital role in my daily life, as well as in my future work environment. I want to be prepared and knowledgeable of others who are different from me, and so I can be prepared to interact with my future clients and colleagues as a therapist. I want to be more culturally informed of others who I may meet in my classes, at the grocery store, library or in life as a whole.

I am aware that not everyone will view diversity the same way as I do. Everyone is of course entitled to their own beliefs, values, opinions, and morals. However, I strongly believe that diversity in general is a good thing and that people should be more accepting of others for the betterment of mankind.

References

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