

Assignment 1: Intercultural Sensitivity

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Psychology 420: Cross Cultural

Of the multiple stages of intercultural sensitivity, I feel as if I fall under the category of Acceptance of Difference. It was easy for me to determine which stages I was not under, but it took some time for me to find out which stage fit me best, as Adaptation to Difference suits me, as well. With Acceptance of Difference, cultural differences are experienced in context (Bennett, 1993). Acceptance means that it is accepted that all behaviors and values exist in their own cultural contexts, including your own. Another characteristic of Acceptance of Difference describes that patterns of behavior and values can be differentiated between cultures. Though Acceptance of Difference means that behaviors exist in their own cultural context, it does not mean that you have to agree with the values or behaviors of that culture. I feel as if the characteristics included in Acceptance of Difference fit my values and behaviors better than the other stages of intercultural sensitivity.

While I was enrolled in community college, I took an anthropology course that dealt heavily with different cultures and their different ways of life. While reading about Acceptance of Difference, it reminded me of some concepts I learned while taking anthropology. The section that describes things that learners in this stage say are relative to what an anthropologist may say, such as “The more cultures you know about, the better comparisons you can make (Bennett, 1993).” There were a few other sayings in this stage that encouraged me to choose this stage as what fit me best. Another phrase, “People in other cultures are different in ways I hadn’t thought of before (Bennett, 1993).” I liked this phrase because it reminded me of my time in my anthropology course and watching documentaries and videos of people in different countries, particularly third world countries, and how they interact and live. It was interesting to see how different people around the world are and that quote played a big role in why I chose Acceptance of Difference.

Another characteristic of Acceptance of Difference that encouraged me to choose it as what fits me best was that acceptance does not mean agreement, but acceptance of the different realities in culture. There are aspects of different cultures that I do not necessarily agree with or would participate in, but that does not mean I do not accept that they have different customs or traditions than myself. For example, different cultures and religions have different practices for special occasions or holidays that I would not participate in, but I respect their customs and what it means to them. Just as with how I accept differences in cultures, even if I do not agree with some practices or traditions, I would hope that those who are of a different culture than myself would accept the beliefs and customs that we have.

Continuing with why I chose Acceptance of Difference, I thought the statement “they are curious about what the alternatives to their own culture are” fit me well. For as long as I can remember, I have loved learning new things and learning about different cultures is included. I find different countries and their ways of life to be fascinating and seeing how others live and how their cultures are makes me think about how different I would be if I were there, or how different the people of that culture would be if they were here. I often wonder what others think about our culture, yet I am eager to understand more about theirs.

Reading through the stages of intercultural sensitivity has allowed me to think more about my expectations of this course. Based on what I read, I am expecting to learn more in depth about each stage of intercultural sensitivity. I hope to understand why some people are in the stage they are in, particularly denial, defense, and minimization. I want to understand why some people think they way they do about other cultures, especially because another culture may not affect them directly, or even indirectly. Is there something within their cognitive capabilities that cause them to think differently about other cultures? Or is simply a generational or personal

viewpoint? I hope to find some answers to these questions about why people are in the intercultural sensitivity stage that they are in.

Also, based on my time completing this assignment, I am expecting to learn about how people can change their viewpoints of another culture and move out of their stage of intercultural sensitivity and into another one. I wish to understand how people are able to alter their opinions on other cultures and how difficult it is for them, as well as how difficult it is for those who are helping them see different cultures in a positive manner. Is it difficult for people to change their opinions on other cultures? Who can help someone see differences in cultures in a positive way and how long does it take? Overall, from this course I hope to gain information about different cultures and why people believe what they believe about them and how likely it is to encourage others to see cultures different than their own in a positive light.

## References

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