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INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN EDUCATION

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: The development of intercultural sensitivity necessitates consideration of the learner's subjective experience. The way that learners interpret cultural differences is the key to developing such sensitivity and associated intercultural communication abilities. This article proposes a spectrum of phases of personal growth that enable trainers to assess the degree of receptivity of individuals and groups and to select content in accordance with a developmental strategy. The ethnocentrism to developmental continuum is in motion. The parochial denial of difference, the evaluative defense against difference, and the universal viewpoint of minimizing of difference are defined in earlier stages of the continuum. The acceptance of difference, adaptation to difference, and integration of diversity into one's worldview are later phases.

INTRODUCTION

The continuum in Figure is broken up into four "stages of development." Each stage reflects a different manner of dealing with difference, such as Denial (of difference), Defense (against difference), etc. The model makes the assumption that intercultural sensitivity rises together with a move to the right towards more "relative" approaches to difference. As the word "ethnocentrism" is thus coined as a suitable antonym of ethnocentrism, the middle of the continuum depicts a separation between the two ideologies. Concepts like Adler's (1977) "multicultural man," Bochner's (1979) "mediating person," Heath's (1977) "maturity," and "intercultural competence" are included in the later stages of ethnorelativism, according to a number of authors (e.g., Dinges, 1983; Brislin, et al., 1983).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The steps in this model were selected and ordered based on the theoretical factors mentioned above as well as fifteen years of intercultural communication teaching and training experience with a diverse group of students. Over the course of three years, variations of this model were presented to several groups of intercultural educators and debated in advanced intercultural communication workshops. The concept has also been effectively utilized to create intercultural communication course curriculum for a variety of seminars and courses. It represents genuine reported student experiences and real-world observations made by educators in this subject as closely as feasible. I. Z. When substantial cultural differences are avoided altogether due to physical or social isolation, there may be a denial of difference. Meaning (categories) for such occurrences have not been developed since difference has not been encountered. As a result, this viewpoint reflects the pinnacle of ethnocentrism, where one's worldview is unquestionably seen as the foundation of all reality.

1. Denial. Meaning (categories) for such occurrences have not been developed since difference has not been encountered. As a result, this viewpoint reflects the pinnacle of ethnocentrism, where one's worldview is unquestionably seen as the foundation of all reality. A minimal degree of difference can be observed without much discriminating thanks to broad categories. An illustration of such a wide category would be the acceptance of the fact that Asian cultures are distinct from Western cultures without acknowledging the existence of any intercultural differences among them. Cultural differences may be mistaken for subhuman status in severe situations of denial. Similar circumstances may be seen in Nazi efforts to exterminate "undesirables" or in the apparent extermination of several Central American Indian populations. This seems to have been the case with early European settlers' sentiments toward American Indians. The rejection of cultural difference "with extreme prejudice" is what unites these incidents rather than their political or military connection.

2. Defence. The defense against difference entails making an effort to counteract any perceived danger to the primacy of one's worldview. This stage shows a progression in intercultural sensitivity beyond denial since diversity must be acknowledged (and hence given meaning) before it is perceived as threatening. Denigration of difference is the most popular defense tactic. When unpleasant characteristics are attached to every member of a culturally unique group, this is known as "negative stereotyping." Race, religion, age, gender, or any other presumed sign of difference may be linked to the disparagement. Here, denigration of this type is seen as a developmental step rather than as a singular act.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The idea that one's culture is superior is another defense tactic. One just thinks that their own culture is the pinnacle of some evolutionary plan rather than disparaging other civilizations. Such a

tactic allows the defender to be "tolerant" of those cultures' aspirations to advance while automatically lowering the significance of cultural diversity. Although the superiority approach provides for more exposure to diversity than does denigration, ethnocentrism is nonetheless justified by the idea that real growth requires overcoming the majority of cultural differences. The most seductive method of defending against difference is a strategy known as "reversal." Reversal is a common behavior among Peace Corps Volunteers, other long-term sojourners, and expatriates that entails elevating the host culture while demeaning one's own culture.

3.Minimization. An attempt to "bury" diversity under the weight of cultural commonalities is a desperate endeavor to maintain the centrality of one's own worldview. Because cultural difference is now openly accepted and not negatively assessed, the stage of minimizing marks a breakthrough beyond denial and defense.

On the contrary, cultural diversity is minimized. Although there are distinctions, they are perceived as being somewhat inconsequential when contrasted to the significantly stronger mandates of cultural homogeneity. The minimizing of difference often manifests in one of two ways (or both). One is "physical universalism," which is demonstrated in the work of ethologists like Lorentz (1977) and others.

According to this perspective, cultural differences are only simple permutations of certain fundamental principles, and human behavior is best understood as mostly intrinsic. People who subscribe to this viewpoint typically approach cross-cultural interactions with the confidence that knowledge of fundamental human behavior patterns is sufficient to assure effective communication. Such a viewpoint is ethnocentric in that it assumes that one's own core behavioral categories are universal and unalterable. The second, and maybe more typical, type of minimization is "transcendent universalism." Transcendent universalism proposes that all people are products of a single transcendent principle, rule, or imperative, whether or not they are aware of it, in a sort of abstract parallel to the concrete behavioral assumptions of physical universalism. Any religion that teaches that all humans are products of a certain supernatural power or entity is the most blatant illustration of this point of view. The phrase "We are all God's children," where the "children" include individuals who don't worship the same deity, is an example of this type of universalism in religion. Other forms of transcendent universalism include the Marxist idea of the historical imperative, which holds that all people are subject to the same historical "forces"; economic and political "laws" that are believed to affect all people in the same way, such as the capitalist concept of "individual achievement"; and psychological principles like "archetypes" or "needs" that are assumed to be consistently true across cultures.

4. *Acceptance.* A shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism may be seen in the embrace of cultural diversity. At this point, cultural differences are understood and acknowledged.¹ In human affairs, difference is seen as basic, necessary, and desired. At this point, specific cu-rural disparities are not analyzed; they only exist. There are two main stages of acceptance within this stage, and they appear to follow one another. The first step is to acknowledge that people behave differently, notably in terms of language, communication style, and nonverbal cues. Although it is commonly acknowledged that accepting these cultural differences is essential to intercultural dialogue (e.g., Barnlund, 1982), the developmental process that enables such acceptance has received less attention. This model makes the premise that in order for acceptance to take place, there must be a significant transition from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative attitude to difference. This change is characterized by the subjective re-construal of difference as a "process" as opposed to a "thing." In order to further the development of intercultural sensitivity, ethnorelativism and the concurrent conception of cultural reality as consensual and malleable are important.

5. *Adaptation.* The acceptance of cultural difference as discussed above allows the adaptation of behavior and thinking to that difference. It is this temporary alteration of process that forms the heart of intercultural communication. The ability to change processing of reality constitutes an increase in intercultural sensitivity when it occurs in a cross-cultural context.

Empathy is the most popular type of adaptation. According to this definition of empathy (Bennett, 1979), it entails a brief change in frame of reference that allows one to interpret events "as if" they were happening to the other person. Empathy resembles a change in cultural world view when the other person is processing reality using a very different world perspective than they are. In general, empathy is "partial," covering just those topics that are pertinent to the communication event. Empathy manifests behaviorally when a person acts in a way that is more in line with the "target" culture than the local culture.

Cultural pluralism is another type of adaptation, which is defined here as the capacity to switch between two or more quite comprehensive cultural worldviews. This phenomena is frequently described using the words "biculturalism" and "multiculturalism"² (with the exception of Adler (1977), who uses the term "multicultural" in a broader meaning). Cultural diversity may be seen as the development of a specific empathetic shift into habit. For example, an American who has spent a significant amount of time in Japan may learn how to quickly adopt a pretty comprehensive Japanese worldview, making him or her what is known as "bicultural."

¹ Bennet, M. (1986). A developmental approach to training intercultural sensitivity. In J. Martin (guest Ed.), Special issue on Intercultural Training, International Journal of Intercultural Relations. Vol 10, No.2. 179-186.

² Adler, N. (1997) International Dimensions of Organizational Behaviour, 3rd edn (Cincinnati: South- Western College Press). 102-103

The aforementioned example suggests that "significant overseas (or other-culture) living experience" (SOLE) is likely necessary for cultural diversity. However, SOLE appears to be insufficient on its own to promote the growth of overall intercultural sensitivity. Non developmental plagiarism can happen when someone just becomes acclimated to two or more cultures, as is sometimes the case with missionaries' or expatriates' offspring. Intercultural sensitivity as it is defined in this paradigm cannot be taken for granted in situations like these when there was no prior conscious empathy. In conclusion, the ability to act ethnorelatively is a stage of developing intercultural sensitivity called adaptation to difference. The acknowledgment of diversity as a relative process underpins one's capacity to behave outside of one's original cultural worldview.

6. *Integration.* The aforementioned example suggests that "significant overseas (or other-culture) living experience" (SOLE) is likely necessary for cultural diversity. However, SOLE appears to be insufficient on its own to promote the growth of overall intercultural sensitivity. Nondevelopmental pluralism can happen when someone just becomes acclimated to two or more cultures, as is sometimes the case with missionaries' or expatriates' offspring. Intercultural sensitivity as it is defined in this paradigm cannot be taken for granted in situations like these when there was no prior conscious empathy. In conclusion, the ability to act ethnorelatively is a stage of developing intercultural sensitivity called adaptation to difference. The acknowledgment of diversity as a relative process underpins one's capacity to behave outside of one's original cultural worldview.

CONCLUSION

The capacity to assess phenomena in relation to cultural context is one of the intercultural sensitivity abilities that emerges at this stage of development. This skill, referred to as "contextual evaluation," is comparable to the ethical stage of growth known as "contextual relativism" by Perry (1970). It permits one to reinstate judgements that were put on hold in the Acceptance stage. However, evaluations of an action's goodness or badness are no longer ethnocentric. Instead, they are only declarations of appropriateness to a certain cultural frame of reference. Therefore, the same possible action might be seen as either positive (Culture.) or negative (Culture B).

The absence of any definitive cultural identification throughout the integration stage might be positively construed. This approach, which Bochner (1981) named "constructive marginality," sees the often alienated condition of marginality as a useful instrument in cultural mediation. The stage of integration describes a person who views difference as an important and happy component of all life, serving as the pinnacle of intercultural sensitivity.

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