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M1 LC

Cultural Studies

Cultural Perception

**Cultural Perception**

**3.1 Objectives**:

After reading this chapter and completing the readings and activities, you should be able to:

-List the five steps in the perception process

-Explain ethnocentrism and cultural relativism and relationship to perception

-Explain techniques used to help make accurate attributions

Warm Up  
Exercise One:

-Clasp your hands together, interlocking your fingers.

-Look at your hands. Which thumb is on top?

-Rearrange the fingers so that the opposite thumb is on top.

-How does it feel, easy or uneasy

"You must have noticed that different people are comfortable with different ways. These differences are natural and to be expected."

Exercise Two:

-Ask participants to look at picture bellow and decide what they see. Most people will see an old lady or a young lady, or both. Do not give participants any suggestions as to what image they might see.

*-*After a few minutes the facilitator should check with the participants to see which figure each one sees.

*-*If a participant can see both images, they should explain what they see to the rest of the group.

Encourage discussion on the following points:

- Perceptions may be different.

- Is it easy to explain to someone else what is obvious to you but not to them?

- Is it easy to perceive exactly what someone else sees despite our efforts to be empathetic?



Exercise Three:

-Ask participants to look at the squares and decide how many squares they can find in the illustration. They should not discuss their conclusions with other group members.

-After one or two minutes, ask them to write

their answers on flip-chart paper.

-Ask participants to explain their answers to the group. Continue the discussion until the correct answer (30) has been given.

Discuss how and why people perceive things differently.

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**We and They**  
*Rudyard Kipling*  
  
   
Father, Mother, and Me  
Sister and Auntie say  
All good people like us are We  
And everyone else is They  
And They live over the sea  
While We live over the way  
But- would you believe it?- They look upon We  
As only a sort of They!\All good people agree,

And all good people say,  
All nice people, like Us are, We  
And everyone else is They:  
But if you cross over the sea,  
Instead of over the way,  
You may end by (think of it!) looking on We  
As only a form of They.

**3.2 Components of the Perception Process**  
   
Three components are involved in our interpretation of our reality:  
-The attributive component: consists of those characteristics we attribute to a person or object or event.  
-The expectative component: consists of the expectations we have of things we perceive  
-The affective component: consists of our feelings about the objects and people we perceive.

**3.3 Culture and Perception**  
   
**Ethnocentrism:** is the fact of believing that the values of our culture are the best.  
**Cultural relativism**: the opposite of ethnocentrism, is trying to understand others’ behavior from their own cultural frame of reference

**3.4 Discussion:**

-We all have prejudices and stereotypes. Think about yours and how they will affect your intercultural communication effectiveness

-Describe an incident in which your ethnocentrism caused an intercultural misunderstanding

-Are you a high self-monitor or a low self-monitor? How do these two affect intercultural communication?

3.5 **Suggested Readings**

Retrieved from <https://www.talent.wisc.edu/download/makingassessmentwork/docs/DMIS%20Profile.rtf> on 11/09/2018

**THE DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was created by Milton *I.* Bennett, Ph.D., (1986,1993) as a framework to explain the reactions of people to cultural difference. In both academic and corporate settings, he observed that individuals confronted cultural difference in some predictable ways as they leamed to become more competent intercultural communicators. Using concepts from cognitive psychology and constructivism, he organized these observations into six stages of increasing sensitivity to cultural difference.

The underlying assumption of the model is that as one' s *experience of cultural difference* becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's competence in intercultural relations increases. Each stage indicates a particular cognitive structure that is expressed in certain kinds of attitudes and behavior related to cultural difference. By recognizing the underlying cognitive orientation toward cultural difference, predictions about behavior and attitudes can be made and education can be tailored to facilitate development into the next stage.

The first three DMIS stages are *ethnocentric,* meaning that one's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way.

DENIAL of cultural difference is the state in which one's own culture is experienced as the only real one. Other cultures are avoided by maintaining psychological and/or physical isolation from differences. People at Denial generally are disinterested in cultural difference, although they may act aggressively to eliminate a difference if it impinges on them.

DEFENSE against cultural difference is the state in which one's own culture (or an adopted culture) is experienced as the only good one. The world is -organized into "us and them," where "we" are superior and "they" are inferior. People at Defense are threatened by cultural difference, so they tend to be highly critical of other cultures, regardless of whether the others are their hosts, their guests, or cultural newcomers to their society.

MINIMIZATION of cultural difference is the state in which elements of one's own cultural world view are experienced as universal. Because these absolutes obscure deep cultural differences, other cultures may be trivialized or romanticized. People at Minimization expect similarities, and they may become insistent about correcting others' behavior to match their expectations.

The second three DMIS stages are *ethnorelative,* meaning that one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures.

ACCEPTANCE of cultural difference is the state in which one's own culture is experienced as just one of a number of equally complex worldviews. Acceptance does not mean agreement--cultural difference may be judged negatively-but the judgment is not ethnocentric. People at Acceptance are curious about and respectful toward cultural difference.

ADAPT A TION to cultural difference is the state in which the experience of another culture yields perception and behavior appropriate to that culture. One's worldview is expanded to include constructs from other worldviews. People at Adaptation are able to look at the world "through different eyes" and may intentionally change their behavior to communicate more effectively in another culture.

INTEGRATION of cultural difference is the state in which one's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. People at Integration often are dealing with issues related to their own "cultural marginality ." This stage is not necessarily better than Adaptation in most situations demanding intercultural competence, but it is common among non- dominant minority groups, long-term expatriates, and "global nomads."

The DMIS has been used with great success for the last fifteen years to develop curriculum for intercultural education and training programs. Content analysis research has supported the relevance of the stage descriptions and has suggested that a more rigorous measurement of the underlying cognitive states could yield a powerful tool for personal and group assessment.

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