BECOMING INTERCULTURALLY COMPETENT

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Discovering the Sequence of Development

After years of observing all kinds of people dealing (or not) with cross-cultural situations, I decided to try to make sense of what was happening to them. I wanted to explain why some people seemed to get a lot better at communicating across cultural boundaries while other people didn't improve at all, and I thought that if I were able to explain why this happened, trainers and educators could do a better job of preparing people for cross-cultural encounters.

The result of this work was the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS) (M. Bennett, 1986, 1993; J. Bennett & M. Bennett, 2003, 2004). As people became more interculturally competent it seemed that there was a major change in the quality of their experience, which I called the move from *ethnocentrism* to *ethnorelativism*. I used the term "ethnocentrism" to refer to the experience of one's own culture as "central to reality." By this I mean that the beliefs and behaviors that people receive in their primary socialization are unquestioned; they are experienced as "just the way things are." I coined the term "ethnorelativism" to mean the opposite of ethnocentrism–the experience of one's own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities.

There also seemed be six distinct kinds of experience spread across the continuum from ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. The most ethnocentric experience was named the *Denial* of cultural difference, followed by the *Defense* against cultural difference. In the middle of the continuum the *Minimization* of cultural difference seemed to be a transition from the more virulent forms of ethnocentrism to a more benign form, leading to the ethnorelative *Acceptance* of cultural difference. At the heart of ethnorelativism was *Adaptation* to cultural difference, followed in some cases by the *Integration* of cultural difference into identity. The sequence of these experiences became the "stages" of the DMIS.

In general, the more ethnocentric orientations can be seen as ways of *avoiding cultural difference,* either by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance. The more ethnorelative worldviews are ways of *seeking*

cultural difference, either by accepting its importance, by adapting perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of identity.

The Stages of Development
Figure 1

Denial → Defense → Minimization → Acceptance → Adaptation → Integration

ETHNOCENTRISM   ETHNORELATIVISM
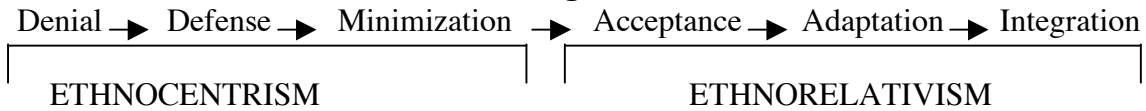
The Ethnocentric Stages of Development

As illustrated in Figure 1, the first three DMIS orientations are conceptualized as more ethnocentric, meaning that the tenants of one's own culture are experienced as central to reality in some way. The default condition of a typical, monocultural primary socialization is *Denial* of cultural difference. This is the state in which one's own culture is experienced as the only real one–that is, that the patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values that constitute a culture are experienced as unquestionably real or true. Other cultures are either not noticed at all, or they are construed in rather vague ways. As a result, cultural difference is either not experienced at all, or it is experienced as associated with a kind of undifferentiated *other* such as "foreigner" or "immigrant." In extreme cases, the people of one's own culture may be perceived to be the only real "humans" and other people viewed as simpler forms in the environment to be tolerated, exploited, or eliminated as necessary.

People with a Denial worldview generally are disinterested in cultural difference even when it is brought to their attention, although they may act aggressively to avoid or eliminate a difference if it impinges on them. For example, many dominant-culture U.S. Americans were not aware of the large numbers of Latinos who shared their communities until the last census figures were released. In some cases in which I have consulted, a sudden increase in the Latino population has been met with angry bewilderment from Anglos, who ask, "How could such a thing have happened to our community?" And of course, U.S. Americans are familiar with the phenomenon of "white flight"–the avoidance reaction of dominant-culture European Americans to the introduction of African Americans or other people of color to previously all-white neighborhoods.

I would like to stress that Denial is not particularly American. In my observation, a Denial worldview in Germans, Italians, or Japanese yields a similar reaction to immigrants. Nor is this worldview restricted to dominant-culture folks in American or other societies. Even if they are forced by economic necessity into interaction with the dominant culture, people of non-dominant groups with a Denial worldview remain unable to recognize the cultural dimension of the interaction. For instance, as many African Americans as European Americans seem to be surprised at cultural differences between these groups in communication style and nonverbal behavior. This is because the Denial worldview in both groups only allows for observations within the familiar categories of "race" and associated constructs of deserved or undeserved inequities in political and economic power. The tendency to use familiar but often simplistic or fallacious categories of race and ethnicity seems also to characterize the Denial form of dominant/non-dominant interaction in other societies.

Another way a Denial worldview shows up is as an inability (and disinterest) in differentiating national cultures. For instance, U.S. Americans at this stage often cannot tell the difference between Chinese and Japanese cultures, or to distinguish among Gulf State Arabs (e.g. Kuwaitis), Fertile Crescent Arabs (e.g. Syrians), and Persians (in Iran). While educated Europeans or Asians are generally more knowledgeable than U.S. Americans about geopolitical issues, at Denial they seem just as likely to neglect these kinds of cultural differences. For example, Asian sojourners seem to be at least as inclined as Americans to maintain the exclusive company of their compatriots, and many Europeans seem oblivious to the cultural factors that frequently underlie political differences.

The main issue to be resolved at Denial is the tendency to avoid noticing or confronting cultural difference. People here need to attend to the simple existence of other cultures, both globally and domestically. Those who are facilitating this initial recognition (teachers, trainers, friends) need to understand that Denial is not a refusal to "confront the facts." It is instead an inability to make the perceptual distinctions that allow cultural facts to be recognized. When facilitators fail to understand the experience of Denial, they are likely to present cultural information in too-complex ways and to become impatient at the aggressive ignorance often displayed at this stage. The resolution of Denial issues allows the creation of simple categories for particular cultures, which sets up the conditions for the experience of Defense.

Defense against cultural difference is the state in which one's own culture (or an adopted culture) is experienced as the only viable one –the most "evolved" form of civilization, or at least the only good way to live. People at Defense have become more adept at discriminating difference, so they experience cultural differences as more real than do people at Denial. But the Defense worldview structure is not sufficiently complex to generate an equally "human" experience of the other. While the cultural differences experienced by people with a Defense perspective are stereotypical, they nevertheless seem real by comparison to the Denial condition. Consequently, people at Defense are more openly threatened by cultural differences than are people in a state of Denial. The world is organized into "us and them," where one's own culture is superior and other cultures are inferior.

People of dominant cultures are likely to experience Defense as an attack on their values (often perceived by others as privileges). They may complain that immigrants or other minorities are "taking our jobs." They are likely to have many negative stereotypes of "them," including a full stock of jokes emphasizing the assumed failings of other cultures. In its benign form, Defense may be expressed by "helping" non-dominant group members to succeed by bringing them into the assumedly superior dominant culture. The politically correct descriptions of some mentoring programs in corporations may mask this Defense orientation. In its more virulent form, Defense is likely to be expressed by membership in groups that exclude cultural difference or in outright attacks people of other cultures. In the U.S., the Ku Klux Klan and its imitators are obvious examples of the latter.

People of non-dominant cultures are more likely to experience Defense as discovering and solidifying a separate cultural identity in contrast to the dominant group (cf., Banks, 1988; Parham, 1989). Cross (1995) argues that such a stage is necessary in the development of non-dominant ethnic identity to counteract the efforts of the dominant group to impose their culture on all members of a society. Like that of dominant group

members, this Defense experience is accompanied by positive stereotyping of one's own culture and negative stereotyping of other cultures.

In the international domain, Defense is clearly the predominant orientation of "nation-building." Like mentoring, such efforts are likely implicit (and sometimes even explicit) attempts to export the builders' assumedly superior cultural values. The polarized worldview is also evident in the statement "you're either with us or against us," uttered by a variety of world leaders. Other incidents of a culturally polarized worldview are evident in the complaints of travelers about unfamiliar food and similar failures of other cultures to not be "like us."

A variation on Defense is *Reversal,* where an adopted culture is experienced as superior to the culture of one's primary socialization ("going native," or "passing"). Reversal is like Defense in that it maintains a polarized, "us and them" worldview. It is unlike Defense in that it does not maintain the other culture as a threat. Reversal is common among long-term sojourners such as Peace Corps Volunteers, missionaries, corporate expatriates, and exchange students. Reversal may masquerade as cultural sensitivity, since it provides a positive experience of a different culture along with seemingly analytical criticisms of one's own culture. However, the positive experience of the other culture is at an unsophisticated stereotypical level, and the criticism of one's own culture is usually an internalization of others' negative stereotypes.

Reversal in domestic multicultural relations is an interesting and complicated phenomenon. It appears that some people of the dominant culture take on the cause of non-dominant cultures in stereotypical ways. For instance, in the U.S. a white person of European American ethnicity may become a rabid proponent of African American issues. While it is not necessarily ethnocentric for someone to identify with the plight of historically oppressed people, in this hypothetical case the European American person sees all black people as saintly martyrs and all white people (including herself before the conversion) as brutal oppressors. By changing the poles of the polarized worldview, this person has not changed here essentially unsophisticated experience of cultural difference.

The resolution of Defense issues involves recognizing the common humanity of people of other cultures. Techniques such as "ropes courses" or other experiences that create mutual dependence independent of gender or race can be effective for this purpose. Facilitators who try to correct the stereotypes of people in Defense are likely to fall prey to the polarized worldview themselves, becoming yet another example of the evils of multiculturalism or globalization. The need here is to establish commonality, not to introduce more sophisticated understanding of difference. When this resolution is accomplished, the stage is set for a move into Minimization.

Minimization of cultural difference is the state in which elements of one's own cultural worldview are experienced as universal. The threat associated with cultural differences experienced in Defense is neutralized by subsuming the differences into familiar categories. For instance, cultural differences may be subordinated to the overwhelming similarity of people's biological nature (*physical universalism*). The experience of similarity of natural physical processes may then be generalized to other assumedly natural phenomena such as needs and motivations. The assumption that typologies (personality, learning style, etc) apply equally well in all cultures is an example of Minimization.

The experience of similarity might also be experienced in the assumed cross-cultural applicability of certain religious, economic, political, or philosophical concepts (*transcendent universalism*). For instance, the religious assumptions that everyone in the world is a child of God or that everyone has karma are examples of Minimization. Note that it is not ethnocentric to have a religious belief; however, it is ethnocentric to assume that people in other cultures either do or would if they could share your belief. Similarly, the assumption that people of all cultures would like to live in a democratic society (or in a benevolent dictatorship) if they only could is ethnocentric by this definition. Because these "universal absolutes" obscure deep cultural differences, other cultures may be trivialized or romanticized at Minimization.

People at Minimization expect similarities, and they may become insistent about correcting others' behavior to match their expectations. Many exchange students have reported to me that their host families, despite their kindness, generosity, and sincere curiosity about different customs, do not really want their students to have different basic values from themselves. I have observed that many host families are at Minimization. The families are motivated by sharing the host country's way of life with the student, on the assumption that of course the student will appreciate that way of life once he or she sees what it is. If the student is insufficiently appreciative, it threatens the Minimization assumption that all everyone really wants to be "like us." This operation of Minimization is far more dangerous, of course, when the appreciation of our way of life is being promoted by armed "nation-builders."

Particularly for people of dominant cultures, Minimization tends to mask recognition of their own culture (ethnicity) and the institutional privilege it affords its members. Because people at this stage no longer experience others in a polarized way, they tend to overestimate their racial and ethnic appreciation. While they may be relatively tolerant, people at Minimization are unable to appreciate other cultures because they cannot see their own culture clearly. If, for instance, I cannot see that my communication style is a cultural pattern, I think that everyone does (or would if they could) use the same style. Consequently, I judge the failure to use my style as a lack of social skill or as a choice to be "alternative." Either of these judgments misses the point that other people may be naturally using a culturally different style.

For people of non-dominant cultures, a Minimization worldview involves the acceptance of something like the "melting pot" idea. It generally is a position that is perceived and perhaps intended as a political statement. In any case, the experience is one that minimizes the cultural differences between the dominant and non-dominant groups in such a way that the same universal standard (e.g. university entrance requirements) can be applied to all the groups without bias. When the result of such an application of standard yields group differences, the explanation by both dominant and non-dominant Minimizers is that the groups actually differ in their intelligence, skills, or preparation. The idea that all standards are necessarily constrained by cultural context does not occur in Minimization.

Current research with the *Intercultural Development Inventory™*, an instrument that assesses the experience of cultural difference in terms of the DMIS, has shown that Minimization is a kind of transition state between the constellation of Denial/Defense and the constellation Acceptance/Adaptation (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). The experience of Minimization is theoretically ethnocentric in that it takes one's own cultural patterns as central to an assumed universal reality. In other words, the experience

is that all people are essentially similar in ways that explainable by my own cultural beliefs. However, the experience also includes the ability to perceive some cultural differences in largely non-stereotypical ways and to recognize the essential humanness of others.

The missing piece in Minimization, and the issue that needs to be resolved to move into ethnorelativism, is the recognition of your own culture (cultural self-awareness). In more general terms, this is the ability to experience culture as a context. Only when you see that all your beliefs, behaviors, and values are at least influenced by the particular context in which you were socialized can you fully imagine alternatives to them. Facilitators at this stage need to stress the development of cultural self-awareness in contrast to other cultures before they move into too much detail about the other cultures. This is the time to introduce the basic culture-general frameworks of intercultural communication (e.g. Bennett, 1998b).

The Ethnorelative Stages of Development

The second three DMIS orientations are defined as more 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. By discriminating differences among cultures (including one's own), and by constructing a kind of self-reflexive perspective, people with this worldview are able to experience others as different from themselves, but equally human. People at Acceptance can construct culture-general categories that allow them to generate a range of relevant cultural contrasts among many cultures. Thus, they are not necessarily experts in one or more cultures (although they might also be that); rather, they are adept at identifying how cultural differences in general operate in a wide range of human interactions.

In this last regard, is important to remember that the DMIS is not a model of knowledge, attitude, or skills. So, the fact that you are knowledgeable about a culture may or may not be associated with the ethnorelative experience of Acceptance. I know a lot of people who are knowledgeable about Japanese hospitality rituals or German status relationships who do not seem to have any general feeling for those cultures. I suspect it is because, despite their specific knowledge, these people are not able to experience the cultural worldviews of which those behaviors are a part. I would hypothesize that people need to have a "critical mass" of information about another culture in order to apprehend the worldview, and that even that amount of information is useless unless basic Minimization issues have been resolved first; that is, that they are "ready" to hear the information.

People may have some of the linguistic or behavioral skills of another culture without any feeling for how to use those skills in culturally appropriate ways – a condition that I have coined being a "fluent fool." (Bennett, 1997). Perhaps people acquired the abilities from short sojourns or training programs. In any case, like knowledge, the skills are not very useful unless they are accompanied by an Acceptance/Adaptation worldview.

Most commonly, people might have positive attitudes toward another culture without having the ability to experience the other culture with much depth. I have observed this to be typical of efforts to appear cosmopolitan or politically correct. Acceptance does not mean agreement. It is naïve to think that intercultural sensitivity and

competence is always associated with liking other cultures or agreeing with their values or ways of life. In fact, the uncritical agreement with other cultures is more characteristic of the ethnocentric condition of Reversal, particularly if it is accompanied by a critical view of your own culture. Some cultural differences may be judged negatively –but the judgment is not ethnocentric unless it is associated with simplification, or withholding equal humanity.

This last point brings up the major issue to be resolved at Acceptance: "value relativity." To accept the relativity of values to cultural context (and thus to attain the potential to experience the world as organized by different values), you need to figure out how to maintain ethical commitment in the face of such relativity (cf. Perry, 1970). This is a difficult matter, as illustrated in the following example. A student recently confided in me her concern that she was being ethnocentric in her support of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. I replied that it was possible that she was, but it was also possible that she was making an ethnorelative judgment. The test is whether she was according full humanity to the Iraqis that she felt should be forcibly dealt with. So I asked "What is good about Sadam Hussein from some Iraqi perspectives?" She said, "nothing is good–he is a monster and all Iraqis think so except some evil people who are profiting from his cruelty." Leaving aside the history of U.S. profits from Iraq, I replied that her concerns were justified–she was being ethnocentric. She was imposing her values on others by making the Minimization assumption that her values were the most real. Further, she was denying equal humanity to Sadam Hussein and Iraqis who supported him by labeling them "monsters" and "evil."

A more ethnorelative approach to the Iraq situation would have been to recognize that Sadam Hussein is a complex human being whose behavior, while "good" in some Arab contexts because it stands up to the Americans or expresses Arab pride, is nevertheless "bad" in the context of the current world consensus about the use of violence and intimidation in domestic governance. The question then is are you committed to stopping the bad behavior? Is Sadam's behavior sufficiently different from other world leaders' to allow a non-hypocritical intervention? Is the need for intervention important enough to outweigh the principle of national sovereignty? Are the consequences of interference better than the consequences of not interfering? The answer to all these questions could be "yes." I believe that had my student considered these and other such questions, and had she then accorded Hussein and other Iraqis a complexity of motive similar to her own, then she could have supported the U.S. invasion in an ethnorelative way. Of course, a different person might make the same considerations and conclude that the invasion was not supportable. But both positions would be ethnorelative.

Resolution of the issue of value relativity and commitment allows you to take the perspective of another culture without losing your own perspective. This is the crux of the next stage.

Adaptation 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 relevant constructs from other cultural worldviews. People at Adaptation can engage in empathy –the ability to take perspective or shift frame of reference vis-à-vis other cultures. This shift is not merely cognitive; it is a change in the organization of lived experience, which necessarily includes affect and behavior. Thus, people at Adaptation are able to express their alternative cultural experience in culturally

appropriate feelings and behavior. If the process of frame shifting is deepened and habitualized, it becomes the basis of biculturality or multiculturality.

Adaptation is not assimilation. The term "assimilation" is understood by many immigrants and people of non-dominant groups to refer to something like the "melting pot." This idea of assimilation is that you should give up who you were before and take on the worldview of your host, or dominant culture. The concept of adaptation offers an alternative to assimilation. Adaptation involves the extension of your repertoire of beliefs and behavior, not a substitution of one set for another. So you don't need to lose your primary cultural identity to operate effectively in a different cultural context.

In domestic multicultural contexts, adaptation leads to mutual adjustment. In other words, people of both dominant and non-dominant groups are equally inclined to adapt their behavior to one another. Of course, the dominant group has the power to demand that only the non-dominant group adjust. But dominant-culture people who experience cultural difference in this more ethnorelative way are less likely to invoke that power. Instead, they are curious about cultural difference and actually eager to experience other cultures. For those reasons, never mind fairness, they seek the other cultural perspectives represented in groups and attempt to learn how to act in ways that are to some extent appropriate in those cultural contexts. They may also be motivated by fairness, but unlike some others who may sincerely believe in equity while lacking the ability to act equitably, these people have the worldview structure to support the kind of mutual cultural adaptation that actually implements equity.

Adaptation as defined here has long been the goal of intercultural communication training for international sojourners. Programs for exchange students, development workers, expatriates, and others have stressed the acquisition of culturally appropriate behavior. As we have seen, however, such behavior may only be "foolish" in its implementation without an appropriate worldview structure to support it. The DMIS suggests that a lot of attention should go to preparing trainees to experience another culture before trying to train any particular behavior.

The major issue to be resolved at Adaptation is that of "authenticity." How is it possible to perceive and behave in culturally different ways and still "be yourself?" The answer seems to lie in defining yourself more broadly – in expanding the repertoire of perception and behavior that is "yours." So, you might be to some extent German critical, Japanese indirect, Italian ironic and African American personal, in addition to your primary European American male explicit style. Insofar as each of these behaviors emerged from a feeling for the various cultures, they would all be authentically you (Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004).

The resolution of authenticity at Adaptation may establish the condition of the last stage of development. However, movement to the last stage does not represent a significant improvement in intercultural competence. Rather, it describes a fundamental shift in one's definition of cultural identity.

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. Here, people are dealing with issues related to their own "cultural marginality"; they construe their identities at the margins of two or more cultures and central to none. As suggested by J. Bennett (1993), cultural marginality may have two forms: an *encapsulated* form, where the separation from culture is experienced as alienation; and a *constructive* form,

in which movements in and out of cultures are a necessary and positive part of one's identity. Integration is not necessarily better than Adaptation in situations demanding intercultural competence, but it is descriptive of a growing number of people, including many members of non-dominant cultures, long-term expatriates, and "global nomads."

A certain amount of encapsulated marginality seems to accompany the ethnorelative experience of non-dominant group members, who may find themselves "caught" between their own minority ethnic group and the majority ethnic group. Their ethnic compatriots may perceive them as "selling out" to the dominant group, even though they are not fully accepted by the dominant group. Also, exchange students who have advanced well beyond Reversal or Defense may again experience debilitating self-criticism or judgmentalism of others as their cultural identification vacillates. While people in this condition are quite interculturally sensitive, they lack the ability to implement that sensitivity in consistently competent ways.

Constructive marginality represents the resolution of the identity issue of Integration. Here people are able to experience themselves as multicultural beings who are constantly choosing the most appropriate cultural context for their behavior. This living on the edge of cultures may occasionally be stressful and alienating, but it is more often exhilarating and fulfilling. Because they so easily shift cultural perspectives, constructive marginals are likely to take the role of cultural bridge-builders in intercultural situations. They can do this without "losing themselves" because they self-reflexively define their identities in terms of perspective-shifting and bridge-building.

While it is important to recognize the experience of a multicultural identity, there is no implication here that this last stage is preferable to the previous one in terms of intercultural adaptation. Actually, it might be better if we kept our primary cultural identities and simply adapted to other cultures. If everyone became culturally marginal, what would they be marginal to?

To extend this last point, I would also like to disavow any idea that more interculturally sensitive people are generally *better* people. To say so would imply that there was one universally good kind of person and that this particular model just happened to describe that goodness. On the contrary, this model describes what it means to be good at intercultural relations. All we can say about more ethnorelative people is that they are better at experiencing cultural differences than are more ethnocentric people, and therefore they are probably better at adapting to those differences in interaction. Perhaps you believe, as I do, that the world would be a better place if more people were ethnorelative. I hope that we will continue to act on this commitment, and that we will do so with intercultural sensitivity.

Explaining Intercultural Development

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was developed with a grounded theory approach (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which involves using theoretical concepts to explain a pattern that emerges from systematic observations. The pattern that emerged from my observations is described above as the "stages" of the DMIS. Below is a summary of the theoretical concepts I used to explain why the pattern occurred and which inform the description of each stage.

The most basic theoretical concept in the DMIS is that experience (including cross-cultural experience) is constructed. This is the central tenant of *cognitive constructivism* (e.g. Brown, 1972; Kelly, 1963; von Foester, 1984), which holds that we

do not perceive events directly. Rather, our experience or events is built up through templates, or sets of categories, that we use to organize our perception of phenomena. So, for instance, an American person who happens to be in the vicinity of a Japanese event may not have anything like a Japanese experience of that event, if he or she does not have any Japanese categories with which to construct that experience. Instead, he or she will have an *ethnocentric* experience, meaning that one's own culture is the only basis for perceiving events.

A related assumption made in the DMIS is that people can be more or less "sensitive" to cultural difference. This idea is based on the constructivist idea of *cognitive complexity* (e.g. Delia, Crockett, & Gonyea, 1970; Goertzel, n.d.; Loevinger, 1970, Loevinger & Wessler, 1979). More cognitively complex individuals are able to organize their perceptions of events into more differentiated categories. Or, stated differently, more cognitively complex people can make finer discriminations among phenomena in a particular domain. For instance, a wine connoisseur may be able to taste the difference between two vintages of the same variety of red wine, while a lay drinker may only be able to differentiate red wine from white wine. Similarly, people who are more interculturally sensitive have a more developed set of categories for making discriminations among cultures. So a sophisticated sojourner can observe subtle differences in nonverbal behavior or communication style, while a naïve traveler may only notice differences in the money, the food, or the toilets. As categories for cultural difference become more complex and sophisticated, perception becomes more *interculturally sensitive*.

How is the complexity of perception described by intercultural sensitivity related to the effective or successful behavior associated with *intercultural competence*? Studies in *communicative constructivism* (e.g. Applegate & Sypher, 1988; Delia 1987) show that people who are more cognitively complex are also more able to be "person-centered" and "perspective-taking" in their communication (although they may not always exercise the ability). These qualities are associated with more successful interpersonal communication. More successful *intercultural* communication similarly involves being able to see a culturally different person as equally complex to one's self (person-centered) and being able to take a culturally different perspective. Thus, greater intercultural sensitivity creates the potential for increased intercultural competence.

One more dimension of constructivism that is important to the model can be called *experiential constructivism*. This dimension includes ideas from the anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979), the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (e.g. Maturana & Varela, 1987; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991), the psycholinguist Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) and more recently George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999), the neuroanatomist Antonio Damasio (1999), the communicologist Dean Barnlund (1998), and my own work (Bennett, 1977; Bennett, 1998a; Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004). All these theoreticians refer to how we "co-create" our experience through our corporal, linguistic, and emotional interaction with natural and human (including conceptual) environments. This assumption allows the DMIS to model a mechanism of intercultural adaptation.

The crux of intercultural adaptation is the ability to have an alternative cultural experience. Individuals who have received largely monocultural socialization normally have access only to their own *cultural worldview*, so they are unable to experience the difference between their own perception and that of people who are culturally different.

The development of intercultural sensitivity describes how we gain the ability to create an alternative experience that more or less matches that of people in another culture. People who can do this have an *intercultural worldview.*

The DMIS supposes that contact with cultural difference generates pressure for change in one's worldview. This happens because the "default" ethnocentric worldview, while sufficient for managing relations within one's own culture, is inadequate to the task of developing and maintaining social relations across cultural boundaries. Assuming that there is a need for such cross-cultural relations (as typically is the case, for instance, for long-term international sojourners, members of multinational teams, and for educators, healthcare workers, and other service providers in multicultural communities), then there is pressure to develop greater competence in intercultural matters. This pressure may be ignored, so change as a function of contact is not inevitable (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000).

Each change in worldview structure generates new and more sophisticated issues to be resolved in intercultural encounters. The resolution of the relevant issues activates the emergence of the next orientation. Since issues may not be totally resolved, movement may be incomplete and one's experience of difference diffused across more than one worldview. However, movement through the orientations is posited to be unidirectional, with only occasional "retreats." In other words, people do not generally regress from more complex to less complex experiences of cultural difference.

Each orientation of the DMIS is indicative of a particular worldview structure, with certain kinds of cognition, affect, and behavior vis-à-vis cultural difference typically associated with each configuration. It is important to note that the DMIS is not predominately a description of cognition, affect, or behavior. Rather, it is a model of how the assumed underlying worldview moves from an ethnocentric to a more ethnorelative condition, thus generating greater intercultural sensitivity and the potential for more intercultural competence. Changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills are taken as manifestations of changes in the underlying worldview. This distinction is important because developmental interventions such as training programs are appropriately aimed at the worldview, not at any particular knowledge (such as in area studies programs), any particular attitude change (such as in prejudice reduction programs) or any particular skill acquisition (such as role-plays or cultural assimilators).

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