

The Ethnocentric Stages

| Ethnocentric Stage | Assessment | Facilitation |
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| <p>Denial Learners are unable or unwilling to recognize cultural difference, possess a neutral disinterest for cultural difference and/or unconsciously avoid people from other groups, strongly maintain traditional worldview, express benign stereotypes and/or superficial statements of tolerance.</p> | <p><i>Learners say:</i> “All I need to know when I’m in another culture is how to get around and order in a restaurant.” “As long as we speak the same language, there will be no problems.” “I have traveled before and found no real differences between people.”</p> | <p><i>Learners need</i> the ability to gather appropriate information about culture, initiatives to explore subjective aspects of culture, and the ability to recognize difference.</p> <p><i>Support learners</i> by providing them with objective travel tips and culture-specific information; embedding differences in non-threatening contexts; promoting an inclusive, non-blaming climate; and illustrating ideas with user-friendly activities.</p> <p><i>Challenge learners</i> by giving them some subjective culture material and a constructive vision of intercultural interaction, arousing curiosity, and facilitating structured contact with other cultures.</p> |
| <p>Defense Learners negatively evaluate cultural difference (the greater the difference, the more negative the evaluation); polarize differences into “us” and “them,” accompanied by overt negative stereotyping; manifest an attitude of superiority toward “underdeveloped” cultures.</p> | <p><i>Learners say:</i> “When you go to other countries, it makes you realize how much better the U.S. is.” “People from other cultures are not as open-minded as people from my own culture.” “I signed up for this program because people there need so much help.”</p> | <p><i>Learners need</i> the ability to manage anxiety, recognize similarities, and develop tolerance and patience.</p> <p><i>Support learners</i> by demonstrating the universality of ethnocentrism (in-group and out-group); avoiding cultural contrasts and providing reassurance and support for pride within one’s group as well as focusing curiosity on the in-group; and providing opportunities for positive, non-threatening interactions with members of other groups.</p> <p><i>Challenge learners</i> by providing historical contexts for in-groups and out-groups, demonstrating commonality, stressing team-building and cooperative activities, and helping learners identify transferable skills used to deal with difference.</p> |
| <p>Minimization Learners recognize and accept superficial cultural differences while holding that all human beings are essentially the same, emphasize the similarities of people and commonality of basic values, define universal standards in ethnocentric terms (as related to oneself).</p> | <p><i>Learners say:</i> “I am sick and tired of hearing all the time about what makes people different; we need to recognize that we are all human beings, after all.” “The best way to get along is to just be yourself.” “Deep down we are really all the same—people just trying to lead healthy and happy lives.”</p> | <p><i>Learners need</i> culture-general knowledge, knowledge of one’s own culture(s), open-mindedness, listening skills, and the ability to perceive others accurately.</p> <p><i>Support learners</i> by providing some subjective cultural differences and definitions of culture, differentiating between stereotypes and generalizations, avoiding excess stress on cultural contrasts, and expanding curiosity from in-group to out-group.</p> <p><i>Challenge learners</i> by providing categories and frameworks for understanding one’s own culture, facilitating contact with ethnorelative cultural informants in structured activities, providing opportunities for difference-seeking, and focusing on cultural self-awareness.</p> |

The Ethnorelative Stages

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| <p>Acceptance Learners recognize and appreciate cultural differences in behavior and values, accept cultural differences as viable alternative solutions to the organization of human existence, begin to interpret phenomena within a context, consciously elaborate categories of difference.</p> | <p><i>Learners say:</i> “It would be boring to be around the same kind of people all of the time.” “I generally enjoy the differences that exist between myself and people from other countries.” “I am just starting to learn more about this new culture, and it’s amazing how many similarities and differences there really are.”</p> | <p><i>Learners need</i> culture-specific knowledge, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, contextual knowledge, and respect for others’ values and beliefs.</p> <p><i>Support learners by</i> providing more complex subjective cultural differences including value analysis; elaborating on categories of cultural contrast; demonstrating relationships between cognitive, cultural, and communication styles, making cultural differences the focus while deepening cultural self-awareness; and preparing learners for cultural frame-of-reference shifting.</p> <p><i>Challenge learners by</i> distinguishing cultural, moral, and ethical relativity; discussing perceived contradictions between culture-specific and universal categories; building on enthusiasm for difference seeking to promote more profound contrasts; and providing experiential learning opportunities that require intercultural empathy.</p> |
| <p>Adaptation Learners develop skills that enable intercultural communication, use empathy and shift cultural frame of reference to understand and be understood across cultural boundaries.</p> | <p><i>Learners say:</i> “I can maintain my values and behave in culturally appropriate ways.” “The more I understand this culture, the better I get at the language.” “I really enjoy some of the characteristics I have learned. Some behaviors, though, are ones I can never imagine feeling comfortable with.”</p> | <p><i>Learners need</i> risk-taking and problem-solving skills, continued expansion of cultural behaviors, and social adaptability to link their cognitive ability to other aspects of their behavior.</p> <p><i>Support learners by</i> providing models of cultural adaptation, discussing cultural topics that require intercultural empathy (e.g., appreciation of humor), facilitating opportunities for learners to practice behavior in known cultures, using ethnorelative cultural informants in less-structured activities, and preparing learners to learn autonomously.</p> <p><i>Challenge learners by</i> providing cultural identity development ideas and opportunities to interact in unexplored cultural contexts; by addressing deeper anxiety issues, such as identity conflicts.</p> |
| <p>Integration Learners internalize bicultural or multicultural frames of reference, maintain a definition of identity that is “marginal” to any particular culture, and sees one’s self as “in process.”</p> | <p><i>Learners say:</i> “Whatever the situation, I can usually look at it from a variety of cultural points of view.” “Everywhere is home, if you know enough about how things work here.” “I may not like everything here, but I am willing to try to understand why it is the way it is—and just to accept the things I cannot understand.”</p> | <p><i>Learners need</i> a culturally sensitive sense of humor, the ability to create new categories, and role and identity flexibility.</p> <p><i>Support learners by</i> providing theoretical frameworks for constructing a multicultural identity; creating opportunities for marginal peer group interaction and opportunities for cultural marginals to serve as resource persons.</p> <p><i>Challenge learners by</i> providing models of cultural mediation and ethical development, promoting the self as process, and encouraging commitments and boundary setting.</p> |