Cross-Cultural Dynamics

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## Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course. The Learning Journal integrates the essential elements of the course within your professional field of interest. The objective of the coursejournal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor insights gained as a result of the course. **The course learning journal should be 3-5 pages** in length and should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction** –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.
2. **Personal Growth** - Describe your personal growth–*how the course stretched or challenged you*– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the week and through subsequent readings – *what new insights or skills you gained.*
3. **Reflective Entry** - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or *adaptation and relevant application*) of new learning in your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?
4. **Conclusion** – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

**Introduction**

The idea of the course was to develop an appreciation, sensitivity, and receptiveness to other cultures. It should not be assumed that Christian scholar-practitioners, missionaries, Christian businessmen and women, and even Christian leaders in corporate America have the necessary understanding, knowledge, and competence to work with cultures outside their own. During the course readings and formulation of developmental readings, we are able to engage with the literature written on cross-cultural dynamics in various milieus such as the corporate world, the missionary field, neighborhoods, and ecumenical settings.

Through readings, meanings are enhanced, and constructs are also learned. The concepts, constructs, and cross-cultural theories learned are then applied to our individual vocations or research interests. We are able to write out an assessment or a plan on how we would use the new concepts to better understand individuals from another culture inside our workplace and ministry settings so that we are more effective and have the necessary tools to contextualize Scripture so that we can witness and spread the gospel to others who grew up with different traditions, value systems, beliefs, and customs.

Although we may not work in an official missionary capacity or field, our workplace, neighborhood, and place of ministry serve as missionary fields and we have to learn how to connect with others any time we engage with them so that conversations can be started, ideas can be exchanged and God’s light can shine through.

The word dynamic denotes constant change, activity, progress, and interaction. Relationships between friends, co-workers, neighbors, and even family are in constant motion and hopefully progression toward mutual understanding, respect, positive communication, and enlightenment. These relationships can be fragile, especially if you do not speak the same language, linguistically and ideologically. Learning God’s intention for mankind, and how to become one glorified ecclesia, takes knowledge, and God’s wisdom, which is what the class provides.

**Personal Growth**

As someone who has always been interested in other cultures by way of traveling, cooking, reading, and interacting, this course elevated my interest to a place of scholarship and cultural sensitivity. Learning about grid group cultural theory, proxemics, cultural intelligence as well as other concepts was very eye-opening. Some of the strategies and processes mentioned in my readings have only put a name to practices I’ve engaged in for the last several years. I have always had respect for those who look different than me, speak a different language, and have different family traditions. Now I can assess initial interactions and figure out how to proceed in the relationship or engagement more effectively.

One revelation was learning about how different cultures emote differently, how emotions may be taught or socialized, and how I could minimize conflict due to a misunderstanding of emotions. It was also revelatory how much cultural competence and understanding can be applied in the field I work in. Property managers are highly underrated. Their service, their many responsibilities, and sometimes the dangerous environments they work in are not recognized. What is also not recognized are the many dynamics at play throughout the workweek.

Property managers interact with their staff, the contractors who work on the building, routine vendors, and last but not least, the residents who live in the building. All of these individuals may be of different ethnicities, a mix of genders and cultures. The staff may all be Hispanic while the residents may be a large percentage Korean. Cross-cultural skills are necessary to be an effective, empathetic manager.

**Reflective Entry**

On a breezy, early, August morning in London, England, as I proceeded to check out of my hotel from the most exhilarating trip I had ever been on, I sadly said my goodbyes to the front desk clerk who worked during most of my stay. She was sweet, professional, and accommodating. Although she hailed from another area of Europe, her English had been honed enough for clear communication. We were from two different worlds. After reviewing my portfolio, my next step was to grab some food from the complimentary breakfast buffet before heading off to the train station. Before I turned to go to the restaurant, the Holy Spirit created a quiet, serene moment for me to do his bidding. As the young front desk clerk was headed back behind the desk from previously coming out and tending to another task, I looked her in the eye and asked her if she knew Jesus.

She was totally open and affable. My trip had been so full of adventure, learning, and intellectual stimulation that I would be remiss if I left to come home without accomplishing something for God’s Kingdom. This was my thank you to the Lord for bestowing upon me blessings and benefits. The young lady replied that she did not know Jesus so I asked her if she would pray a prayer with me. She agreed. I held her hands and for the next few minutes, she repeated the prayer of salvation. It was a God moment. After we were done, I went to secure my to-go breakfast, returned to the desk to grab my suitcase, waved goodbye, and headed out. The young lady was now born again. We were from two different cultures; we were two different ages and I’ll probably never see her again (although I do plan on returning to London). All we had in common was a few days’ worth of pleasantries and an openness to the other.

Many African Americans may not be comfortable with witnessing Christ to another culture. Perhaps there is an intimidation factor, a fear of reaching out or being misunderstood. All that is needed is a love for Christ and humanity and Holy boldness to expand the kingdom. For the love of God transcends color, culture, ethnicity, race, gender, and language. God will provide a bridge for us to communicate with each other if we just open our hearts.

**Conclusion**

There is so much more to learn about cross-cultural dynamics. If one desires to see God’s kingdom expand and emerge, we are going to encounter “the other”. The other should not instill fear in us, the other should not paralyze us nor imperialize us. Our differences and similarities should intrigue us to the point of exploration, and desire to understand and communicate. There may be a reticence to engage the other but one thing we have to remember is that we are also “the other”.