**Cross-Cultural Dynamics Learning Journal**

The Cross-Cultural Dynamics course offers students the opportunity to realize the positive impact they can have on others’ lives and the opposite. Indeed, the course intends to prepare students for interdisciplinary success within a global society. That is, to analyze (cross-cultural understanding) and interact effectively (cross-cultural communication) with cultures with differing religious beliefs, ideologies, and worldviews. The course is relevant to the graduate program, whereby students can learn effective cross-cultural strategies with the skills necessary to integrate faith and religion in a postmodern society.

As for personal growth, the course benefited me far more than anticipated, especially while I worked through the community development principles and applied them to a six-hour presentation I did for mental health professionals a few months ago. Had I not been assigned the task, I would have missed a rich opportunity to carefully examine and think through the situations that occurred and the insights offered by the participants through the course evaluations – as I have done in the past, only to repeat them again in the future. Completing the exercise revealed that personally, I need to grow in humility, listen more closely, and speak wisely. I was convicted in several areas, and knowing that abortion is a divisive subject, to begin with, I need to be more sensitive and better prepared to take on such a task. Scripturally, the Bible verses offering contemplation include:

“A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart” (New King James Version, 2007, Proverbs 18:2),

“The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” (New King James Version, 2007, Proverbs 18:15).

“By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom” (New King James Version, 2007, Proverbs 13:10).

“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of others” (New King James Version, 2007, Philippians 2:4).

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (New King James Version, 2007, James 1:19-20).

“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces” (New King James Version, 2007, Matthew 7:6).

I include the last Bible verse because there are people who have hardened their hearts and are too close-minded to hear anything negative regarding abortion. Personally, I have experienced people who have attended an online workshop and, while I was presenting, spent the entire time using the chat box to undermine the information I was sharing. Fortunately, I was unaware that this was taking place at the time, so the negative comments did not throw me off. However, I will need to be able to address a hostile audience for future presentations and know how to engage, when to engage, or if to engage, as Matthew 7:6 refers to.

New insights – Before this class, I had not thought about what constitutes a community, the different types of community, and the techniques for developing community programs. The chapter in the Handbook of Clinical Sociology titled Sociological Work in Communities (Sengstock, 2001) has provided insights into how I can apply techniques to a newly formed international non-profit organization I am part of – the International Institute for Reproductive Loss (IIRL) that will be launching September 2024. Currently, we are in the process of building the website and planning an international conference in May 2025. Specifically helpful is Sengstock's suggestion to start small when developing community programs (p. 161).

While starting small may sound obvious, it wasn’t when considering IIRL’s upcoming conference. Viewing bi-annual international conferences as a community development program has given me the confidence to start small, making it easier to implement, evaluate, and grow in two ways: first, as an organization, and second, professionally, educationally, and personally. This new insight has also helped me move the organization forward mentally in a way that lessens my anxiety and relieves the pressure of having to decide on the conference.

The Cross-Cultural Dynamics course allowed me to think more about IIRL, consisting of different communities and the essential elements required to develop each one. Each community will be a sum of a greater part. Reflecting on this has been extremely beneficial for structuring IIRL. That is, viewing the organization as an upcoming intentional and virtual community that interconnects others with similar associations, expertise, shared experiences, beliefs, and values (Sengstock, 2001).

In conclusion, practicing cross-culturally in a global post-modern day society will take knowledge, skill, patience, practice, and time. As I have been personally reminded through this course, “We usually communicate from our own frame of reference” (Elmer, 2009, p. 38); transformation in others can only occur when we first recognize our own biases and seek to understand others in a non-judging Christ-like way. The course has been most effective in meeting my professional goal, especially in the area of how to grow IIRL educationally through learning more ways to present well and religiously by reflecting on scripture verses and applying them to areas where I need to improve upon. Lastly, while working on these class assignments, I got overwhelmed, thinking I had so much more to learn before I should speak again. That was until one of my teammates told me that one of my five-minute videos had been viewed nearly 30,000 times. We do not have to be perfect to serve God, and we will make mistakes. Putting into practice what I have learned in this class will enhance my abilities for continued Kingdom work, following in the direction where God leads.

Works Cited

Elmer, D. (2009). *Cross-cultural connections: Stepping out and fitting in around the world.* Intervarsity Press.

Life Application Study Bible. (2007). Tyndale.

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