

Global Competency Certificate

Thompson Rivers University

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Knowledge & Sociology: Gaining a Global-Lens and Applying a Multicultural Perspective

Before taking University-level Sociology classes, I was unaware of other cultures in the world and under the impression that my own views are universally dominant. As a white, Christian, heterosexual woman in a monogamous and legally binding marriage, I was unaware of my prejudices or biases. Reflecting upon this period in my life, I can think of many examples of common phrases that only serve to spread misconceptions. In particular, “I don’t know why Aboriginal peoples ask for compensation for residential schools, there have been plenty of oppressed people, including the whites;” “Moms on welfare are like breeding-women, they have babies for paycheques;” “Multiculturalism is the best it’s ever been in Canada, so racism obviously has gone down.” Growing up in Edmonton, Alberta, before living in the Greater Vancouver Area had exposed me to many different cultures. From a place of ignorance, I overtly displayed my personal biases and met these cultures with undertones of xenophobia or racism.

My classes in English and Sociology have provided me with a deeper knowledge of the various historical backgrounds that have contributed to my personal biases and misconceptions. For example, Studies in Indigenous Literature taught me that a large majority of my xenophobic attitudes are normalized and foundation in Western-Society. Similarly, the first thing I learned as a Sociologist is that culture is multifaceted and influenced by a variety of factors. Another

example is the Sociology of Families class, which had debunked my assumptions that other societies look and act in a similar way to mine. While I was under the impression that the majority of other cultures actively practice monogamy, the statistics did not support my prejudices.

This course had students compare and contrast the different forms of families across cultures. My project compared the case-studies of a Western-Canadian family with one from the developing regions of Nigeria. In particular, I detailed the size, kinship structure, economic status, job-opportunity and political-atmosphere of each family. During this project, I found myself shocked at the level of social inequality being experienced on a global scale. This experience dislodged my personal biases regarding family-systems and showed me that my culture is not truly “dominant” or “universal” but rather depicted that way in mainstream media.

Sociology has contributed to my knowledge regarding Global Issues by changing the way I perceive or interact with others. The above project served to reveal my own personal biases or prejudice towards others, which in turn shifted my perspective from one of hate to one of understanding. By shedding my xenophobic lens, I was able to see the commonalities between families on a global scale. While there were distinct differences and variances cross-culturally, the project also unveiled many universal similarities. For example, each society assigned value and social-meaning to the family unit, want to socialize their children in a way that will help them succeed and uniformly emphasize the children’s health or wellbeing. This knowledge has shaped the way I interact with others by contributing to my understanding, appreciation, and empathy towards others. In particular, this experience has added to my Global Learning by

showing me how to critically-engage with how my words or actions affect others and spread misconceptions about culture.

Global Learning will impact my future by providing me with the knowledge and tools needed to solve issues surrounding social inequality. From a multiculturalist perspective, I hope to apply a multiculturalist lens to problems within our community. In particular, I hope to tackle racialized issues, economic inequality, and resource-distribution in Kamloops. Having applied to the Bachelor of Education, I think the knowledge and experience gained from the Global Competencies Certificate will aid me in being a more empathetic or understanding teacher. My ultimate goal is to create a society in which we promote EQUITY rather than EQUALITY, COMMUNICATION over CONFLICT, and prioritize ACCEPTANCE over INTOLERANCE.