**Wikiography**

**Principles of Learning**

**EDUC5001G – Professor W. Hunter**

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Abstract

This wikiography paper includes an analysis of the information added to the course Wiki by the author for the Principles of Learning course in the following subject areas: culture, cultural, intercultural communication, Milton Bennett (a theorist recognized for the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity), ethnocentrism, grounded theory and appreciative inquiry. An evaluation of the entries to the Wiki has been summarized for assessment purposes, and a description of the work completed has been assessed to provide an insight into the quality of the work achieved in each of the subject areas mentioned above.

*Key Words*: culture, cultural, intercultural communication, Milton Bennett, ethnocentrism, grounded theory, appreciative inquiry

The subject areas of my contribution to the course Wiki include: culture, cultural, intercultural communication, Milton Bennett (a theorist for the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity), ethnocentrism, grounded theory, and appreciative inquiry. The overall underlying theme of my contributions is based on the definition of the word culture. Because of the nebulous, ambiguous nature of the word culture, defining the word turned out to be an enormous task for the Wiki assignment. However, in order to continue to build on the Wiki with the related words, intercultural communication, which is derived from the words inter, culture/ cultural, and communication, this ground work of defining the word culture had to be completed comprehensively and well.

Like the metaphor of a well-established tree with roots spreading out in the rich soil in many directions, the word culture can represent the main trunk of the tree with branches spreading out, or it can symbolize a complex growth of the root system of the tree. The possibilities of the future graduate students adding, or making changes to the Wiki with the concepts related to culture are endless. However, I realize that this possibility greatly depends on the interests of the students, for it appeared that there were no previous entries to the topic of culture on the Wiki website. When I enrolled in the Master of Education (MEd) program at the University of Ontario, Institute of Technology (UOIT) in September 2012, I did not know at the time that I would be immersed in the topic of culture and intercultural communication. However, during the fall semester, the combination of two courses, the Research Methods course and the Social and Cultural Context of Education course have helped to draw out the concept of culture into the light from a very dormant part of my mind. Looking back, it’s surprising how far I’ve travelled along this pathway already, and still continuing on the same journey in the current course – Principles of Learning.

Given the amount of learning that’s been happening and the many discoveries about myself and others along the way, I would most likely continue on along this pathway in the foreseeable future towards meeting the UOIT, MEd program portfolio completion requirements. What I found unique about my work on the course Wiki as compared to other course work that I completed to date was that just reading three or four articles to complete an assignment was not enough. The Wiki, like an entity with many tentacles, pulled me in and got me involved in a subject matter in a way that I’ve never worked on an assignment before. Upon reflection, I would declare that the Wiki assignment is a gigantic task— a continuous, on-going, trailer load of an assignment. I read more than thirty scholarly articles on culture, cultural, intercultural communication and related articles in search of materials to include on the Wiki. There always seemed to be something more that I should be adding to the Wiki.

For example, I started with an article that I felt was a really good find on the topic of culture written by Agboka (2012). It required much time to sift through the article, to absorb it, and to extract and summarize the information to provide a comprehensive, easy to read overview on the current issues on the topic of culture. When I added the results of this work on the Wiki, I thought at the time that my work on the C*ulture* part of the Wiki was done. I was ready to move on to the next topic on my contribution list. What’s interesting about this Wiki assignment is that when I add new information on the Wiki, it does not feel complete. Perhaps this is because unlike other assignments, I cannot hand in each Wiki entry, or submit them to someone as I complete them. Instead, I get a chance to go back and look at my work whenever I want to, and it registers in my mind as a work in progress each time I look at it, which seems to imply that there’s still more work that needs to be done. Now that I’m reflecting on why I spent so much time and effort on defining culture, I’m gaining some insight into my thought process at the time. While searching for appropriate materials to add to the Wiki, I became absorbed in the search as well as the readings. However, I still feel that there is much more that needs to be done and learned. In retrospect, connecting with the first part of the Wiki assignment, my recent experiences from adding new information to the Wiki once again validates Boettcher’s 10th learning principle: “Everything Else Being Equal, More Time-on-Task Equals More Learning” (Boetcher, 2007).

The internal process of continually reviewing and assessing my work for accuracy and completeness resulted in the addition of metaphors about culture to the Wiki, which then prompted me to look for pictures to complement the metaphors. Once I found the pictures from Google Images and uploaded them to the Wiki, I was excited to see the results of my work. Uploading the pictures and ensuring that they are placed where I want to showcase them is tricky and takes many trial and errors. Unfortunately, the issue with the damaged hard drive that housed the Wiki happened to fall on the weekend that I was making these trials, but eventually, all the pictures were placed on the Wiki, complementing the description of the cultural metaphors. Again, after having completed this task, I felt that my work was done, and I was pleased with the results of my efforts.

However, this time, I was questioning myself: “So, what’s the big deal about culture?” I’ve defined the word and even added pictures to describe it. “How does it relate to education?” “What are some of the connections to culture and learning or teaching?” This took me back to the “drawing board”, which meant more search for relevant materials, and more readings, and it was considerably more difficult to get the articles that seemed to be relevant. Many of the articles that I wanted to read were unavailable in the full text format. The abstracts available on the library search engines on some of these articles led me to the UNESCO website, where I was able to download some of the articles that I was searching for. Once the *Culture and Learning*, and the *Culture and Teaching* sections were added to the Wiki, I was more than ready to move on. By this time, I needed a break from *Culture*.

The next addition to the Wiki was Milton Bennett, who is well known for his work on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), which provides a framework for understanding an individual’s development and his/her awareness along a continuum, from a highly ethnocentric perspective to a highly ethnorelative perspective (Durocher, 2007). Other additions to the Wiki followed: intercultural communication, cultural, grounded theory, appreciative inquiry, and ethnocentrism. It may appear that the grounded theory and the appreciative inquiry seem unrelated to the cultural theme of my Wiki additions. They were added to the Wiki for several reasons. First, some of the research papers on intercultural communication were based on the grounded theory methodology using the appreciative inquiry (Meade, 2010; Rausch, 2008). Second, the grounded theory methodology and the appreciative inquiry were new information to me; and third, they were also new additions to the Wiki. Moreover, grounded theory methodology provides an interesting way of reviewing and analyzing qualitative data that allows the researchers to refer back to any part of the previously analyzed information and be able to make comparisons with newly accumulated knowledge. It offers researchers a flexibility to be able to move from one end of the spectrum to the other end at any given point in their analysis towards emerging theories. Similarly, appreciative inquiry methodology provides an innovative way of focusing on the strengths of individuals with a positive, respectful, questioning attitude (Meade, 2010).

Upon review of the above mentioned entries posted on the Wiki, internal links were added to provide the readers with the ability to connect seamlessly to the words already defined on the Wiki. External links to various websites for a primary source material, or a video, or scholarly journal articles were provided on the newly added theories, theorist and definitions as mentioned previously in this paper. The documentation of sources were cited and included in the *Sources* of each Wiki page to ensure that proper credit was given to the originator of the material. Pictures and diagrams were added to each page to provide visual learners with an opportunity to connect with the information more easily. Furthermore, the pictures are also visually stimulating, and they entice the readers to get engaged in the topic to read further and to learn.

All of the information that I’ve added to the Wiki are new additions, or original, and some of the concepts are quite contemporary such as appreciative inquiry. Much effort and time were spent on the theme of culture to provide a fertile ground for the future Wiki contributors. The work on the Wiki was at times a difficult process. This was partly because there was learning involved not only on the topics added to the Wiki, but also on the Wiki as a technology tool. I found/ learned different ways of streamlining the linking process for internal and external links from working on this Wiki assignment by observing the HTML codes used by others and modifying the sequence to make it work for my intended purposes. Most of the technology aspect of this Wiki was also a new learning opportunity for me as well. I learned much and gained new insights on the topics: culture, cultural, intercultural communication, Milton Bennett, ethnocentrism, grounded theory, and appreciative inquiry. However, there’s much work that remains to be done. I plan to return to the Wiki and visit. Also, if I continue on this journey towards learning more about intercultural communication in any of the future courses that I would pursue at UOIT (it seems highly likely at this point in time), I would wish to return and add new found knowledge to the Wiki.

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