

**Ethnocentrism** – A form of cultural bias; it is the evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.

### **Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)**

The Bennett scale, also called the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), was developed by Milton Bennett.<sup>[1]</sup> The framework describes the different ways in which people can react to cultural differences.

### **Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Six stages of Bennett scale)**

1-3 stages reflect ethnocentrism in cross-cultural communication. During these three phases, a person sees their original culture as the most superior one and takes it as the criteria to judge other cultures.<sup>[2]</sup>

#### **1. Denial of difference**

- Individuals experience their own culture as the only "real" one, while other cultures are either not noticed at all or are understood in an undifferentiated, simplistic manner.<sup>[3]</sup> People at this position are generally uninterested in cultural difference, but when confronted with difference their seemingly benign acceptance may change to aggressive attempts to avoid or eliminate it.<sup>[3]</sup> Most of the time, this is a result of physical or social isolation, where the person's views are never challenged and are at the center of their reality.<sup>[3]</sup> Members of dominant culture are more likely to have a denial orientation towards cultural diversity.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### **2. Defense of difference**

- Differences are acknowledged, but they are denigrated rather than embraced.<sup>[2]</sup> Rather, one's own culture is experienced as the most "evolved" or best way to live.<sup>[3]</sup> This position is characterized by dualistic us/them thinking and frequently accompanied by overt negative stereotyping.<sup>[4]</sup> They will openly belittle the differences among their culture and another, denigrating race, gender or any other indicator of difference. People at this position are more openly threatened by cultural difference and more likely to be acting aggressively against it.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### **3. Minimization of difference**

- People recognize superficial cultural differences in food, customs, etc. and have somewhat positive view about cultural differences.<sup>[2]</sup> But they still emphasize human similarity in physical structure, psychological needs, and/or assumed adherence to universal values.<sup>[2][3]</sup> People at this position are likely to assume that they are no longer ethnocentric, and they tend to overestimate their tolerance while underestimating the effect (e.g. "privilege") of their own culture.<sup>[3]</sup> They usually assumes that our own set of fundamental behavioral categories are absolute and universal.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### **4. Acceptance of difference**

- One's own culture is experienced as one of a number of equally complex worldviews.<sup>[3]</sup> People at this position appreciate and accept the existence of culturally different ways of organizing human existence, although they do not necessarily

like or agree with every way.<sup>[2][3]</sup> They can identify how culture affects a wide range of human experience and they have a framework for organizing observations of cultural difference.<sup>[3]</sup> We recognize people from this stage through their desire to be informed or proactively learn about alien cultures, and not to confirm prejudices.<sup>[2]</sup>

#### **5. Adaptation to difference**

- Individuals are able to expand their own worldviews to accurately understand other cultures and behave in a variety of culturally appropriate ways.<sup>[3]</sup> In this stage, multicultural participants start to develop intercultural communication skills, change their communication styles, and effectively use empathy or frame of reference shifting, to understand and be understood across cultural boundaries.<sup>[3][2]</sup> At this stage, one is able to act properly outside of one's own culture.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### **6. Integration of difference**

- One's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews.<sup>[3]</sup> People at this position have a definition of self that is "marginal" (not central) to any particular culture, allowing this individual to shift rather smoothly from one cultural worldview to another.<sup>[3]</sup> At this point, a will to comprehend and adopt various beliefs and norms begins to emerge, demonstrating a high level of intercultural sensitivity.<sup>[2]</sup>