

Example of research paper on cultural sensitivity project

[Life](#), [Home](#)



I have watched movies, read and heard about the Indian culture. I have come across a few native Indians on previous occasions, but I had never interacted or been exposed to any of them at a closer scope. Therefore, my visitation to an Indian family recently made a difference in my understanding of their way of life, which was thoroughly intriguing. The experience was different because many Indian practices were explained to me from people who do practice them. The house was decorated with many colors. The portraits, curtains, beads and furniture in the living room were all chosen with care and had different bright colors that my host explained had cultural denotations. For instance, the curtains were blue because it was the color of the Lord Krishna, who is responsible for counsel and is a representation of the goodness in life. The different representation of their colors was new to me since they mean almost the opposite in my culture. For instance, red, which was the dominant color in the house, represents purity, wealth and royalty in the Indian custom. In my understanding, royalty is represented by blue or purple. Red is the ultimate representation of passion, but they chose for it to stand for purity. Also, white in my culture stands for purity and holiness. In native Indian customs, the color is the most repulsed, next to black which is a sign of evil. It denotes the absence of life because they perceive it to be colorless. In fact, widows are only allowed to wear white because they are perceived to be inactive and cannot enjoy the luxuries of life. Colors are apparently paramount to Indian customs because they showcase a person's belief in different aspects of their traditions. I found this different to my culture and way of life because in my world colors are not keenly observed.

The Indian food and the manner in which it was eaten were also different to me. We were all required to sit down on a Thali(mat), and the head of the house sat on a small low stool. The eating was done with hands because according to Indian customs, it was a humble and respectful gesture. The main dish was a cuisine that was made from different kinds of vegetables. The family is strictly vegetarian because it does not believe in the unholy slaughtering of animals. The cuisine was accompanied with Roti, which is baked like bread. As it was explained, Roti was the ultimate representation of Indian culture and was served to visitors as a sign of welcoming them into a person's home. All these were different to my way of life because visitors in my culture are only supposed to be treated well, as opposed to being served specific foods.

Also, the symbols in the house were all strange to me. One was a symbol of a flower in purple form. The symbol is known as the Bilva and must be placed in homes as it showcases that the home is sanctified from all evil. The plant in the symbol is known as the bael tree and is supposed to be planted around the house for sanctification purposes. There was also a symbol and sculpture of a cow, which is greatly revered in Hinduism, which is the religion of the Indians. The cow is a representation of life and is considered as the ultimate provider. The family members all referred to the sculpture as “she.”

I learned that Indians have to pray twice a day, at dusk and dawn. I have read books about Indians being the most strictly religious people in the world, but I had never known about their prayer routines and how they conduct them. The prayers are done twice a day with a recital of a Sanskrit

and a reading of the Bhagavad Gita. The prayers take place in the homes of people, at a room that is usually secluded as holy ground. I was not aware that a person's home could be depicted as a sanctuary of worship since I always assumed that the only place Hindus worshiped is in Hindu temples. In addition, I became profoundly aware of the fact that there are many types of Indians and all of them practice different customs that are closely related to each other. There are Indians originally from the South, East, and west of India. My hosts explained to me that there are over two thousand sub-tribes and ethnicities in the Indian people, which I did not know. In addition, even though the majority of them practice Hinduism, there are Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs and Jains among them.

The most common stereotypes with Indians have to do with how uptight they are about religion, dressing, their choice of music and their way of life. Indians are believed not to socialize outside their circles and are often depicted as one of the most traditional cultures. The part about religion is quite correct because they are very strict on prayers and following of religious doctrines (Parekh, Singh, 3). However, they are more appreciative of the contemporary world and ways of life than people presume. The children of my hosts were youths aged between seventeen and twenty-three. They attested to enjoying all genres of music and one idolized pop music star Beyoncé. They dressed normally and wore the Saris on special occasions or during prayers. They watched and enjoyed normal shows like typical people, which is opposed to many people ideas that they are repulsive to contemporary forms of life. Indians are often portrayed as natives who are shackled up in the hole of traditional beliefs and do not explore the world.

However, they live the typical life any other person would. They attend schools, speak English and have friends outside their circles.

In addition, most people believe that Indians are natives who live in reservations. Contrary to this belief, Indians own homes and live among other people. It is true that they used to reside in reservations as a community in the past, but they are more integrated to society in modern times. They have assimilated with other people in the society and some even intermarry with other cultures. For example, only 300 reservations exist in countries like United States today, and most of them are simply tracts of land owned by Indians and are not necessarily actively occupied.

Also, there are stereotypes about Indian women and their position in society. Even though they cook and take care of the home, a contemporary Indian woman has more to offer. They go to school, have careers and freely interact with other people in the society. The traditional Indian woman did not have a voice to speak up or mingle with men. The same notion is not afforded to them nowadays with most people still viewing the culture as savage to the women. However, the stereotype is not true. The woman of the household I visited is a professional doctor with a master's degree. Two of her daughters are in college. She said that her husband did consult her in everything that he does, and her opinion is highly valued. She allows her daughters to mingle with anyone they choose to. However, chastity is still greatly valued, and a lady is supposed to remain chaste until she is married, just like stereotypes denote. Also, as it was explained to me, marriage partners are chosen even though the system is not as rigid as it was before (Thukral, Pimple, Palsetia Dave & De Sousa, 2013).

My viewpoint about Indians and their culture was transformed by my visit. Mostly, I did not associate with them because I assumed they are too rigid or forbidden by their cultures to form alliances with outsiders. However, after my visit I realized how friendly and respectful Indians are. I will, therefore, incorporate more Indian friends into my circle of social interactions. I will also make a notable effort to attend their ceremonies and festivals in order to know more about their culture. I learned that they were receptive to other people as well, highlighted by the gesture of inviting me into their home and giving me special treatment as an important guest. I realized that people are skeptical of their traditions because they neither know nor understand them. All they know are what others say or what they read from books. Having had an up-close experience with Indians, I am appreciative of their traditions and will not look at them as outsiders because of their 'weird' ways. In many aspects, they are just like other people in the society.

References

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