

Experience of going to a church wedding theology religion essay



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On the 18th August 2012 , I was privileged to have accompanied a friend to a Church wedding that was held at the St. Peters Anglican Church in the Gold Coast. This particular wedding was organized by the bride's family, whom are Australian. However, the groom's family was originated in Singapore. The groom was an Indian decedent that was born and raised here in Australia. Eventhough, the families involved were from Singapore and Australia, the wedding was conducted in a way where it satisfies both the family of the bride and groom. Eventhough the close family of the groom have adapted the Australian culture, the extended family of the groom still lives and practice the traditions from a Indian culture. This causes them to carry out the ceremony with Indian related themes . The particular event is considered a major event in Australian culture as it is a ceremony that Australians go through once in their life (Lal, 2007). Being a student who has been brought up in a very strict Malay culture, the wedding protocols are not the same.

I primarily choose this is event is because I have only once seen a church wedding but never have I seen a church wedding with elements from an Indian culture. Eventhough Malaysia is known as a multicultural nation, I have never been to an Indian nor Christian wedding. Since Australia is a predominantly Christian country, with around 64 per cent of all Australians identifying as Christians (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trades, 2011). Eventhough Christian is a religion, a wedding ceremony is more of a cultural event.

My initial expectation was that this wedding would be nothing different than the weddings portrayed in movies or television. This was however proven wrong as the ceremony was done in a fashion where they were married in

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front of a priest, but their dress code and protocol was different from the usual church wedding.

Observations

Malaysia is a country known for its multiculturalism. Being a Malaysian, I was brought up in a Malay culture and we tend to be open to other cultures.

However, as I was growing up, I have never attended a wedding other than Malay weddings. This led me to my amazement towards a wedding from another culture. It was a beautiful ceremony and I am considered lucky as these events do not usually come often. I was blessed to be a part of the ceremony and was greeted with open arms. It was an unusual feeling as the weddings that I have attend in Malaysia, I was always left out as Malay weddings would usually involve the adults and teenagers or young adults were left out from making preparations or formally participate in the ceremony itself.

The ceremony began at exactly 9 am, where all the guests were requested to find their sitting before 8. 30 am. The ceremony lasted for only 2 and a half hour. This is one of a vital point of my observations as a traditional Malay wedding would usually spread out through 3 days, of which, everyday there were different things to be done. On the second day of a Malay wedding, the whole party will make their way to the mosque where the wedding is officialise. (This part of the wedding is very similar to the church wedding in terms of religious value.) With a Malay weddings, people would arrive late and still be considered as acceptable where as in a church, the time upon arrival plays a very vital role as if you come late you'd have to sneak in quietly in order to be in the ceremony. This had shown how <https://assignbuster.com/experience-of-going-to-a-church-wedding-theology-religion-essay/>

eventhough I was brought up in a multicultural environment, the sense of categorization still occurs.

Upon arriving, I was seated on the 5th row on the right side facing the altar. I was seated alone and not knowing anyone that was around me. At first I was disappointed as I was forced to sit through the wedding alone as my friend was seated on the second row, but the party on the 5th row were rather nice and friendly (They were the groom's high school friends). It turns out that this was already a sitting arrangement. It turns out that the seating was arranged according to family/ friend status. The closer you are to the bride and groom, the closer you seating. I found this interesting as I didn't think that the seating had any meaning towards ceremony before attending this ceremony.

The ceremony beginning was quiet informal because the indication of the ceremony to begin was with a tune played through the organ. I was quiet shock as the whole church was talking softly to each other and all of the sudden, the music plays. It startled me quite a bit as I assumed that the wedding would start with an announcement. Even so, I saw that everyone was kept calm even when the organist played from out of the blue, which I can say that to guest who never actually seen a church wedding, wouldn't know when the ceremony will begin.

Problem statement

Being able to witness and able to engage into a church wedding, I was to identify a few communication problems between 2 cultures that celebrate a similar event. Eventhough Malay and Australian culture differs, the wedding

ceremony of a Church wedding wouldn't raise many difficulty to interact with the Malay culture. However, interaction between the two groups will cause a few difficulties. These problems include that misinterpreted made by one group towards the other and the subculture that differ with the 2 cultures.

Stages of the perception process

As it was mentioned, I had found that eventhough I was open to a variety of culture, I would always relate towards my own culture. This is what is called influence of culture towards culture. Perception is generally defined as the process by which a person assimilates and makes use of sensory data. In other words, perception is the selection, organization, and interpretation of sensory data. People behave in accordance with what they perceive. Cook and Hunsaker (2001) bring out this fact in their explanation of the meaning of perception. According to them, " it is the critically important process that helps people define their world and provide clues for guiding their behavior.....our perceptions are our personal reality, whether they are objective or not". Our perception determines our behaviour.

Through the 3 stages of perception, I will relate towards the example of when I saw the sense of punctual was very important towards Australian culture towards a similar event in a Malay culture. The first stage was the selection process, where when one selects what they see and choose to disregard others. The selection process consists of selective perception and selective exposure. This when I had used the selective perception; when instead of letting the idea of what time you arrive being a big problem, I choose to see the punctuality as a small problem. Selective exposure is when you choose to expose yourself towards your own beliefs. It is when <https://assignbuster.com/experience-of-going-to-a-church-wedding-theology-religion-essay/>

positing that individuals prefer exposure to arguments supporting their position over those supporting other positions. In this case, I had choose to defend and question this practice as it does not seem like a big of deal.

The second stage of perception is the categorization. In this stage, the perception process organizes the perceived notion in the mind, making it ready to be shaped up in overt response (IBM, 2011). This is when all the stimuli organize and categorize all the information from stage one and makes it a whole category. In my case, I had categorized the two different perspectives into Malay culture and Australian culture. This is where the whole process could lead to either a negative or positive reaction. Because of the two category, the ingroup and outgroup, the interpretation may cause a potential negative effect. The ingroup, in this case Malay culture, is more bias towards me as Ingroup (' us') represents a special class of membership group characterized by internal cohesiveness among its members. An ingroup is a group whose norms, aspirations, and values shape the behaviour of its members.

The third and final stage or the perception process is the interpretation. When interpreting stimuli, we try to apply elements of familiarity to it, drawing upon contexts and knowledge we already have in order to help us understand. At this stage I had already put my mind set to saying that punctuality shouldn't be a big issue. This is also the stage where I execute the response of which when I meet up with my friend after the wedding, I started to question the reason and seek for explanation. This is often misleading as if someone who encounters a similar scenario, they would act

differently. (Like instead of asking around, they might straight and stereotype)

Subculture.

As the bride and groom drove off in an Mercedes, I realized that the perception that I have I based on subculture, specifically media culture and regional culture. Say what you want about predominant modern culture, it isn't everyone's bag. Some people appreciate things that skew differently than the cultural norm. Other people, like younger generations, can't seem to find a role in the culture of past generations, and so set out to create their own. Still others latch on to a new development and try to build it into something big, something that may one day reshape the norm.

The media culture refers to the influence of mass media towards a certain group of society to act towards forging a new identity. This would have happen to this wedding if it wasn't for the two contradictory subculture of the bride and groom. The bride, who grew up in Australia, always wanted a wedding done in heaven. Whereas the groom, who eventhough spent half his life in Australia, wanted a simple wedding as he spent most of time growing up in Singapore. Thus he had choose to fall under the regional culture.

From this wedding, we can see that the two weddings were mixed and their subcultures were merged. This however will not bring the effect in a Malay culture. If two people from different subcultures choose to get married, a family feud will likely to occur. This is because Malay culture is a collectivistic cultures, where every decision made is always seen as a whole and very interdependent

Reflection

Before I had attended this wedding, I had this picture in my head that a lot of modern weddings would drop all the traditional values of a church wedding. However this wedding wasn't it. They stuck to apparently a proper church wedding with written vows and real flowers. Due to media culture, I had always thought that a wedding has to be very big with bells and a lot of decorations.

I had also thought that if you are neither a relative nor a friend of the bride and groom, you would be judge and be left out. I was welcomed by the whole family of both parties. They nice and seem to be spreading the joy of love from their children to others. When I informed them of my assignment, they were more thrilled when they found out I was using their wedding as an assignment. The groom's father even invited over for tea the next day as he gave more and more insight on the bride and groom, of which I attended to get a deeper knowledge on the culture behind a church wedding.

This wedding had also made me realized that eventhough I was born raised in a multicultural environment, I still have a lot of weaknesses towards opening up to other culture.