Filip Kolovrat

Comm 2150 – Intercultural Communication

Service Learning Paper

**Service Organization**

Contact information for my project:

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Special needs basketball camp

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**Project**

My project was at the special needs basketball camp at JL Sorenson. I worked with a few other people from the rec center staff and we worked with elementary school kids that had a number of different physical or mental disabilities. During the camps, we went over many different facets of the game of basketball, with a huge emphasis on having fun and enjoying yourself. Every session, we stressed that that was the most important thing when you play any kind of sport or activity. We focused on the basics and fundamentals of basketball: dribbling, passing, shooting, defense, etc.

**Culture Groups**

The kids that I worked with are a part of multiple culture groups. One culture group that they all have in common is that they are all elementary school students in the South Jordan/Herriman area. There are multiple disabilities that the kids have. There are a few kids that have autism. There are others that have slow learning disabilities that are far less noticeable that autism. There are two that have downs syndrome.

**Challenges**

In the beginning, when I didn’t know the kids very well, I found it difficult to talk to them in a way that would be effective for their learning of basketball skills. It took me a couple of sessions to get more comfortable with each one of them individually and find out the best way for them to learn. After a few sessions, I felt like we were friends and it was much easier for me to relate to them and help them learn the game and have fun at the same time. Another thing that was challenging was the fact that I couldn’t teach the way that I usually do because some of them had a hard time positioning their hands the right way, throwing the ball hard enough, moving their feet, etc. So I had to adjust my way of teaching to better fit their needs. After I made the necessary adjustments, it moved along smoothly and was a lot of fun.

**Theory**

The theory that I am applying to my project is Stella Ting-Toomey’s Face Negotiation theory. On our theory summary grid paper, face is defined as “the public image everyone wants to claim for him/herself.” The textbook says that everyone would like to be respected and have a sense of self-respect, but the way we save face changes from culture to culture.

There are four different strategies of face-saving:

1. Face restoration: protecting yourself
2. Face-saving: protecting someone else
3. Face-giving: giving room for someone else to recover face
4. Face-assertion: recovering your own face

The strategy that you use depends on your upbringing and the culture that you are a part of. People in the United States generally focus on themselves and saving their own face without worrying about someone else.

The element of this theory that made me want to apply it to my project is the negotiation styles that we took notes on in class and also that are in the textbook:

1. Dominating style: high concern for self, low for others
2. Integrating style: high concern for both self and others
3. Compromising style: concern for both parties, both get something positive
4. Obliging style: high concern for others
5. Avoiding style: low concern for self and others

**Analysis**

The reason that I chose to focus on the negotiation styles for my project is because I thought that it applied to the kids that I worked with perfectly. As I thought about it over the last few days, I realized that these are some of the most selfless people that I have ever interacted with and I recognized that this theory would be applicable to the thoughts that I was having. No matter which kid I worked with in the camp, not one of them ever displayed elements of dominating style or avoiding style. I began to notice that they were so concerned with me and they seemed to appreciate me so much for being their coach. None of them ever got mad, complained, or demanded anything for themselves. They always had fun and thanked me multiple times after each session. The compromising style was the most prominent in my opinion because we both got something positive out of it. Also, the obliging style seemed to be there because of how much they seemed to enjoy me as a coach and friend. During one session, a boy named Michael really started to like me and he seemed to stick to me during the whole session. When we took a break for the kids to go get a drink of water, he was determined to have me come with him because he thought I was tired and needed some energy. He seemed to have no concern to get a drink for himself, even though he was the one that was working harder. All he was worried about was bringing me with him to get refreshed. Also, as I mentioned on my field notes, Michael (M-Dog) and his mom brought me a thank you card on the last day of the camp. They were very appreciative and it felt very rewarding because they were so nice. Michael also said that we need to go to a Jazz game together next season. I felt like I developed a great relationship with Michael purely based on the fact that he was so concerned with my well-being and he was very unselfish.

**Reflection**

At the beginning of this semester, I felt very hesitant about this project. It is something that is out of my comfort range, but I knew that I had to do it and it would be good for me eventually. I was reluctant about working exclusively with another culture because I was worried that I would do or say something that would offend someone. I learned a lot about the culture I worked with. The most important thing I learned was how unselfish they are and how being kind and genuine can change a person’s view on things. They made me see that people and relationships are the most important thing in life and caring about the people around you goes a long way. My attitude changes drastically because I realized that when I go out of my comfort zone, I learn so much and it is always a positive experience for me. I learned a lot from the kids that I worked with. The application of the face negotiation theory helped me a lot because it helped me analyze the situation and have a better understanding of what type of people I was working with and how their minds worked.

**References**

“Intercultural Communication in Contexts” Martin and Nakayama

Course readings

Notes from class lectures