# Cultural Humility Reflective Essay

## Introduction

Culture is significant in understanding different categories of people.  Culture is complex and diverse, and this implies that no single individual can understand all cultures.  People are different because of their cultural heritage or beliefs. Cultural humility is a situation whereby people are open, flexible and ready to learn matters about other cultures.  It is the ability to acknowledge other people and the diversity that exists in their cultures. It is essential to realize that cultural humility banks on self-humility. It provides room for people to appreciate their biases concerning other cultures and be able to address them accordingly. People should appreciate their biases concerning other cultures, but also realize that it is impossible to know all cultures. This reflective paper is all about an experience with the people belonging to a different religion.

## Description

 Religion is fascinating when it comes to beliefs and practices. The major religions of the world differ in practices and the way they carry out their services or prayers. Being a Christian means, there are many things that one is not familiar with regard to other religions.  Being a Christian l developed a desire to learn more about Islamic prayers and worship. The primary objective of visiting the mosque was to try and find out of the major differences that exist between the Christians and Muslims. The way Muslims conduct their prayers in the mosque is quite different from the way Christians conduct their prayers. The experience was informative because it helped me discover and understand some of the Islamic practices. Before entering the mosque, every Muslim is required to remove his or her shoes. The removal of shoes signifies truth and humility at the place of worship. The other important ritual that l experienced was the washing of hands before beginning prayers in the mosque. This practice is commonly referred to as wudu, and it is mainly meant for purification (Nimer, 2002). After the washing, one is required to move to the area where prayers are made and be able to offer two types of prayers which are called rakat. When I finished immediately, l heard the call for group prayer from the loudspeaker. At this juncture, people are made to line up close to each other and wait for the imam to lead the next session of prayer.  During the group prayer, the imam reads a portion of the Quran. The last part was the recitation of Islamic phrases Alhamdulillah and after that, we were free to leave the mosque.

## Reflection

 The experience in the mosque created an opportunity to socialize with people of a different religion and faith. My perception about Muslims for a long period was always negative. Their interactions and worship was always a contentious matter. They appeared quite different from other people because of how they embraced their religion. However, my perception of the Muslims and the Islamic faith changed the moment I entered the mosque for prayers. The interactions l had with the Muslims fraternity at the mosque proved something different than what l had always thought.  The interactions that l had signified the significance of socialization. The essence of socialization is the mingling aspect, which provides an opportunity to move closer to other people and demystify or prove your biases. Therefore, my socialization with the Muslims affected my perception about the Islamic faith (Berry, 2007). Socialization helped me to realize that Islam is not a hostile religion. Earlier on l thought that Muslims were hostile to people of other faith. I used to believe that they could not allow Christians to access their worship centers.  However, my perception was challenged when l was allowed in the mosque to offer prayers regardless of my faith. The impact of socialization cannot be ignored or overlooked when it comes to cultural humility (Berry, 2007). The best way to learn or understand the other groups of people is to move closer to them rather than dismissing them from afar. Therefore, my perception concerning the hostility among Muslims was changed immediately l moved close to them and interacted with them. The other perception that l had was regarding the ritual of washing hands before prayers. Mosques are built with places where people clean themselves with water before offering prayers. This experience was new to me because it is not found in the Christian circles where l worship. I had discredited this ritual, but my perception changed through socialization (Nimer, 2002). Intersectionality greatly impacted the experience that l had. The way social organizations are connected in the society explains the significance of intersectionality. Many people are influenced by the way these social groups or organizations interact with each other. This privilege impacted my experience with the Muslim fraternity.  The issue of gender, sexuality, religion and many others tend to shape our experiences in life. Intersectionality affected my experience because it contributed to the cultural differences that were exhibited among the Muslims (Hancock, 2016). Their social life is close-knit together with their religion, and this means that every aspect of their lives is as a result of religious loyalty.  Therefore, l felt that intersectionality affected my experience with the Muslims faithful. A case in point is where women do not line up together with men in the mosque during the group prayers. Intersectionality greatly informs this practice. There is no way men and women can mix on the same line while conducting group prayers. Men and women both have their lines. It was evident that this was as a result of their deep religious understanding (Hancock, 2016). While interacting with the Muslim people during worship time l realized that agreement and coexistence are significant.

When people encounter strange or new cultures, it is important to learn new things and be able to coexist.  The understanding of Muslims regarding worship and social life is unique to themselves, but it should be respected by the people of other cultures (Nimer, 2002). The rituals that the Muslims always conduct in the mosque explain why they are Muslims and how they practically live their faith. They believe that faith is supposed to be practical for instance the washing and removing of shoes. Ideally, appreciating what other people hold is essential when it comes to cultural humility. The Muslims that l interacted with at the mosque also learned how other people view their religion. The fact that I was a Christian, but disregarded religion boundaries and went for prayers in a mosque impacted the Muslims who were in the mosques. The understanding that other people do not value their religion was no longer the case due to the interactions that we had with them. Their social identity was acknowledged and valued (Nimer, 2002). Their membership in the Islamic religion was significant in understanding who they are and their place in the society. The interactions with Muslims were not only beneficial to me, but also to the Muslim fraternity at the mosque. Visiting the mosque for the first time made me anxious. I had no clear understanding of what could happen there. Being a Christian and going to worship in a mosque was an experience of its kind that made me feel frightened. Religious barriers are not easily broken that is why crossing over to have a different experience was not easy. However, when l managed to enter the premise and joined other people in the prayer sessions, I was relaxed. I felt that all was well and therefore there was no need to worry. The environment was friendly and not hostile, and this made me feel appreciated at the mosque. It is crucial to realize that after the experience l felt that the Muslim community was welcoming and friendly. It made me develop the desire to interact more with the Muslims whenever l met them.

It is explicit that the feelings before the visit were frightening, but after that l felt the Muslims were friendly people (Gallardo, 2014). The experience that l had developed cultural humility by making me appreciate cultural diversity. It is necessary for people to learn about other cultures to reduce prejudice. The moment we crossover or break our cultural barriers to know more about other people’s cultures that is when we develop cultural humility. I learned a lot from the experience that l had in the mosque with Muslims faithful. I happened to know more about their practices during prayers like the washing of hands and removing of shoes. Earlier, I had not known the importance of these two practices, but I learned that they were symbolizing truthfulness and purity. Learning about these religious practices among the Muslims has helped me develop cultural humility. It is important to note that cultural humility is all about learning other cultures and appreciating other people’s cultures. Therefore, learning other people’s cultures developed my cultural humility (Gallardo, 2014). The experience that l had at the mosque will affect my future behavior as a social worker. A social worker is an individual who works with the community to improve people’s well-being. A social worker is ready to offer services to people irrespective of their cultural or religious background (Cree, 2013). They do not serve people by religion or culture, in other words, they do not discriminate. The experience that l have gained will help me to serve everyone regardless of their cultural background. Therefore, this experience will shape my behavior as a social worker.

## Conclusion

Cultural humility is essential in the society. The differences between religion and culture can only be contained if people can learn other cultures. The more we learn about other cultures is, the more we value other people. We can only learn about other cultures through the process of socialization. The interactions people have across cultures helps to build cultural humility. In the process of interacting we tend to appreciate other people’s identities and hence accepting their culture. Therefore, cultural humility must be practiced by all in the modern society to avoid prejudice and discrimination.

## References

Berry, J. (2007). *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology: Basic processes and human*. Needham: A Viacom company.

Cree, V. (2013). *Becoming a social worker: Global narratives*. London: Routledge.

Gallardo, M. (2014). *Developing cultural humility: Embracing race, privilege and power*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Hancock, A. (2016). *Intersectionality: An intellectual history*. New York: Oxford university press.

Nimer, M. (2002). *The North American Muslim resource guide: Muslim community life in the* *United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge.