

Appreciating Diversity

Learning Objectives

Read to answer these key questions:

- Why is it important to maintain Native American identity and culture?
- What is diversity and why is it important?
- How can an understanding and appreciation of diversity help me to be successful in school and in work?
- What is some vocabulary useful for understanding diversity?
- What are some myths and facts about sexual orientation?
- How can I gain an appreciation of diversity?

“The highest result of education is tolerance.”
Helen Keller

Our schools, our workplaces, and our nation are becoming more diverse. Gaining an understanding and appreciation of this diversity will enhance your future success. Understanding yourself and having pride in your unique characteristics is the first step in the process. Self-knowledge includes information about your personality, interests, talents, and values. Earlier in this text you had the opportunity to begin this exploration. This chapter challenges you to examine some additional characteristics that make you a unique individual and to take pride in yourself while respecting the differences of others.

Maintaining Native American Identity and Culture

Taking pride in your culture is important because it serves as a foundation for learning. You are more likely to be successful if you approach learning with an understanding of yourself, which includes a sense of belonging to your family and tribe, and an understanding and appreciation of your culture and history. Since colonial times, the story of the Native American experience has been a sad one in which the colonizers attempted to destroy Native culture, language, and religious practices, and assimilate Native Americans into the dominant culture. Fortunately, there is a cultural renaissance beginning to take hold in Native American societies today.

Teaching has always been an important part of Native American culture, but it was done in a different way than in our schools today. Children were taught by experiential or “hands on” learning, storytelling and examples from the elders. Children were taught values and beliefs through stories, and practical skills were learned first by observation and then by practice. Teaching was the primary responsibility of the women and the elders, but the extended family and whole community took part in teaching children. Extended family included blood and ceremonial family. Children represented the future of the Tribe or Nation. Children learned the skills that they needed to survive in the natural environment and also how to become contributing and respectful members of the community. Today, our modern society expects parents (many times single mothers) and teachers (sometimes good, sometimes bad), and law enforcement to rear our children.

The Effects of Colonization

The world changed when Christopher Columbus first set foot in what he thought to be India. This set in motion a series of events over the past 500 years that would challenge the survival of Native American culture and populations. It is interesting to read about his first encounters with Native populations. In 1492, when Christopher Columbus first arrived in the Americas, he commented on the goodness of the Taino Indians in the Caribbean Islands. He stated that the Indians were “very gentle and without knowledge of what is evil nor do they murder or steal. They love their neighbors as themselves.”¹

Native Americans had a good understanding of their natural world and had a unifying set of beliefs governing the world and the relationship of all things in it. They had a system of knowledge that included morality, ecology, spirituality, and philosophy. They possessed accurate knowledge about the plants and animals in their environment. They also had knowledge of astronomy and complex astronomical cycles. They had ceremonies, stories, and customs based on the constellations and the rhythmic cycle of nature.

For example, the value systems of nations such as the plains Cree, Dakota, Blackfoot, and Ojibwa include respect, obedience, and humility. These three teachings are represented by the three center poles of their home, more contemporarily known as the “teepee.” The three center poles lean on and support each other to create a strong foundation for the home. The remaining poles and cover are all supported by those three foundation poles. The first pole represents Respect, which means giving honor; they give honor to their elders and to strangers who visit their community. They honor the basic rights of all

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“All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The Earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it.”

Chief Joseph, Nez Perce

others as they honor all life, especially mother earth. The second pole represents Obedience, which relates to right and wrong. It means that they listen: they listen to their fellow students, their teachers, their parents, and to their traditional stories. Obedience means they listen so they can accept wisdom and guidance from others. The third pole represents Humility, which means they are humbled when they understand their relationship with Creation. They are not above or beneath others and this understanding of their harmonious relationship helps them value all life. All life is equal.

Many Native Americans today practice two religions. They have adopted various Christian denominations but continue to practice traditional ceremonies and maintain elements of their Native American spirituality. Spirituality is based on the connectedness of all living and nonliving things; and the relationship of humans to each other, to plants and animals, and to the air, water, and land. Duwamish Chief Seattle stated: “We are all related...whatever befalls the earth, befalls man.”² Because of the interrelatedness of all things, there are rules for moral behavior since the actions of one person affects all others. Moral behavior includes respecting the environment and acting responsibly and respectfully. Respect for the elders, those persons who had survived the difficult course of life and had earned their wisdom, is a cornerstone of indigenous cultural and spiritual tradition. Animals and plants are considered part of the family and treated with understanding and respect. If an animal is killed for food, it is necessary to respect the animal. Native Americans recognize that resources are limited and must be available for future generations. Indigenous people throughout the American continent are instructed to learn about the natural environment and respect it; they were the first ecologists.

Native American spirituality is very different from Western religion, which was introduced during the colonial period. In Western religion, it is believed that human beings were given mastery of the world in the Garden of Eden. Human beings are seen as the only creatures “created in God’s image.” They viewed nature as resources to be developed and used. Respect and care for the natural world is alien to Christianity because the world is seen as inherently evil, and will be destroyed on Judgment day.

Another difference in the epistemology (world view) of Native Americans is the concept of what is “alive.” In Western thought, animals and plants are the only things that are alive and humans are the only living things that are imbued with a “soul” or “spirit.” But in indigenous spirituality, trees, rivers, rocks, mountains, animals, water, and fire, all have a spirit. This concept of what is alive is reflected in many Native American languages in which there are no gender differences, but differences in the animate and inanimate. Thus, all humans, animals, and elements are to be respected, and taken into consideration. Onondaga elder, Oren Lyons says, “We don’t call a tree a resource. We don’t call fish a resource. We don’t call a bison a resource. We call them our relatives. But the general population uses the term resources, so you want to be careful of that term—resources for just you?”³ Since animals and plants were created before humans, they were considered relatives and elders deserving of respect.

Early European colonists not only had the idea that they were masters of nature, but that they were a superior culture, and indigenous cultures had to be assimilated into this superior culture or be exterminated. It included the idea that “Western civilization represented the highest development of humankind...where Western Europeans understood themselves to be at the cutting-edge of history with everybody else requiring instruction to be brought up to speed.”⁴ This idea was supported by various Christian denominations and included a moral mandate to remake other cultures to conform to their worldview. Soon after the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico, schools were set up to indoctrinate indigenous children in Christianity and teach them the ways of Western European culture. Obviously, these new ideas did not match the worldview of Native American populations.

Across the Americas, the goals of education were assimilation of Native American cultures. In the U.S., compulsory education laws forced Native American children to be removed from their homes and sent to boarding schools. In order for Indian children to become “productive citizens,” they were prohibited from speaking their native language and often punished if they did so. The purpose of these schools was to erase their culture and

“I am going to venture that the man who sat on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning, accepting the kinship of all creatures, and acknowledging unity with the universe of things, was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization.”

Chief Luther Standing Bear, Lakota Sioux

teach them how to live in the white man's world. In effect, they taught native people how to be white. This often led to cultural disintegration in which Native Americans lost their culture yet were still not fully accepted into the dominant white culture, resulting in a loss of identity, increased social problems, and the feeling of being misunderstood in both worlds. Because Native American children began to lose their language, communication between children and parents and grandparents became limited, resulting in these children being cut off from their heritage and culture. In the process, these children viewed education as irrelevant, painful, and something to be avoided. This systematic destruction of thousands of years of Native American culture, language, history, and spirituality led to the self-destructive behaviors of alcoholism, drug addiction, and self-hatred that still haunt Native American nations to this day, from the tip of Alaska, to the tip of Tierra del Fuego.

Dillon Platero, director of the Navajo Division of Education, described a typical student named "Kee."

Kee was sent to a boarding school as a child whereas was the practice—he was punished for speaking Navajo. Since he was only allowed to return home during Christmas and summer, he lost contact with his family. Kee withdrew from both the White and Navajo worlds as he grew older because he could not comfortably communicate in either language. He became one of the many Navajo who were non-lingual—a man without a language. By the time he was 16, Kee was an alcoholic, uneducated, and despondent—without identity.⁵

Removing Native children from their parents and community is especially damaging since traditional Native teaching and child rearing comes from parents, grandparents, and extended family members. Examples of the teachings of the Iñupiaq Eskimos were "knowledge of language, sharing, respect for others, cooperation, respect for elders, love for children, hard work, knowledge of family tree, avoidance of conflict, respect for nature, spirituality, humor, family roles, hunter success, domestic skills, humility, and responsibility to the tribe."⁶ These values would enable Native American children to maintain a positive self-identity and to find their place in the world. Native children knew who they were and how to live in the world. They accepted the responsibility of becoming a contributing member of society. The accomplishments of the children were viewed as accomplishments of the family.

When Columbus arrived, there were several million Native Americans living in, what is today, Canada and the United States. In Mexico alone, there were between 10 and 30 million Native Americans speaking over 256 distinct languages! In the U.S, at the beginning of the 20th century, the numbers decreased to 200,000 because of new diseases introduced since 1492, the introduction of guns which were used in warfare, starvation resulting from the killing of the buffalo and other game, and forced movement of Native Americans to reservations that were on less desirable lands. Alcoholism, drug addiction, diabetes, heart disease, and mental illness have taken a great toll on the indigenous nations of America. European colonization is often called the "American Indian holocaust."⁷

Rebirth of Native American Culture

It wasn't until the 1960s, during the civil rights era, that there was the realization that Western education was not working for Native students nor for society in general. This era was the beginning of education built on the premise of self-determination. Native American groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM) began to speak up for the First Nations of America. Self-determination and resiliency were stressed as important tools or "weapons" against the mental and spiritual colonization of the Americas. Resiliency is based on the human characteristic of surviving at any cost. Resilient people and communities use their cultural, linguistic, and spiritual heritage to negotiate and overcome the roadblocks that a dominant society puts in front of them. Resiliency comes from within the individual, but it must be fostered from outside: from the extended family that is the community.

In Canada in 1973, the National Indian Brotherhood introduced the concept of “Indian control of Indian education” that tied education to self-determination and self-government. In both the U.S. and Canada, the policy of self-determination is based on the value of preserving tribal culture and giving tribes the responsibility for self-government and education. Children must feel that they are a part of their family and tribe. Story telling is an important part of Native American education and provides a foundation for Native identity. Self-determination in education reflects the desire of Native American people to break free from colonization and to determine their own future. It is a continuing challenge to provide education based on an appreciation of diversity and incorporating Native values and culture.

Part of self-determination is the recognition of the value of all tribes and working together to improve education and opportunities for all Native Americans. When Hernán Cortés conquered the great Aztec capitol, Tenochtitlan, he had only a few hundred soldiers. He was able to conquer this great nation by forming alliances with different tribes and then getting them to fight amongst each other. It is important for Native Americans to work together to accomplish mutual goals. In education today, this idea includes respecting fellow students, the learning community, and members of different tribes.

One of the key tenets of the Declaration of Independence of 1776 is “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” However, these rights were only for white men with property and excluded women and people of color. The history of the United States documents these groups and their quest for equal rights, self-determination, and empowerment. Native Americans are empowered when education is built upon a foundation of appreciating diversity and the unique contributions of tribal cultures. As we move forward to realizing democracy for all groups, it is helpful to remember Martin Luther King’s famous quote in 1963, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Across North America, Native Americans are striving toward equal rights and rebuilding their identity based on their cultures and communities. As they take pride in their heritage, they not only become more successful, but they are in a position to contribute to the greater good of society. Lakota Chief Luther Standing Bear asked, “Why not a school of Indian thought, built on the Indian pattern and conducted by Indian instructors? Why not a school of tribal art? Why should not America be cognizant of itself: aware of its identity? In short, why should not America be preserved? ...In denying the Indian his ancestral rights and heritages the white race is but robbing itself. But America can be revived, rejuvenated, by recognizing a Native American school of thought. The Indian can save America.”⁸

Perhaps one of the greatest contributions of Native Americans is a respect for the environment and an understanding of the place of human beings in the ecosystem. There is a famous Cree prophecy which goes like this: “When all the trees have been cut down, when all the animals have been hunted, when all the waters are polluted, when all the air is unsafe to breathe, only then will you discover that you can’t eat money.” Do we deplete our resources or try to maintain the quality of living for future generations? Will technology be used to destroy the planet or to improve the human condition? We can benefit by combining the insights of both cultures.

“Like the Thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man’s success, his education, his skills, and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society.”

Chief Dan George, Salish

The Future of Native American Culture

Lakota Chief Sitting Bull has suggested that “Native people should take what is good from the white man’s culture and reject what is bad. For this to happen, Native American people need to understand their history and be grounded in their own communities and cultures.”⁹ Luther Standing Bear, a leader for the Lakota tribe, has suggested that “education of the future must incorporate what was valuable in the old ways while becoming members of modern American society. The new generation of Native Americans can maintain

the sense of family and community in order to bring stability and success to their communities.”¹⁰ Although this is an admirable goal, the reality is that too few Native Americans are successful in education. The National Institute for Native Leadership in Higher Education reports that for every 100 Native American students entering high school, only 60 will finish, about 20 will enter college and only 3 will receive a bachelor’s degree.¹¹

For Native American people to reclaim their identity and place in society, it is important to transcend the culture shock and harmful effects of Euro-centric colonization. The future is self-determination; it is the preservation of tribal life and culture. It is taking control of your own future for the sake of future generations in your tribe. It is important to maintain the positive in the traditional ways in which there was a sense of confidence based on knowledge of one’s culture that allowed people to treat each other with respect and civility. It is also critical to acknowledge the traditions that once served an important function in your community, but in today’s world, may be counter-productive to your tribe’s future. Education which includes tribal knowledge and traditions is the force behind self-determination. Education of the future must incorporate what was valuable in the traditional ways while becoming members of modern American society. “When we leave the culture shock behind, we will be masters of our own fate again and able to determine for ourselves what kind of lives we will lead.”¹² The new generation of Native Americans who are grounded in their knowledge of history and tribal culture can achieve success and become role models for their communities. To achieve this goal, they must understand who they are and their unique place in their family, community, and the world. It is a process of self-discovery.¹³

Diversity Is Increasing

Another word for diversity is differences. These differences do not make one group inferior or superior. Differences are not deficits: they are just differences. Look around your classroom, your place of employment, or where you do business. You will notice people of a variety of races, ethnic groups, cultures, genders, ages, socioeconomic levels, and sexual orientations. Other differences that add to our uniqueness include religious preference, political affiliation, personality, interests, and values. It is common to take pride in who we are and to look around and find people who share our view of the world. The challenge is to be able to look at the world from the point of view of those who are different from us. These differences provide an opportunity for learning.

Our schools and communities are becoming increasingly diverse. In the United States, one in every five students has a parent born in a foreign country. Nationwide, non-Latino whites make up only 63 percent of the population. The current population includes 16 percent African Americans, 15 percent Latinos, and 5 percent Asians. There is also an increase in people who identify themselves as multiracial. About seven million people or 2.4 percent of the population identify with at least two different racial groups. California, one of the most populous states, is leading the nation in diversity. There is no single group in the majority: 43 percent are Latinos, 36 percent are non-Latino whites, 9 percent are African Americans, and 8 percent are Asian.¹ In New Mexico, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia, non-Latino whites are also in the minority.²

In our schools, places of work, and communities, we increasingly study, work, and socialize with people from different ethnic groups. This morning I talked with a student from Mexico and another from France. My classes have students from Mexico, Japan, Argentina, and Iraq. A colleague called on the phone and we spoke in Spanish. He invited me to a Greek café and deli where we ate Greek salad and purchased feta cheese and baklava. This diversity provides different perspectives, and products from other countries enrich our lives. It requires open-mindedness and respect for differences for it all to work.

We also live in a **global economy**. Increased trade among the nations of the world requires an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. The United States is in the center of the largest free-trade area in the world. In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) created a free-trade area that includes Canada, the United

States, and Mexico. This act resulted in a freer flow of goods among these countries and an increase in international business. The success of this international business depends on increased cooperation and problem solving among these nations. Free-trade agreements will probably be expanded to other countries in Latin America in the near future.

Another major step toward the global economy was the creation of a single currency in Europe, the euro, which was successfully launched on January 1, 2002. The purpose of this largest money changeover in history was to establish a system in which people, goods, services, and capital can move freely across national borders. The European countries using the euro have made their economies more competitive by facilitating trade, travel, and investment.

International trade accounts for a quarter of all economic activity in the United States.³ All we have to do is look around us to see that many of the foods and products we use in our daily lives come from other countries.

Last night Jessica invited friends over for dinner and made stir-fried vegetables with chicken. She used ingredients from Vietnam, Thailand, Italy, Japan and Mexico. These foods were all purchased at her local grocery store. The guests ate dinner on plates made in Malaysia and drank wine from Australia. The next morning, she got up and dressed in a shirt made in the Dominican Republic and pants made in Mexico. She then put on her walking shoes, which were made in Thailand, and listened to Jamaican music on her iPod, which was made in China. For breakfast she ate a banana grown in Honduras and drank coffee from Colombia. She drove to school in a car that was made in Japan.

Global trade brings us many new and inexpensive products and is having a major impact on the economy and careers of the future.

Changes in technology have made an awareness and appreciation of diversity more important. The world is becoming an **electronic village** connected by an array of communication and information technologies: computers, the Internet, communications satellites, cell phones, fax machines, and the myriad of electronic devices that are an integral part of our lives today. These devices make rapid communication possible all over the world and are essential for international business and trade. The Internet is like a vast information superhighway, and each computer is an onramp to the highway. Those who do not have a computer or lack computer skills will be left off the highway and have limited access to information and opportunities.

The increased use of the Internet offers both great opportunities and challenges. The Internet can help to break down barriers between people. When communicating with someone over the Internet, differences such as race, age, religion, or economic status are not obvious. The flow of information and ideas is unrestricted, and people with similar interests can communicate easily with one another. There is great potential for use as well as misuse of the Internet. Chat groups can share information about medical conditions or treatments, but hate groups can also use the Internet to promote their political agendas.

The Internet presents new challenges for communicating, since nonverbal cues are often missing. Looking at a person's face or listening to the tone of voice adds a great deal to communication. A new type of "netiquette" has evolved as a result. For example, using all caps is a form of YELLING! Increasingly words are shortened and changed for ease of communication, resulting in a type of Internet grammar. Understanding websites in other languages is another new challenge.

Journal Entry #1

How will the global economy and the electronic village affect your future career and lifestyle?

Benefits of Diversity

- Gain critical thinking skills
- Pride in self and culture
- Learn from others
- Improve interpersonal skills
- Learn flexibility
- Develop cultural awareness

Why Is Diversity Important?

Our society, schools, and work environments are becoming more diverse. Having an understanding and appreciation of diversity can help you to be successful at school, at work, and in your personal life. Here are some benefits:

- **Gain skills in critical thinking.** Critical thinking requires identifying different viewpoints, finding possible answers, and then constructing your own reasonable view. Critical thinking skills are one of the expected outcomes of higher education. Many of your college assignments are designed to teach these skills. Whether you are writing an essay in an English class, participating in a discussion in a history class, or completing a laboratory experiment, critical thinking skills will help you to complete the task successfully. Critical thinking skills are also helpful in finding good solutions to problems or challenges you might find at work. For example, for a business manager, an important task is helping employees to work together as a team. The critical thinking process results in greater understanding of others and better problem-solving skills. To stay competitive, businesses need to find creative solutions for building better products and providing good customer service. Critical thinking skills help people work together to come up with good ideas to make a business a success.

- **Have pride in yourself and your culture.** Having pride in yourself is the foundation of good mental health and success in life. Sonia Nieto did research on a group of successful students. These students had good grades, enjoyed school, had plans for the future, and described themselves as successful. Nieto found that “one of the most consistent, and least expected, outcomes to emerge from these case studies has been a resoluteness with which young people maintain pride and satisfaction in their culture and the strength they derive from it.”⁴ Having pride in yourself and your culture is an important part of high self-esteem and can help you to become a better student and worker. Having good self-esteem provides the confidence to accept and care for others. The best schools and workplaces provide an environment where people can value their own culture as well as others. With respect between different cultures, ideas can be freely exchanged and the door is opened to creativity and innovation.

The world is constantly changing and we must be ready to adapt to new situations. Sometimes it is difficult to balance “fitting in” and maintaining our own cultural identity. Researchers have described a process called **transculturation**, in which a person adapts to a different culture without sacrificing individual cultural identity. One study of Native Americans showed that retention of traditional cultural heritage was an important predictor of success. A Native American student described the process this way: “When we go to school, we live a non-Indian way but we still keep our values. . . . I could put my values aside just long enough to learn what it is I want to learn but that doesn’t mean I’m going to forget them. I think that is how strong they are with me.”⁵ Cultural identity provides strength and empowerment to be successful.

- **Gain the ability to network and learn from others.** In college, you will have the opportunity to learn from your professors and other students who are different from yourself. You may have professors with very different personality styles and teaching styles. Your success will depend on being aware of the differences and finding a way to adapt to the situation. Each student in your classes will also come from a different perspective and have valuable ideas to add to the class.

It is through networking with other people that most people find jobs. You are likely to find a job through someone you know, such as a college professor, a student in one of your classes, a community member, or a previous employer. Once you have the job, you will gain proficiency by learning from others. The best managers are open to learning from others and help different people to work together as a team. No matter how educated or experienced you become, you can always learn from others. Bill Cosby once told a graduating class at Washington University, “Don’t ever think you

know more than the person mopping the floor.”⁶ Every person has a different view of the world and has important ideas to share.

- **Improve interpersonal skills.** A popular Native American proverb is that you cannot understand another person until you have walked a few miles in their moccasins. Being able to understand different perspectives on life will help you to improve your personal relationships. Good interpersonal skills bring joy to our personal relationships and are very valuable in the workplace. The Secretary of Labor’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) identifies having good interpersonal skills as one of the five critical competencies needed in the workplace. Workers need to work effectively in teams, teach others, serve customers, exercise leadership, negotiate to arrive at a decision, and work well with cultural diversity.⁷ Efficiency and profits in any industry depend on good interpersonal skills and how well workers can provide customer service.
- **Learn to be flexible and adapt to the situation.** These two qualities are necessary for dealing with the rapid change that is taking place in our society today. We learn these qualities by successfully facing personal challenges. If you are a single parent, you have learned to be flexible in managing time and resources. If you served in the military overseas, you have learned to adapt to a different culture. If you are a new college student, you are probably learning how to be independent and manage your own life. Flexibility is a valuable skill in the workplace. Today’s employers want workers who can adapt, be flexible, and solve problems.
- **Develop cultural awareness.** Cultural awareness is valuable in your personal life and in the workplace. In your personal life, you can have a wider variety of satisfying personal relationships. You can enjoy people from different cultural backgrounds and travel to different countries.

In a global economy, cultural awareness is increasingly important. Tuning into cultural differences can open up business opportunities. For example, many companies are discovering that the buying power of minorities is significant. They are developing ad campaigns to sell products to Asians, Latinos, African Americans, and other groups.

Companies now understand that cultural awareness is important in international trade. American car manufacturers could not understand why the Chevy Nova was not selling well in Latin America. In Spanish, “No va” means “It doesn’t go” or “It doesn’t run.” Kentucky Fried Chicken found out that “Finger-lickin’ good” translates as “Eat your fingers off” in Chinese! Being familiar with the cultures and languages of different countries is necessary for successful international business.

Journal Entry #2

How will an understanding of diversity help you to be successful in school and work?

Vocabulary for Understanding Diversity

Knowing some basic terms will aid in your understanding of diversity.

- **Race.** Race refers to a group of people who are perceived to be physically different because of traits such as facial features, color of skin, and hair.

“I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has had to overcome while trying to succeed.”

Booker T. Washington

- **Ethnicity.** Ethnicity refers to a sense of belonging to a particular culture and sharing the group's beliefs, attitudes, skills, ceremonies, and traditions. An ethnic group usually descends from a common group of ancestors, usually from a particular country or geographic area.
- **Ethnocentrism.** Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own ethnic, religious, or political group is superior to all others.
- **Culture.** Culture is the behavior, beliefs, and values shared by a group of people. It includes language, morals, and even food preferences. Culture includes everything that we learn from the people around us in our community.
- **Gender, sex.** Gender refers to cultural differences that distinguish males from females. Different cultures raise men and women to act in specified ways. Sex refers to anatomical differences.
- **Sexism.** Sexism is a negative attitude or perception based on sex.
- **Stereotype.** A stereotype is a generalization that expresses conventional or biased ideas about people in a certain group. Stereotypes can lead to discrimination based on these ideas. They cause us to view others in a limited way and reduce our ability to see people as individuals.
- **Prejudice.** A prejudice is a prejudgment of someone or something. Prejudices are often based on stereotypes and reflect a disrespect for others. Sometimes people who are prejudiced are insecure about their own identities.
- **Discrimination.** Discrimination happens when people are denied opportunities because of their differences. Prejudice and stereotype are often involved.
- **Racism.** Racism occurs when one race or ethnic group holds a negative attitude or perception of another group. It is prejudice based on race. Anthropologists generally accept that the human species can be categorized into races based on physical and genetic makeup. These scientists accept the fact that there is no credible evidence that one race is superior to another. People who believe that their own race is superior to another are called racists.
- **Cultural pluralism.** Each group celebrates the customs and traditions of their culture while participating in mainstream society.
- **Genocide.** Genocide is the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group. It can include the destruction of the language, religion, or cultural practices of a group of people.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

"You must be the change you want to see in the world."

Mahatma Gandhi

Understanding Diversity

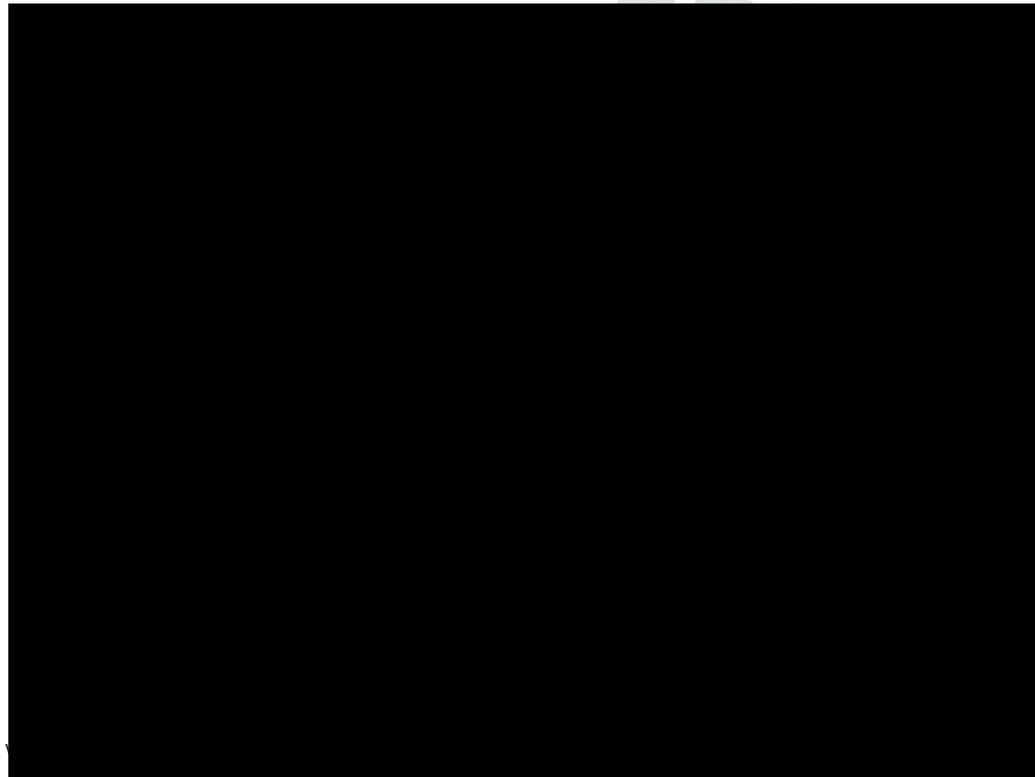
There are 6.6 billion people in the world today. Statistics provided by the Population Reference Bureau and the United Nations can give us a better understanding of diversity in the world today. By geographic area, the world's population can be broken down into these percentages:⁸

- 61 Asians
- 14 Africans
- 11 Europeans
- 9 Central and South Americans
- 5 North Americans (Canada and the United States)

If visitors from outer space were to visit the earth and report back about the most common human being found, they would probably describe someone of Asian descent. Statistics also show that approximately 50 percent of the world population suffers from malnutrition and 80 percent live in substandard housing. Moreover, 6 percent of the

population living in the United States, Japan, and Germany owns half of the wealth of the world. In addition, continuous wars and fighting among the people of the earth have contributed to human suffering and the flight of many refugees.

As children, we accept the values, assumptions, and stereotypes of our culture. We use our own culture as a filter to understand the world. Because of this limited perception, people often consider their culture to be superior and other cultures to be inferior.⁹ The belief that one's own culture, religious, or political group is superior to others is called **ethnocentrism**. Native Americans have argued that the celebration of Columbus Day, commemorating the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus, is an example of ethnocentrism. In reality, the Native Americans lived here long before Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492.



Ethnocentrism can lead to discrimination, interpersonal conflict, and even wars between different groups of people. In extreme cases, it can even lead to **genocide**, the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group. History is full of examples of genocide. In the United States, Native Americans were massacred and their land was confiscated in violation of treaties. In Mexico and South America, the Spanish conquerors systematically destroyed native populations. During World War II, six million Jews were killed. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge killed millions of Cambodians. Unfortunately, genocide continues today in various conflicts around the world.

An understanding of the harmful effects of stereotypes is necessary to improve our understanding and appreciation of diversity. A **stereotype** is an assumption that all members of a group are alike. For example, a tall African American woman in one of my classes was constantly dealing with the assumption that she must be attending college to play basketball. Actually, she was very academically oriented and not athletic at all. It is important to remember that we all have individual differences within groups of the same ethnicity or cultural background.

All of us use stereotypes to understand people different from ourselves. Why does this happen? There are many different reasons:

- It is a fast way to make sense of the world. It requires little thought.
- We tend to look for patterns to help us understand the world.
- We are often unable or unwilling to obtain all the information we need to make fair judgments about other people.
- Stereotypes can result from fear of people who are different. We often learn these fears as children.
- The media promotes stereotypes. Movies, magazines, and advertisements often present stereotypes. These stereotypes are often used as the basis of humor. For example, the media often uses people who are overweight in comedy routines.

The problem with stereotypes is that we do not get to know people as individuals. All members of a culture, ethnic group, or gender are not alike. If we make assumptions about a group, we treat everyone in the group the same. Stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination. For example, a person who is overweight may find it more difficult to find a job because of stereotyping.

Psychologists and sociologists today present the idea of **cultural relativity**, in which different cultures, ethnic groups, genders, and sexual orientations are viewed as different but equally valuable and worthy of respect.¹⁰ These differences between cultures can help us learn new ideas that can enrich our view of the world. They can also promote greater understanding and better relationships among individuals and nations.

QUIZ

Understanding Diversity, Part I

Test what you have learned by selecting the correct answers to the following questions.

- The belief that one's own ethnic, religious, or political group is superior to all others is called
 - cultural pluralism.
 - cultural relativity.
 - ethnocentrism.
- The assumption that all members of a group are alike is
 - discrimination.
 - stereotype.
 - prejudice.
- The deliberate destruction of a racial, cultural, or political group of people is called
 - genocide.
 - racism.
 - ethnocentrism.
- Most people on the earth are
 - North Americans.
 - Europeans.
 - Asians.
- Cultural relativity is defined as
 - the belief that one's own ethnic group is superior.
 - groups that are viewed as different, but equally valuable.
 - an ethnic group that descends from a common group of ancestors.

How did you do on the quiz? Check your answers: 1. c, 2. b, 3. a, 4. c, 5. b

Journal Entry # 3

Describe an incidence in which you experienced discrimination. Consider discrimination in a broad context, including ethnicity, culture, language, gender, sexual orientation, weight, height, appearance, personality type, values, politics, religion, age, experience, socioeconomic background, academic skills, or any other factor which could cause discrimination.

A New Look at Diversity: The Human Genome Project

Although the people of the world represent many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, biologists are taking a new look at diversity by learning about human genes. Genes are composed of segments of DNA that determine the transmission of hereditary traits by controlling the operation of cells. Cells are the basic building blocks of the human body.

The Human Genome Project, a multibillion-dollar and multinational government-sponsored research project to map all human genes, was completed in 2003. This map is a catalog of all the genetic information contained in human cells. They have identified the genes and determined the sequence of the three billion chemical base pairs in human DNA. Although the project is completed, analysis of the data will continue for many years.¹¹ The human genome is considered a biological treasure chest that will allow scientists to discover how a body grows, ages, stays healthy, or becomes ill. This knowledge is invaluable in discovering new medications and improving health.

Results of the Human Genome Project show that we are all genetically similar while having unique individual differences. One of the interesting findings is that “as scientists have long suspected, though the world’s people may look very different on the outside, genetically speaking humans are all 99.9 percent identical.”¹² While we are genetically very similar, each individual can be identified by his or her genetic code. With the exception of identical twins, each individual human being is slightly different because of the unique combination of DNA letters inherited from one’s parents.

Dr. Craig Venter, head of Celera Genomics Corporation, has stated that “race is a social concept, not a scientific one.”¹³ While it may be easy to look at people and describe them as Caucasian, African, or Asian, there is little genetic material to distinguish one race from another. Venter says, “We all evolved in the last 100,000 years from the same small number of tribes that migrated out of Africa and colonized the world.”¹⁴ Very few genes control traits that distinguish one race from another, such as skin color, eye color, and width of nose. These outward characteristics have been able to change quickly in response to environmental pressures. People who lived near the equator evolved dark skin to protect them from ultraviolet radiation. People who lived farther from the equator evolved pale skins to produce vitamin D from little sunlight. The genes responsible for these outward appearances are in the range of .01 percent of the total. Researchers on the Human Genome Project agree that **there is only one race: the human race.**

The Human Genome Project will be important for understanding the human body and will help us to find ways to prevent or cure illnesses. It may also provide new information for critical thinking about the idea of ethnocentrism and discover some basic ways in which all human beings are similar.

“So let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved.”

John F. Kennedy

“We need to help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community and this nation.”

César Chavez

Journal Entry # 4

What advice would you give to a person preparing to visit another country with a very different culture and language?

Understanding Sexual Orientation

Major causes of stereotyping and the resulting prejudice and discrimination are fear and lack of knowledge of those who are different. Prejudice and discrimination against gays and other minorities have sometimes led to hate crimes. For example, in 1998, Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming, was lured from a bar, beaten, and tied to a log fence, where he was left during cold weather. He died five days later. His murderers received life sentences in prison. At Matthew's funeral, protesters held up signs saying, "God hates fags."¹⁶ The term "faggot," which comes from the Latin word for a bundle of sticks, may refer to the time of the Inquisition when gays were actually burned at the stake along with witches.¹⁷

Stereotypes about sexual orientation and the resulting discrimination are common in society today and affect a great number of people. One out of four families has a gay family member and it is estimated that up to 10 percent of the population is gay or lesbian. In a class of 30 students, it is likely that three are gay men or lesbians. Many of these people are fearful of identifying themselves as gay because of potential discrimination and lack of acceptance by the general population. Think about these stereotypes as you read the following scenario:

My brother Jake was always a little different; he was not the "typical boy." Growing up he was my best friend. It was as if he were the sister I never had. He was kind and gentle and compassionate toward all creatures. He enjoyed cooking, taking care of children and growing flowers. I remember that my father tried to make a man of him by encouraging him to join in manly activities such as hunting. My father was frustrated because Jake could not kill a deer. Jake looked the deer in the eye and decided that he could not kill such a beautiful creature. I had to agree with him, but my father was disappointed. He was frustrated in all his attempts to make my brother a man and had frequent conflicts with him. At age 16, my brother ran away from home and was "adopted" by a female teacher at our high school. She encouraged my brother to go to college and he moved across the continent, eventually working his way through medical school and becoming a well-known and respected cardiologist and critical care specialist. I was happy for my brother because he could do what he loved best: helping other people. One day my father had a heart attack and Jake returned home and saved my father's life. At this point, my father was finally proud of the man he had become.

I remember having a conversation with my other brothers about whether Jake was gay or not. I acknowledged the possibility, but said that it would be awful if we asked him and it were not true, so we never asked him. He did not look or act gay; he was just different. In fact, my girlfriends were always trying to get a date with him. One day I received a call from my brother. He was saying good-bye because he was dying. He did not want the family to visit; he just wanted to say good-bye, and he died the next day at the age of 43. Against Jake's wishes, my mother and some of my brothers traveled to New York and were shocked to find that Jake was living with a man who was HIV-positive and that Jake had died of AIDS. My father told everyone that Jake died of cancer. I felt an overwhelming sense of sadness at losing my brother and that he never felt comfortable enough to tell us that he was gay. I will always wonder if I should have asked him about being gay and if I possibly could have been more a part of his life. Since

I lost my opportunity to do this, I have resolved to gain a better understanding and appreciation of sexual orientation, which is sadly the only thing I can do at this point.

Becoming educated about sexual orientation can help to diminish anti-gay prejudice and help people who are struggling with their sexual identity. Here is a list of myths and facts about gay men and lesbians. The corrected information below is provided by the Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). This organization provides information on its website, www.pflagla.org. An organization called Rainbow Bridge also provides educational materials on gays and lesbians. Most college campuses have organizations that support gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students. It is common that people disagree with the following facts because of common stereotypes about sexual orientation.

Myths and Facts about Gays and Lesbians

Myth: Only one percent of the world's population is gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Fact: It is estimated that about 10 percent of the world's population is gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Myth: Effeminate men and masculine women are always gay.

Fact: Effeminate men and masculine women can be heterosexual. Some gay persons fit this stereotype, but most look and act like individuals from the heterosexual majority.

Myth: Homosexuality is a choice, a preference, or a learned behavior.

Fact: Homosexuality is not something that one chooses to be or learns to be. As children, gay men and lesbians are not taught or influenced by others to be homosexual. Most current research cites genetic or inborn hormonal factors in homosexuality.¹⁸

Myth: You can always tell from a person's appearance if he or she is gay.

Fact: Most gay men and lesbians look and act like individuals from the heterosexual majority.

Myth: Lesbians and gay men never make good parents.

Fact: Gay men and lesbians can make good parents. Children of gay and lesbian parents are no different in any aspects of psychological, social, or sexual development from children in heterosexual families. These children tend to be more tolerant of differences.

Myth: Gay men and lesbian women are often involved in child abuse.

Fact: Gay men and lesbians are rarely involved in child abuse. In the United States, heterosexual men commit 90 percent of all sexual child abuse. The molesters are most often fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, or boyfriends of the mothers.

Myth: The word "homosexual" is preferred over "gay" or "lesbian."

Fact: The term "gay man" or "lesbian" is preferred over the term "homosexual."

Myth: The term "gay" refers only to men.

Fact: The term "gay" refers to both men and women.

Myth: Some cultures do not have gay men and lesbians.

Fact: All cultures have gay men and lesbians.

Myth: Only gay men get AIDS and it is a death sentence.

Fact: AIDS is increasingly a heterosexual disease. Advances in the early detection and treatment of AIDS make it a chronic, controllable disease for most patients.

Myth: Being gay is an emotional or mental disorder.

Fact: The American Psychological Association does not list being gay as an emotional or mental disorder.

Myth: Through psychotherapy, a gay person can be turned into a heterosexual.

Fact: Psychotherapy has not been successful in changing a person's sexual orientation.

Myth: A person is either completely heterosexual or completely homosexual.

Fact: Based on Dr. Alfred Kinsey's research, few people are predominantly heterosexual or homosexual. Most people fall on a continuum between the two extremes. A person on the middle of the continuum between heterosexual and homosexual would be a bisexual. Bisexuals are attracted to both sexes.¹⁹

Myth: Homosexuality does not exist in nature. It is dysfunctional.

Fact: Research suggests that homosexuality is "natural." It exists among all animals and is frequent among highly developed species.²⁰

Myth: Gay people should not be teachers because they will try to convert their students.

Fact: Homosexual seduction is no more common than heterosexual seduction. Most gay teachers fear they will be fired if it is found out that they are gay.²¹

How to Appreciate Diversity

Having an appreciation for diversity enriches all of us. Poet Maya Angelou has described the world as a rich tapestry and stressed that understanding this concept can enrich and improve the world:

"It is time for us to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and strength. We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that the threads of the tapestry are equal in value, no matter their color; equal in importance, no matter their texture."²²

Here are some ways to appreciate diversity:

- Educate yourself about other cultures and people who are different from you. Read about or take courses on the literature or history of another culture, or learn another language.
- Explore your own heritage. Learn about the cultures that are part of your family history.
- Value diversity and accept the differences of others.
- View differences as an opportunity for learning.
- Realize that you will make mistakes when dealing with people from other cultural backgrounds. Learn from the mistakes and move on to better understanding.
- Work to understand differences of opinion. You do not have to agree, but respect different points of view.
- Travel to other countries to discover new ideas and cultures.

- Think critically to avoid stereotypes and misconceptions. Treat each person as an individual.
- Avoid judgments based on physical characteristics such as color of skin, age, gender, or weight.
- Put yourself in the other person's place. How would you feel? What barriers would you face?
- Make friends with people from different countries, races, and ethnic groups.
- Find some common ground. We all have basic needs for good health, safety, economic security, and education. We all face personal challenges and interests. We all think, feel, love, and have hope for the future.
- Be responsible for your own behavior. Do not participate in or encourage discrimination.
- Do good deeds. You will be repaid with good feelings.
- Learn from history so that you do not repeat it. Value your own freedom.
- Challenge racial or homophobic remarks or jokes.
- Teach children and young people to value diversity and respect others. It is through them that we can change the world.

Journal Entry #5

Frequently we learn discrimination through our parents, our community, the media, and our environment. What would you teach your children about diversity?

Stages of Ethical Development

After much study, Harvard University professor William Perry developed the theory that students move through stages of ethical development.²³ Students move through these patterns of thought and eventually achieve effective intercultural communication.

Stage 1: Dualism

In this stage we view the world in terms of black or white, good or bad, “we” versus “they.” Role models and authorities determine what is right. The right answers exist for every problem. If we work hard, we can find the correct answers and all will be well. Decisions are often based on common stereotypes.

Stage 2: Multiplicity

At this stage we become aware that there are multiple possibilities and answers. We know that authorities can disagree on what is right and wrong. We defend our position, but acknowledge that on any given issue, everyone has a right to his or her own opinion.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Stage 3: Relativism

As we learn more about our environment and ourselves, we discover that what is right is based on our own values and culture. We weigh the evidence and try to support our opinions based on data and evidence.

Stage 4: Commitment in Relativism

At this stage, we look at our environment and ourselves and make choices. In an uncertain world, we make decisions about careers, politics, and personal relationships based on our individual values. We make certain commitments based on the way we wish to live our lives. We defend our own values but respect the values of others. There is openness to learning new information and changing one's personal point of view. This position allows for the peaceful coexistence of different points of views and perspectives. It is at this point that we become capable of communicating across cultures and appreciating diversity.

QUIZ

Understanding Diversity, Part II

Test what you have learned by selecting the correct answers to the following questions.

- Results of the Human Genome Project show that humans are
 - 80 percent identical.
 - 50 percent identical.
 - 99.9 percent identical.
- To appreciate diversity,
 - seek to find common ground with all people.
 - Defend your point of view without listening to others.
 - Explore your own heritage without seeking to understand different cultures.
- To avoid stereotypes,
 - Make a quick judgement based on race.
 - Avoid people from different cultures.
 - Treat each person as an individual.
- The following statement about sexual orientation is generally accepted as true:
 - sexual orientation is not something one chooses or can change.
 - some cultures do not have gay men and lesbians.
 - homosexuality is a learned behavior.
- In the last stage of ethical development, commitment in relativism, we
 - view the world in terms of "good" and "bad."
 - become aware of multiple possibilities.
 - defend our own values but respect the values of others.

How did you do on the quiz? Check your answers: 1. c, 2. a, 3. b, 4. a, 5. c

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Diversity Is Valuable and People Are Important

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made a famous speech in which he said, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” Because of his message of brotherhood and understanding, his birthday is celebrated as a national holiday. Tragically, King was assassinated because of his strong stand against racism. We are still working toward his ideal of brotherly love.

When I ask students to describe what success means to them, they often talk about having a good career, financial stability, owning a home, and having a nice car. Some students mention family and friends and people who are important to them. Understanding diversity and appreciating other people can add to your personal success and enjoyment of life.

To gain perspective on what is important to your success, it is interesting to think about what people will say about you after you die. What will you think is important at the end of your life? If you can ponder this idea, you can gain some insight into how to live your life now. Go to the following website:

http://www.lindaellisonline.com/The_Dash_Poem_Copyright_Linda_Ellis.htm

Read “The Dash” by Linda Ellis.

Learn to understand, respect, and appreciate the different people in your life. Take time to love those who are important to you. Focus on cooperation and teamwork on the job. Don’t forget about the people you meet on your road to success; they are important too. Having an understanding and appreciation of diversity will make the world a better place in which to live.

JOURNAL ENTRIES

Appreciating Diversity

Go to <http://www.collegesuccess1.com/JournalEntries.htm> for Word files of the Journal Entries

Talking Circle

This chapter has introduced you to many interesting facts about Native American history and methods of educating the individual within a traditional society. Also covered was the impact that the European invasion brought with the mindset of “curing the savages and sending them to boarding schools” to literally erase their culture. This had a devastating impact on Native American cultures. Fortunately there is now a revival of interest in preserving Native American culture.

Native American belief systems can “save America,” as Lakota Chief, Luther Standing Bear has stated. What does this really mean? Consider the elements discussed in this chapter for your journal or talking circle activity.

1. Taking pride in your culture and maintaining awareness of your family and tribal history can provide a foundation for learning and college success. Do you agree with this statement? Please explain.
2. Traditional learning was provided in the home and included storytelling and “hands on” methodology. How does this differ from your experience in formal education and especially in your college classes?
3. Many First Nations and other tribes have strong cultural values of respect, obedience, and humility. Explain how these values can either strengthen or hinder your college success.
4. Native American spirituality views the connectedness of all living and nonliving things. How can you utilize these beliefs to provide you with a strong foundation for college and life?
5. In this chapter, there is a statement that “Resilient people and communities use their cultural, linguistic, and spiritual heritage to negotiate and overcome the roadblocks that a dominant society puts in front of them.” How will you do this as it relates to your higher education experience and career world?
6. There are at least two significant borders in the Americas. One is at the gateway to Canada and the other at the gateway to Mexico. How do you feel about the concept that First Nation peoples across the Americas are related?

Success over the Internet

Visit the *College Success Website* at <http://www.collegesuccess1.com/>

The *College Success Website* is continually updated with new topics and links to the material presented in this chapter. Topics include:

- Tolerance
- Ways to fight hate
- Diversity and multicultural resources
- Asian-Pacific students
- Latinos
- Women
- Minorities

Contact your instructor if you have any problems accessing the *College Success Website*.

Notes

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Find Someone Who . . .

Name _____

Date _____

Walk around the classroom and find someone who fits each description. Have the person write his or her name on the appropriate line.

- _____ Shares a favorite hobby
- _____ Father or mother grew up in a bilingual family
- _____ Parents or grandparents were born outside the United States
- _____ Speaks a language besides English
- _____ Is the first one in the family to attend college
- _____ Enjoys the same sports
- _____ Knows someone who has died of AIDS
- _____ Has a friend or relative who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- _____ Has a disability they have had to overcome
- _____ Is struggling financially to attend college
- _____ Has children
- _____ Is a single parent
- _____ Has your same major
- _____ Was born in the same year as yourself
- _____ Attended your high school
- _____ Moved here from out of state
- _____ Has been in the military
- _____ Has participated on an athletic team
- _____ Can play a musical instrument or sing
- _____ Has played in a band

Exploring Stereotypes

Name _____ Date _____

Part 1. We are all familiar with **common stereotypes** of certain groups. Think about how these groups are often portrayed in the media. Quickly complete each statement.

1. All athletes are _____
2. All lawyers are _____
3. All male hairdressers are _____
4. All construction workers are _____
5. All redheads are _____
6. All people with AIDS are _____
7. All people on welfare are _____
8. All young people are _____
9. All old people are _____
10. All men are _____
11. All women are _____
12. All A students are _____

Part 2. Your instructor will ask you to share the above stereotypes with the class. Then discuss these questions.

1. What prejudices result from such stereotypes?

2. What is the source of these prejudices?

3. What harm can come from these prejudices?

Name _____ Date _____

Part 1. Answer the following questions about yourself. You may be asked to share these answers with a group of students in your class.

1. What is your ethnic background?
2. Where were your parents and grandparents born?
3. How much education do your parents have?
4. What languages do you speak?
5. What is your biggest challenge this semester?
6. What is one of your hopes or dreams for the future?
7. What do you enjoy most?
8. What is your most important value and why?
9. What is one thing you are proud of?
10. What is one thing people would not know about you just by looking at you?
11. Have you ever experienced discrimination because of your differences? If so, briefly describe this discrimination.

Part 2. Meet with two other students you do not know. Introduce yourself and share answers to the above questions. Your instructor will ask you to share your answers to the following questions with the class.

List three interesting things you learned about other persons in your group.

1.

2.

3.

Did you change any assumptions you had about persons in your group?

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Name _____ Date _____

Everyone has a unique cultural background based on many different factors. Answer these questions to explore your unique culture.

1. Describe where you grew up and the school you attended.

2. What beliefs did you learn from your family?

3. What beliefs did you learn from your teachers? How would your teachers describe you as a student?

4. How has your religious training or lack of religious training affected your beliefs?

5. If you are in a relationship, describe how your partner has affected your beliefs.

6. If you have children, how have your values and beliefs changed?

7. Are the beliefs you grew up with right for you today? Why or why not?

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