

Diversity:

Supplemental Handouts

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How Does Culture Affect You?

If you woke up tomorrow morning and found that you belonged to another culture or ethnic group, how would your life be the same and how would it be different? Put a check in the box to indicate which areas would be unchanged and which would be different.

	Same	Different
1. The friends you associate with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The social activities you enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The foods you prefer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The religion you practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The clothes you wear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The neighborhood you live in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The home you live in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The job/position you hold	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The vehicle you drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The music you enjoy listening to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The language(s) you speak	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The political party you belong to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted from Gardenswartz, L. & Rowe, A. (1993). Managing Diversity: A Complete Desk Reference and Planning Guide. New York: Irwin.

Developing Cultural/Diversity Competence

Building effective relationships is at the heart of diversity work. Griggs (1995) suggests three important steps:

- The practice of treating people differently based on their culture, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, or other type of difference is sometimes conscious, but often is unconscious, irrational responses which have been learned over time. Because we are “on automatic” we sometimes believe our responses are beyond our control. As a first step, then, ***we must begin to take personal responsibility for the way we respond to difference.***
- Human emotion is always connected to the way people perceive individuals from other cultures or groups who are different. Although our emotions are a result of cultural conditioning, we can control our emotions. It is difficult to establish effective relationships with people we hold negative attitudes and beliefs about. The second step, then, is to ***recognize our negative emotional responses to those who are different from us.***
- ***Step 3 is, allow yourself to be flexible - to be open to and capable of making changes in your personal and professional behavior for the purpose of understanding the perspectives of others and seeing the world from their viewpoint.***

Thomas, P. W. (1995). A cultural rapport model. In L. Griggs & L. Louw, (Eds.) Valuing Diversity (pp. 136-157) McGraw-Hill.

Underlying Principles Of Diversity

1. ***Diversity is an inside job, meaning that diversity is not about “them.”*** Rather, it is about each person coming to terms with his or her attitudes, beliefs, and experiences about others and gaining comfort with difference.
2. ***Diversity goes beyond race and gender.*** The diversity tent is big enough to include everyone... young and old, homeless and affluent, immigrant and native, white and black, rural and urban, gang member and corporate professional.
3. ***No one is the target of blame for current or past inequities.*** All human beings have been socialized to behave in certain ways, and all of us are at times both perpetrators and victims of discrimination and stereotypes. The idea is to move forward in creating more opportunities.
4. ***Human beings are ethnocentric,*** seeing the world through their own narrow view and judging the world by their familiar yardstick. This is not bad per se, but can be a source of conflict if other ways of being are not accommodated and valued.
5. ***The human species resists change, continuing to seek homeostasis.*** This makes the constant adaptation required by diversity difficult for people already overwhelmed by staggering transitions in today’s communities and organizations.
6. ***Human beings find comfort and trust in likeness.*** There is a tendency to seek the company of those most similar to us in a variety of ways...age, gender and ethnicity being just several of many.

7. ***It is difficult for people to share power.*** History shows us that we rarely do it voluntarily. Understanding this last reality helps clarify why there is sometimes a backlash associated with diversity from people, particularly white males, who believe they lose in this experience.

All of these truisms about the human species do not make people mean-spirited or cruel. It just makes us humans. Nevertheless, these realities make dealing with diversity a challenge.

Adapted from (1995). Diversity: Just What Is It Anyway? Dimensions in Diversity, Vol. 3 (3). Southeast Community College

Examples of Subtle Stereotypes

We all hold stereotypes. None of us is exempt. Try this little brain teaser borrowed from *Managing Diversity*.

Just before the nurse died of the effects of an attack, she said, “He did it, the villain!” referring to one of the three doctors in the room. She didn’t glance or point in his direction. The doctors were named Green, Brown, and White. Why was Dr. Brown immediately suspected?

Answer: Dr. Green and Dr. White were both women.

Did you get hooked by your own stereotypes about the roles of women and men? If so, take heart. You’re human.

Do we make judgments about people simply based on their names? Close your eyes and develop a mental image of each person with the following names: Gloria, Bertha, Richard, Cuthbert. Was Gloria apt to be better looking than Bertha? Was Richard apt to be better looking than Cuthbert? Ask any college boy if he’d rather take his chances with a Gloria or a Bertha. Or ask a college girl if she’d rather blind-date a Richard or a Cuthbert. College students in questionnaires have revealed that names conjure up the same images in their minds as they do in yours.

Does one’s nationality affect her physical attractiveness? College students were shown 30 photographs of unidentified pretty girls and asked to rate each in terms of “general liking,” “intelligence,” and “attractiveness.” Two months later, the same group were shown the same photographs, this time with fictitious Irish, Italian, Jewish and “American” names attached to the photographs. Immediately, the ratings changed. Faces which were viewed as representing a national group slipped down in ratings and even further down in likability, while the “American” girls suddenly looked much prettier and nicer.

Heilbroner, R. L. (1993) Don’t let stereotypes warp your judgment. In V. Cyrus, (Ed.) Experiencing Race, Class, and Gender in the United States, (pp. 144 -146), CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

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Probably the broadest concept is that there is diversity whenever two people get together. No two people are like. They have different life experiences which results in seeing things in this world differently. Diversity, then, becomes an attitude - the attitude we should never make assumptions about people based upon our own life experience filter. Rather, that we view any other person as being unique. Things that contribute to that uniqueness certainly can be culture, ethnic background, religious views, or language. The uniqueness, however, can also come from a life that was rural versus urban or a life that was filled with traumatic childhood experiences versus a fairly stable home environment. This attitude may include the view that however that person sitting next to me views life because of these differences in experiences, it is good, and I can learn something from that person.

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Summary of Strategic Goals (January, 1990)

Goal: To Assure National And International Preeminence

Goal: To Achieve An Acknowledged Role And Stature In The
Commonwealth Of Pennsylvania

Goal: To Build A Supportive Environment For Both Women And Men In
The University's Classrooms And Research Centers And In Our
Communities That Reflects Our Nation's Diverse Racial And Ethnic
Population And The Multifaceted Histories, Experiences, And
Knowledge Of All Humankind