

Diversity: An Overview

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Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define diversity.
- Explain what is meant by our *changing cultural landscape*.
- Describe and give examples of demographic, social, and cultural changes that are responsible for the growing importance of diversity.
- Discuss the meaning and consequences of cultural cruise control.
- Contrast assimilation and pluralism and give an example of each.
- List and explain three dimensions of diversity.
- List and explain five diversity myths.
- Define diversity consciousness.
- Define diversity education.

Many cultures contribute to the richness of our world community. Just as every culture has time honored traditions that make its heritage unique, each of us has individual qualities and characteristics that make us special. Let us learn more of one another . . . in knowledge there is understanding; in understanding there is respect; and where there is respect, growth is possible.¹

In recent years, the term *diversity* has grown in use. The term regularly appears in the popular media, professional magazines, trade books, and scholarly literature. Nevertheless, there is no single, agreed upon definition of diversity. To some it means tolerance, acceptance, or perhaps an attitude. To others, diversity may mean inclusion, numbers, or racial and gender differences. Still others see diversity as a code word for affirmative action or laws designed to ensure representation of minority groups.

Unlike affirmative action, diversity is not a legal concept. Nor does it include only some people. *Diversity* is defined in the dictionary as “a state of unlikeness” or “the condition of being different.” Because we are all different, diversity includes everyone. In this book, **diversity** refers to *all* of the ways in which people are different. This includes individual, group, and cultural differences. Our ability to recognize, understand, and adapt to these differences is a major focus of *Diversity Consciousness*.

OUR CHANGING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Traditionally, the concept of diversity is most often used in relation to culture. **Culture** refers to our way of life, including everything that is learned, shared, and transmitted from one generation to the next. Although culture endures over time, it is not static. Language, values, rules, beliefs, and even the material things we create are all part of one's culture.

Culture's influence on us is profound. As we internalize culture throughout our lives, it influences who we are, what we think, how we behave, and how we evaluate our surroundings. For example, culture shapes the way we communicate, view work, interpret conflict, define and solve problems, and resolve dilemmas. Culture, which Hofstede describes as a collective programming of the mind that reveals itself in symbols, values, and rituals, is often so embedded in us that we may be unaware of its influence.²

Landscape means a scene or a setting. When we talk about **cultural landscape**, we are referring to the different lifestyles, traditions, and perspectives that can be found in the United States and throughout the world. The cultural landscape that surrounds us is both fluid and complex. Increasing our awareness and understanding of a variety of cultural landscapes enables us to appreciate why interacting with people with different "collective programming" can be such a challenge.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "You cannot step into the same river twice." If we were to rephrase Heraclitus using modern-day terminology, we might simply say that "change is constant." Certainly, this applies to the cultural landscape that surrounds us. For instance, each time we interact with coworkers, customers, or clients, no matter how familiar the situation, it is never exactly the same. People and their cultures change incessantly, from moment to moment.

As individuals, each day we are more experienced and knowledgeable than we were the day before. Similarly, culture is ever changing. Languages, values, religious beliefs, and customs rub up against each other, dominate and accommodate, blend together, and evolve into new hybrids. Consider just a few of the ways in which the cultural landscape is changing.

- *Languages.* Languages transmit and preserve culture. Of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken throughout the world, one becomes extinct every two weeks. The state of Oklahoma is one of the areas of the world in which languages are disappearing fastest. Many of these languages are spoken by Native American tribes. (National Geographic, Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages).
- *Work/Life Issues.* Work schedules are becoming more flexible as mothers and fathers look to balance their careers with child-raising responsibilities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, almost 26 percent of working women with children under 18 work flexible schedules at the present, compared with 14 percent in 1991.

TABLE 1.1 Top-Eleven Names in the United States

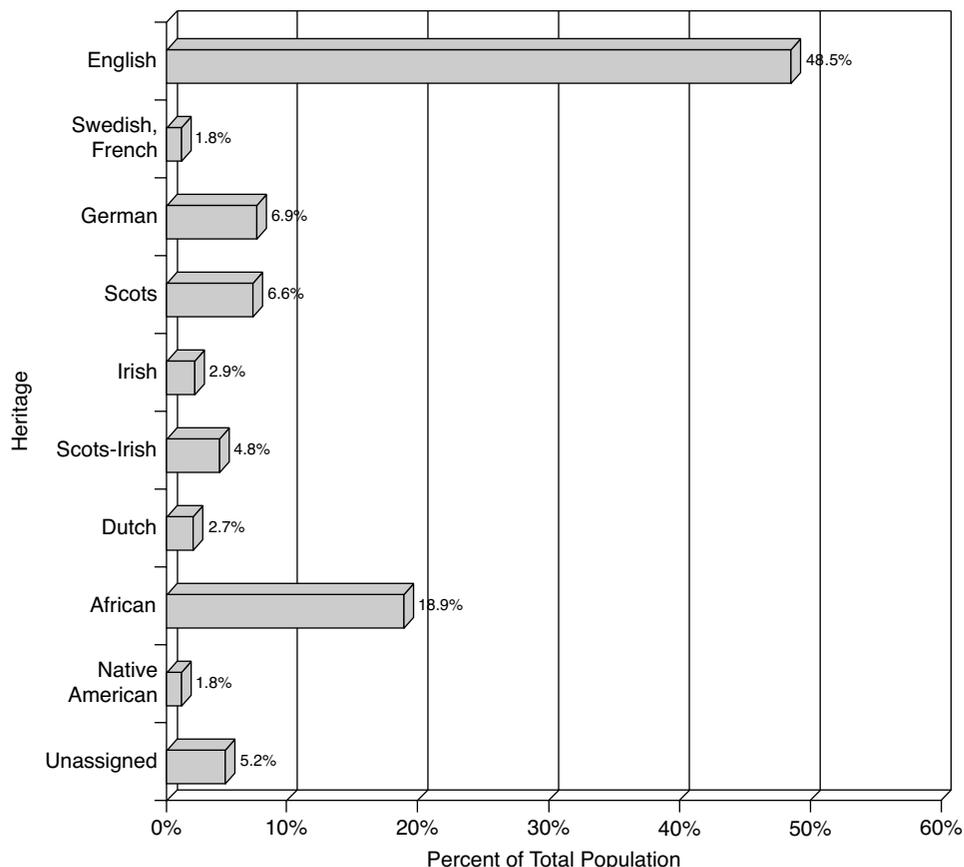
Rank in 1990	Rank in 2007	Name	Occurrences per 100,000	Change in rank
1	1	Smith	881	None
2	2	Johnson	688	None
3	3	Williams	569	None
5	4	Brown	512	1↑
4	5	Jones	505	1↓
7	6	Miller	418	1↑
6	7	Davis	398	1↓
18	8	Garcia	318	10↑
22	9	Rodriguez	298	13↑
8	10	Wilson	290	2↓
19	11	Martinez	287	8↑

- *Use of Technology.* **Digital natives**, young people who are “native speakers” of the language of computers, video games, and Internet, are learning to adapt to new technologies at a faster rate than those of us who are **digital immigrants**; people who were not born into the digital world but learned the language and the new technology later on in life.³
- *Surnames.* Data from a new analysis by the Census Bureau show that the most common surnames in the United States have changed in recent times. Six Hispanic surnames are found among the top 25 and 3—Garcia, Rodriguez, and Martinez—are among the top 11 (see Table 1.1). Notice the significant change in rank for these three names. According to several demographers, this is in all likelihood the first time that a non-Anglo name was among the most common in the United States.⁴

Demographic Changes in the United States

Diversity is not a new phenomenon. If we look back at the first U.S. Census in 1790, we see some interesting differences and similarities with today’s society. The first U.S. Census revealed our rural character. Only 3 percent of the population lived in settlements of 8,000 or more.⁵ In 1790, almost one of five residents (about 19 percent) was African-American (see Fig. 1.1). It is interesting to note the cultural diversity among Whites at that time. About 75 percent of the White population were White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (English, Scots, Scots-Irish); 25 percent were mainly Dutch, French, German, Irish, and Swedish.⁶ These statistics show that early inhabitants of this country were not monocultural. Rather, their cultural differences were significant.

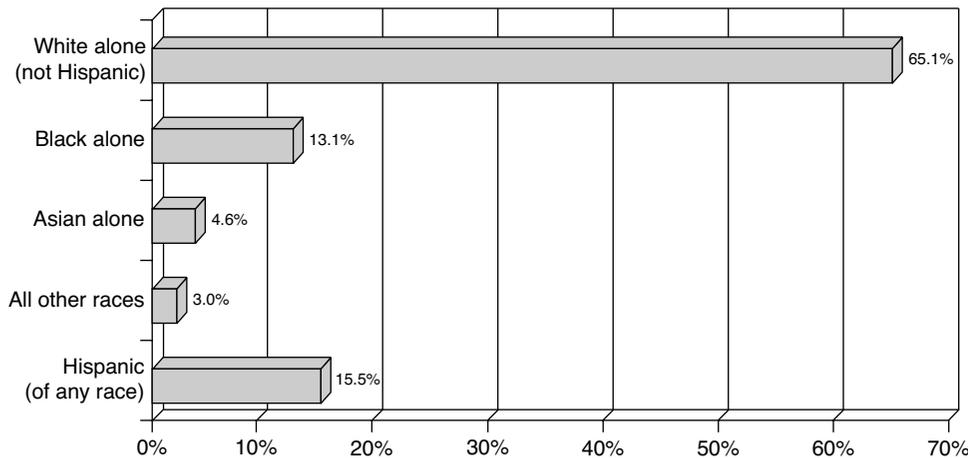
Since 1790, the cultural landscape of the United States has continued to change. We are no longer a rural society. Approximately 75 percent of our population lives

FIGURE 1.1 U.S. Population Distribution in 1790

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Part II, Series Z- 20-132*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976.

in urban areas.⁷ Our racial and ethnic mix has a different look as well (see Fig. 1.2). The percentage of African-Americans, or Blacks, has declined from approximately 19 percent in 1790 to approximately 13 percent today. Asians have steadily increased in numbers since they were first counted in the 1860 Census. Data from the most recent census show that Asians and Pacific Islanders as well as Hispanics are the two fastest growing minority populations in the United States. The rapid growth in these populations is being fueled by immigration. During the last decade, Hispanics accounted for nearly half of the total population growth in the United States.

Racial and ethnic minorities now account for about a third of the U.S. population and exceed 100 million for the first time. The impact of immigration, according to essayist Richard Rodriguez, can be seen in the number of people who come to this country speaking a language other than English. For example, he observes, "Because of the massive migration of Latin Americans northward, the United States has

FIGURE 1.2 Population of the United States, by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004, "U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin," <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/>.

become the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, after Mexico, Spain, Argentina, and Colombia."⁸

In comparison to Asians and Hispanics, the growth rate among Whites was significantly less during the 1990s. This continues a trend. Whites made up approximately 90 percent of the U.S. population in 1940. Based on Census estimates for the year 2050, the percentage of Whites who are not Hispanic (Hispanics can be of any race) will shrink noticeably to just under 50 percent.

Census data must be interpreted cautiously. Different groupings have been used since the first census. In 1870, for instance, the terms *quadroon* (a fourth Black, or having one Black grandparent) and *octoroon* (an eighth Black, or having one Black great-grandparent) were used to indicate the exact amount of a person's Black heritage.

In recent years, racial categories have been added and an increasing number of people have chosen to identify themselves as "other." Many people do not feel that they belong in a single category, and others do not want to be categorized at all. An employee who refuses to select any category explains, "I'm not White, I'm not Black, and I sure don't want to be an *other*."

A number of authors have written autobiographical accounts describing experiences in which they cope and adjust to fitting no single racial category. Examples include *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother* by James McBride, *Black, White, and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self* by Rebecca Walker, and Kip Fulbeck's *Part Asian. 100% Hapa* (see Fig. 1.3). In *What Are You? Voices of Mixed-Race Young People*, Pearl Fuyo Gaskins shares poetry, essays, and portions of interviews of some 45 mixed-race youth. She organizes her chapters around a variety of themes such as "The Color of My Skin Is Not the Color of My Heart," "Roots: Random Thoughts on Random Hair," and "Are You Dating Me or My Hair?"



thai, indian, scottish, lithuanian

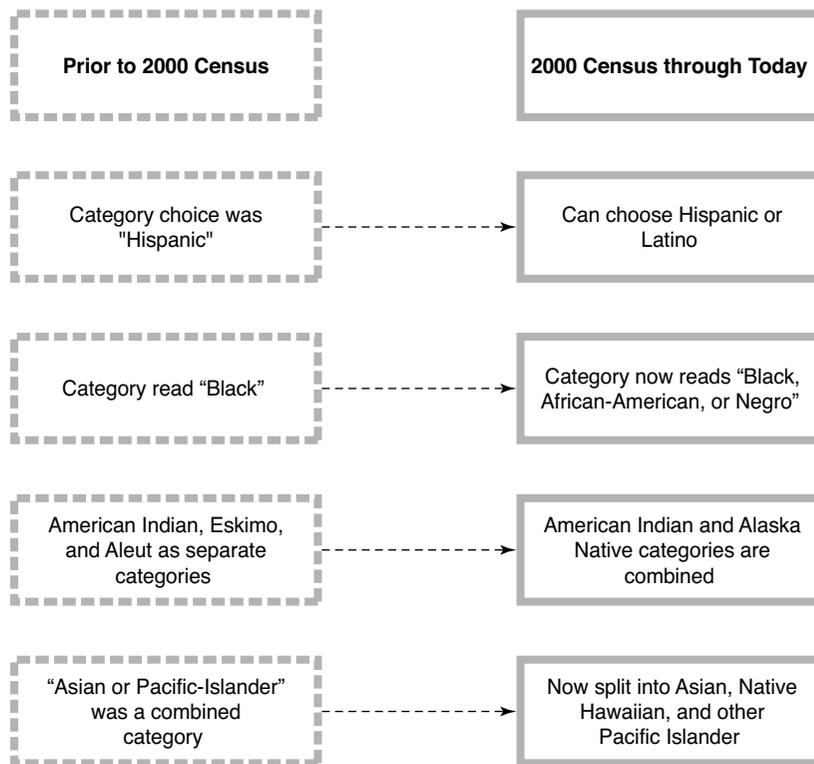
Really? You don't look Thai. Well, let me look again. Yeah now I can see it around your eyes. You know Thai food is my favorite. Were you born in Thailand? Do you speak, what is it, Thai-wanese? Do you dream in English or Thai-wanese? You really don't have an accent at all.

FIGURE 1.3 Hapa (*adj.*) 1. *Slang.* Of mixed racial heritage with partial roots in Asian and/or Pacific-Islander. (*noun*) 2. *Slang.* A person of such ancestry. [*der.* Hawaiian: *Hapa Haole* (half white)].

Source: PART ASIAN 100% HAPA © 2006 by Kip Fulbeck. Used with permission of Chronicle Books, San Francisco. Visit ChronicleBooks.com.

Don't Box Me In

An increasing number of people are resisting the pressure to be boxed in by color. Tiger Woods, for example, has made it known that he objects to being called African-American. Rather he prefers "Cablinasian," a term he made up that combines his Caucasian, Black, Indian, and Asian ancestry. Other well-known people who have affirmed their mixed ancestry are Keanu Reeves (Hawaiian, Chinese, Caucasian), Mariah Carey (Black, Venezuelan, Caucasian), and Johnny Depp (Cherokee, Caucasian). Groups such as Wesleyan University's Interracial Students Organization are becoming more common on college campuses. This trend will probably continue as interracial marriages become more common and society becomes more comfortable with different and new ways of defining one's heritage.

FIGURE 1.4 U.S. Census Changes 2000: Race and Hispanic Origin

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. More detailed information concerning the new racial categories is available on the U.S. Census Bureau Web site (<http://www.census.gov>).

The racial options of the 2000 Census were modified to accommodate those who want to express their multiracial heritage. For the first time, respondents could identify themselves as members of more than one racial category. Also, a separate question about ethnicity appears before race. Figure 1.4 shows other major changes.

Nearly 7 million Americans, or about 2.4 percent, identified themselves as members of more than one race in the 2000 U.S. Census. Many demographers expect this figure to increase dramatically by 2050. Evidence for this can be found in the responses of young people. Among those younger than 18, 4.2 percent were multiracial. According to U.S. Census officials, the major reason for this response is the significant increase in the number of interracial couples.⁹

Latinos, who can be of any race, often find it difficult to relate to rigid racial categories. In the 2000 Census, more than 40 percent of Latinos rejected the racial categories listed and selected "other race."¹⁰ Clara Rodríguez, author of *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States*, points out that analysts often misinterpret what this means. Analysts mistakenly assume Latinos are confused, says the author, when in fact they see themselves as stretching across racial lines.

I was born in 1959 and I was "Black." I did not challenge forms when I was younger, because I did not realize then how important the information those forms requested would become to me. If the form asked me to check "Negro," I did. I don't remember there being racial categories other than Black/Negro or White.

As I grew older and learned through family conversation that there was another culture that was part of me, I began a hesitant journey of uncovering who I am as a complete person. This began with acknowledgment that my Native American heritage is as important to me as being Black. My first acknowledgment of my racial completeness was to check "other." Checking "other" was one of the most difficult things I have ever done. With that act came extreme guilt at the thought of abandoning my given culture and race.

I soon discovered that the guilt came from a sense of having banished myself to neutrality. "Other" meant recognizing no race at all. I went back to checking "Black," which once again made me comfortable but incomplete. I have now settled on checking both "Native American" and "Black."

—Another perspective

Profile in Diversity Consciousness

"There is often a divide, as we know, between black and white. For those of us in the middle, we often feel we must choose one side of this divide or the other, especially in our younger years. For me, growing up identifying predominantly as African-American in a white family gave me a sense that I was interminably an outsider. My family loved me unconditionally, but it was hard to love myself with the same unbiased eyes.

I felt this most acutely during sixth grade when my mother and I moved to a more diverse, and more racially divided, part of town. African-American eighth graders teased me for being so light-skinned, while my best friend and I were forbidden to continue our friendship because her white parents disapproved of my dark skin and of my cousins' Japanese ancestry.

A few years ago I was standing at a street corner, waiting for the walk signal, when a white woman and a black man came up beside me

with their young daughter on her bicycle. In those moments before we continued on our separate paths, I felt a sense of completeness like I had never experienced before. Standing there at the corner, we looked like a family. It was one of the first moments in my life when I did not stand out from the crowd.

My struggle for identity has pretty well ceased within the past few years. I am an individual of complex origin and am proud to be so. I find it fitting that my birthday falls on United Nations Day. By default of identity, those of us who incorporate two opposing races do much to bring those two races together. As an American with African, German, English, Irish, Scottish, and Mexican heritage, I am proud to participate in the melting pot that is America."

—Shannon Luders-Manuel, as quoted in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine (permission to reprint from Teaching Tolerance, <http://www.tolerance.org>).

THINKING THROUGH DIVERSITY

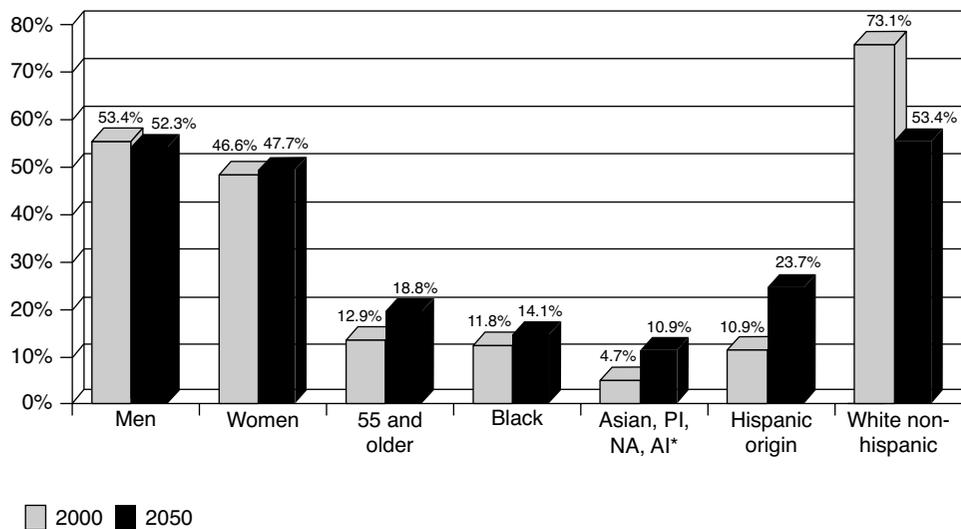
Would you describe yourself as multiracial, or do you see yourself as belonging to a single race? Why?



It is clear that our nation's schools and workforce will feel the effects of growing diversity for some time. Demographic data indicate that

- Women, minorities, and older people will continue to account for the vast majority of new entries in the workforce (see Fig. 1.5). Immigration and population changes have driven work-force growth among minorities. As more women are added to the labor force, their share will approach that of men. The new elders, as they become even healthier and better educated, are more likely to continue working rather than fully retiring. Employment projections for 2050 show that women will make up approximately 48 percent of the U.S. labor force. Finally, the percentage of workers with disabilities is expected to increase because of a number of factors. The workplace is becoming more accessible due to the removal of both attitudinal and physical barriers and the protection of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Recent Census data point to future growth in the number of people with physical and mental disabilities.

FIGURE 1.5 U.S. Workforce Demographics: 2000 and Projected for 2050



* Asians, Pacific-Islanders, Native Alaskans, and American Indians

Source: 2000: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey annual averages. Projections: M. Toossi, "A New Look at Long-Term Labor Force Projections to 2050," *Monthly Labor Review*, November 2006, 19-39.

- Students at all levels of education will continue to grow increasingly diverse. One indication of this trend is the recent change in the percentage of K–12 public school students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities. The percentage has climbed steadily, from approximately 30 percent in 1986 to 44 percent in 2004.¹¹ Likewise, the number of ELL (English Language Learner) students has increased dramatically. Between 1994–95 and 2004–05, the growth of ELL students exceeded 60 percent.¹² Data from the U.S. Department of Education reveal a similar pattern among college students, who have become increasingly diversified in terms of their race, ethnicity, gender, and age.¹³
- The international student population in the United States is growing. The Institute of International Education estimates that there are now nearly 600,000 international students in the United States.¹⁴ Most of these students come from Asian and Latin American countries. In addition, more U.S. students than ever are now studying abroad.

Technological and Social Changes

A number of social and technological changes have also altered the cultural landscape in recent years.

Globalization and Technology

In *The World Is Flat*, Friedman emphasizes how **globalization**, the growing interdependence of people and cultures, has accelerated in the twenty-first century. Globalization is impacting individuals of every conceivable color and culture. To use Friedman's terminology, the world is being flattened in all kinds of ways. For example, there is no such thing as an "American job" in a flat world. Factors such as immigration, the speed and ease of modern transportation, outsourcing, environmental changes, and the globalization of markets and technology contribute to this trend.

Technological advances have transformed our social world into what Marshall McLuhan termed a *global village*.¹⁵ In other words, increasingly we need to think of the entire world when we talk about our social environment. Computers, satellites, and communication technology have brought the world closer together and made cross-cultural encounters an everyday occurrence.

The emergence of the global economy, a recent surge in immigration, and the growing diversity of the U.S. population are transforming the business arena. For example, U.S. companies are creating more multilingual Web sites to expand their market, improve sales, and remain competitive. Dress codes are being revised to include headwear and other articles of clothing required by various religions. Companies are providing consumers with a greater array of products that reflect their diverse lifestyles and tastes. With an increase in white-collar service jobs, companies are paying more attention to cross-cultural interaction among workers and between workers and customers.

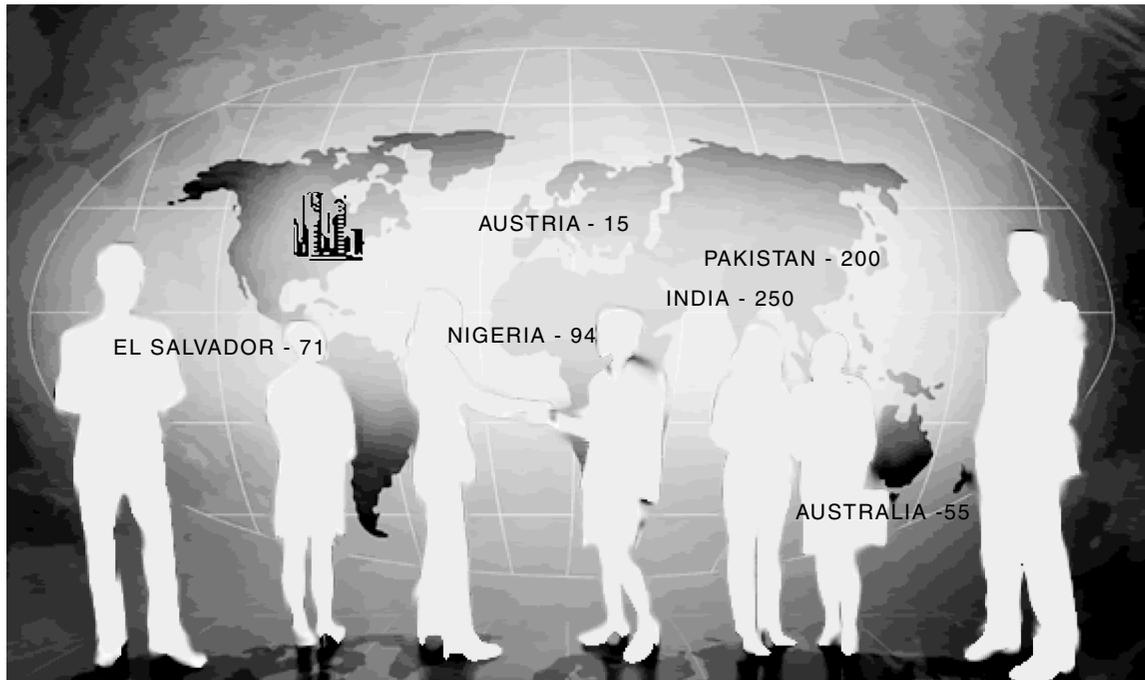
The impact of globalization has been particularly noticeable in the hotel and restaurant business. A case in point is a Hilton hotel in Washington, D.C., where

workers speak 36 languages and some speak no English at all. To communicate with his staff, the hotel's general manager has memos translated into five different languages and read aloud to workers. During meetings, supervisors rely heavily on gesturing, tone of voice, and the written word to clarify complex thoughts to non-English-speaking workers. And language is only one of the many challenges. According to the hotel's assistant director of housekeeping, a growing segment of the hotel's workforce is Muslim women. During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, these women fast from sunup to sundown. However, they are reluctant to take their normal lunch break during Ramadan because they would be surrounded by the smell of food in the employee cafeteria. When the Muslim women asked if they could work through the lunch hour and leave earlier, the assistant director agreed. However, she later heard from fellow managers who were concerned that other employees might take advantage of the situation.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as the economic and political efforts to respond effectively to them, underscore the growing importance of developing a **global perspective**, meaning a view of the world and our place in it. For example, the government is stepping up its efforts to address current and projected shortages of employees with foreign language skills. Agencies such as the army, the FBI, the State Department, and the Commerce Department are in dire need of language specialists with expertise in Arabic, Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Farsi, Russian, Turkish, and other languages.

For each of us, developing a clearer, more encompassing view of the world around us is absolutely necessary. By doing so, we:

1. Develop greater insight into our interconnectedness. Technology, commerce across national borders, and immigration and emigration have linked the United States with the rest of the world like never before. The loss of human life on 9/11 was not just an American tragedy; it was felt worldwide (see Fig. 1.6). People from more than 60 countries were victims of the World Trade Center disaster. Figures provided by individual governments, or the U.S. Department of State, show the number of victims from countries such as Pakistan (200), India (250), Australia (55), El Salvador (71), Austria (15), and Nigeria (94 reported missing by Nigerian press; no official number).¹⁶
2. Expand our awareness of different perspectives. Without a global perspective, we are more likely to assume that our way of doing things is universal. This is particularly true of those aspects of our culture that are not readily visible to us. Consider how we view time. Do we view time as a precious resource that should not be wasted? What do we assume about someone who is late to an appointment to finish a conversation with a friend? Perhaps we have always lived in a culture where being on time and meeting deadlines are extremely important. Consequently, we make all sorts of judgments about people on the basis of their promptness. However, what if we find ourselves in a culture that does not share our time orientation? For example, different time perspectives can be viewed along a continuum, extending from a monochronic to a polychronic time orientation.¹⁷ *Polychronic* time means that multiple activities are

FIGURE 1.6 World Trade Center Tragedy: Victims Worldwide

done at one time and plans are subject to change, especially if they interfere with personal commitments. This is at odds with *monochronic* time, in which people follow a strict schedule and focus on one activity at a time. whereas the United States, Canada, and many Western cultures tend to be predominantly monochronic, countries in the Middle East and Latin America tend to be more polychronic.

3. Enhance our self-awareness. When we visit another country, we may complain about a wide variety of things such as the food, odors, standards of cleanliness, dress, and the way people converse. Uncomfortable experiences in strange lands can teach us about ourselves. By examining how we react and adjust to these experiences, we learn more about the ways in which cultural experiences shape our thinking and behavior. Furthermore, we become more aware of just how difficult it is to change culturally ingrained habits, no matter how insignificant they may seem.

Expanding our global perspective is not easy. Thirty minutes of world news each night does not begin to fill the void. A college president recently told the story of a visiting professor from Australia who spent a semester in the United States. During that time, he did not see a single story or commentary about *his* country, except for a shootout with a madman.¹⁸

I am a citizen, not of Athens or Greece, but of the world.

—Socrates

Heightened Awareness of Diversity

Stories about diversity appear in the news each day. These stories deal with such issues as discrimination in the workplace, cultural conflict, global education, and religious as well as language differences. On 9/11, many of these issues captured the public's attention in an instant. People in the United States suddenly became much more aware of their own vulnerability and cultural isolation, as well as the growing importance of world economies, world geography, communications networks, migration, cultural values and traditions, and religious diversity.

The effects of 9/11 remain with us. According to a recent USA TODAY Gallup poll, 39 percent of respondents reported feeling some prejudice against Muslims. About 22 percent said they would not want Muslims as neighbors. However, of these respondents, 58 percent said they had never met a Muslim.¹⁹ Since 9/11, in an effort to promote awareness of their cultural practices and religion, Muslim groups have become much more active in presenting educational programs to police, hospital workers, teachers and students, therapists, corporations, and community groups.

As the world continues to shrink, global competition and cooperation are pushing diversity issues into the forefront of the workplace. As Friedman acknowledges in *The World Is Flat*, economic change and culture are interdependent. Economic performance hinges to a great degree on **glocalization**, a culture's openness to diverse influences and ability to blend foreign ideas and best practices with our own traditions. Although Friedman discusses glocalization as a cultural trait, this type of openness can be developed by individuals as well. In a flatter world, cultural isolation, intolerance, and an inability to communicate with others and value their contributions will put us at an economic disadvantage. From Friedman's perspective, a constantly changing global environment will be hardest on those who are not prepared, both culturally and technologically. Similarly, a heightened awareness of diversity coupled with a new skill set will empower us to take advantage of the staggering opportunities afforded by this new landscape.

Scholarship on the subject of diversity has mushroomed in recent years. Diversity itself has become a thriving industry. Books, Web sites, diversity consultants, courses, workshops, and conferences have proliferated as more and more money is spent in this area. Pride in our cultural roots is championed by popular music, movies, ethnic festivals, and cultural exhibits. As diversity has become more visible in everyday life, it is more apt to become an issue that we address, discuss, and debate publicly and privately.

Continued Cultural Separation in the Midst of Diversity

Although some parts of our cultural landscape are becoming more diverse, other parts show little of this change. Sociologists refer to this as **cultural lag**, a condition in which one part of a culture is not keeping pace with another part. This lag or gap is becoming increasingly evident when we look at where we live, worship, go to school, and work. Consider the following examples.

1. Many residents of the United States continue to live in neighborhoods that are separated along racial, ethnic, and economic lines. The upper, middle, and lower social classes gravitate to separate communities. Hispanic barrios, Little Japans,

Global Marketing on the Internet

Nowhere in business today is the value of the global market more apparent than on the Internet. Data from a recent report, “Web Globalization: Write Once, Deploy Worldwide,” show that a growing majority of the online population is non-English speaking.²⁰

Web buyers are more likely to select products and services if the supplier’s Web site is culturally relevant and if it is available in their native language, according to the report. If U.S.-based companies want to extend their market reach and remain competitive, they will have to create multicultural, multilingual Web sites. Already, many companies have globalized their Web sites, including:

- General Electric—links allow the user to access G.E. home pages in more than 60 different countries. Each site is in the native language of that country.
- DaimlerChrysler and UNESCO—Web-based initiative between private and public sector organizations. The site provides information in four languages on the importance of cultural diversity. Additionally, it promotes intercultural dialogue among young people and to date, more than 25,000 students have participated.
- Google.com—widely used Web browser offers an interface in more than 80 different languages. By clicking on Google’s “language tools,” the user can enter any URL (Internet address) and have each page translated in any one of six different languages—English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, and Italian. For instance, the user can access a Web page in Portuguese and have it translated to English, or vice versa.

Little Italys, and Chinatowns are commonplace. So too are “chocolate cities and vanilla suburbs,” a phrase used by musical artist George Clinton. William Frey, in his analysis of recent population estimates from the Census Bureau, concludes that most communities in the United States lack significant racial and ethnic diversity.²¹ Census data reveal high segregation levels in large urban areas where racial groups have a history of living in separate neighborhoods. For Hispanics, increasing segregation is largely related to a significant influx of immigrants. This change is especially apparent in the South.²²

2. To a large degree, gender segregation exists in the job market. In some cases, jobs are overwhelmingly held by either men or women, such as the male-dominated fields of engineering and coal mining and the preponderance of women found in nursing and textile manufacturing. Within occupations in general, gender segregation can also be found at different levels of the organizational hierarchy. In the mid-1990s, the U.S. Labor Department’s Federal Glass Ceiling Commission found that the upper levels of big business remained mostly White and mostly male.²³



THINKING THROUGH DIVERSITY

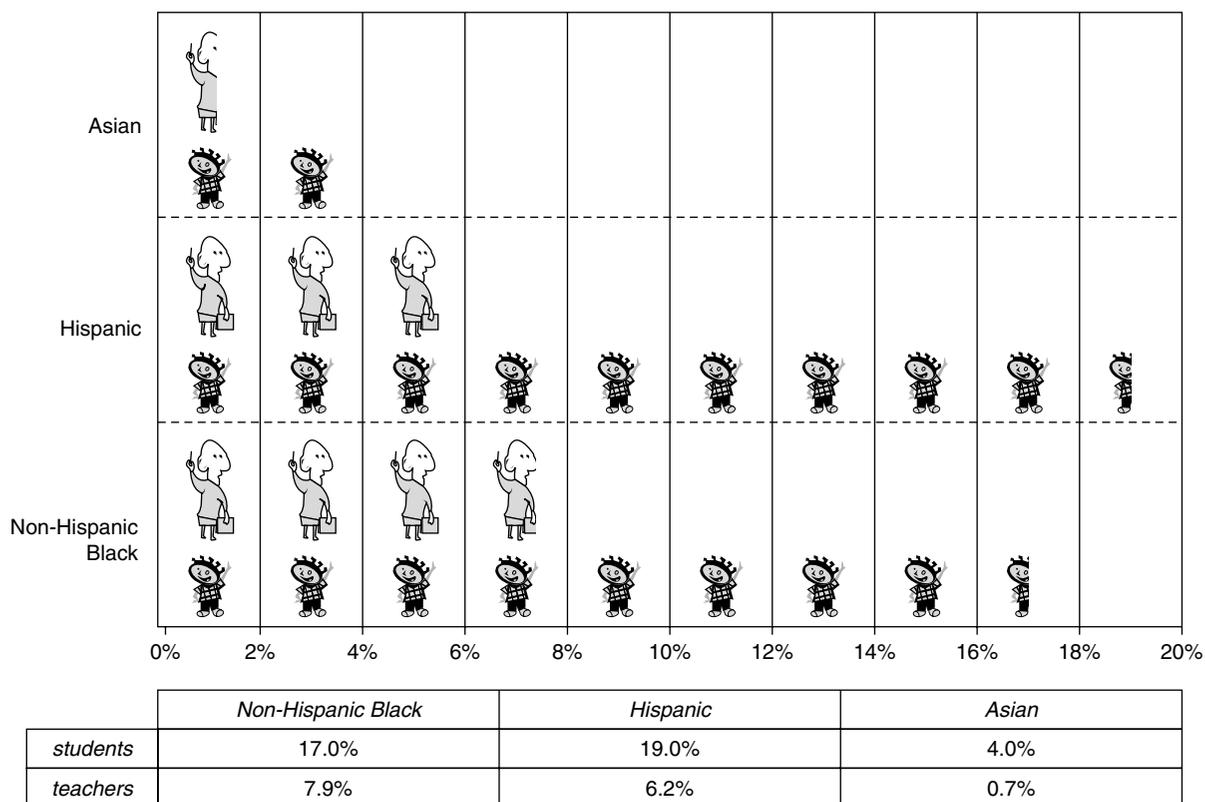
Have you or any member of your family ever encountered a glass ceiling? Explain.

According to the Commission, the **glass ceiling**—attitudes and actions that block the promotion of women and minorities into top management positions—was firmly in place. Since that time, there has been relatively little change. As an example, women now account for less than 8 percent of senior managers; and the earnings of those who do break the

glass ceiling average about 72 percent of their male colleagues'.²⁴ These barriers may exist because of individual prejudices and discrimination, or they may be rooted in the policies, procedures, and culture of a business.

3. Martin Luther King once called our time of worship the most segregated hour of the week. Despite a trend toward more integrated neighborhoods, especially in some suburbs, racial segregation remains firmly in place at many religious services, as evidenced by recent data from a nationwide poll by the *New York Times*. Ninety percent of Whites who attend religious services at least once a month said that none or only a few of their fellow congregants were Black. Similarly, 73 percent of Blacks said that almost all of their fellow congregants were Black.²⁵
4. Although the percentage of students of color in U.S. public schools is increasing significantly, racial diversification among teachers has not kept pace. Data show a widening demographic mismatch between students and their teachers (see Fig. 1.7). Furthermore, future U.S. Census projections leave no doubt that the percentage of public school students who are racial and ethnic minorities will continue to increase.

FIGURE 1.7 Public School Students and Teachers: A Growing Racial Gap



Source: Erica Frankenberg, The Civil Rights Project, *The Segregation of American Teachers*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

5. Recently, there has been a resurgence of intergroup hostility and intolerance. This is not simply the work of a select few. When we think of intolerance, how many of us visualize a member of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) or a skinhead? Unfortunately, intolerance can also come dressed in a three-piece suit, a military uniform, or more casual wear. Schools, places of worship, and job sites have witnessed an upsurge in hate crimes during the past few years. Hate literature, graffiti, symbols of hate such as nooses, threatening e-mail and telephone calls, property damage, and physical violence point to a continuing cultural lag between the diversity we encounter and our ability to respect or at least tolerate that diversity.
6. Cyber-segregation or the **digital divide**, the gap between people with regard to their ability to access and use information and communication technologies (ICTs), threatens to widen the gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” in the United States and in the world. The *Pew Internet and American Life Project* shows resilient gaps in terms of age, race, and education:
 - 26 percent of Americans age 65 and older go online, compared with 84 percent of those ages 18 to 29.
 - 57 percent of African-Americans go online, compared with 70 percent of Whites.
 - 29 percent of those who have not graduated from high school have access, compared with 89 percent of college graduates.²⁶ Another dimension of the digital divide concerns people with disabilities. When they have access to new technologies, they are more likely to work and move from being dependent on government subsidized programs to becoming taxpayers.

People react differently to the changes that continue to transform our cultural landscape. Some adapt while others resist or remain oblivious. In a way, it is a lot like the growing importance of computer technology. We may adjust and learn more because we know that if we do not become computer literate, our chances for success

*The real voyage of discovery
consists not in seeking new
landscapes but in having new eyes.*

—Marcel Proust

will be severely limited. The same holds true for diversity. Whether we realize it or not, diversity touches each of us on a daily basis. If we are not in a position to capitalize on diversity, we will be at a disadvantage socially and economically. In Chapter 2 we focus on the relationship between diversity and success.

A RANGE OF REACTIONS

How do we react to our changing cultural landscape? Reactions may vary depending on our awareness of others and ourselves, our comfort level with the situation at hand, and our ability to transform understanding into action. Furthermore, our reactions may show a range of competencies, from being unaware of the landscape and fixated on us and our world to being able to shift gears and easily adjust to a multitude of individual and situational factors.

In each of the scenarios in the following three sections, with whom do you identify?

Cultural Cruise Control

When we shift into **cultural cruise control**, we act as though our own values, beliefs, and experiences are universal. When we find ourselves in this mode of thinking and acting, we are oblivious to different cultural cues and individual perspectives. We simply adhere to our own cultural rules. Our self-awareness is minimal or nonexistent. If we acknowledge differences, we tend to view them as important for other people in other settings.

Although cruise control makes interacting with others easier for us, it also leads to misunderstandings, conflict, and lost opportunities. The following real-life examples illustrate some of the pitfalls that are inherent in simply using our own culture to guide our actions.

Scenario: A teacher, who grew up in a small town in New Jersey, talks about his students with coworkers. “In my hometown, my neighbors were people with a Polish heritage just like me. My dad was a blue-collar worker. My family didn’t have much and what we did have, we worked hard for.

My best friend went to high school and college with me. His family was pretty much the same as mine. We got teaching jobs together in a suburb. When we started out, the students in the school were a lot like we were as kids. We got to be really good teachers.

Then the neighborhood started to change and we were having more and more black kids in our school—then Hispanics. And a lot of the neighborhood apartments began to fill up with families that were much poorer than the students we were used to. Both of us knew what it was to struggle, and we had a few black friends in college, so we didn’t think this was any big deal. We were really good teachers—so why change? After all, we’ve both always treated all our students the same.

Now administrators want us to change the way we teach these poor minorities. They say the way we teach doesn’t work for these students. We need to go to workshops and learn new methods. We were poor once. Nobody changed the way they taught for us. We just worked hard. And look where we are.

I’m not changing anything. These kids can learn from me if they want to bad enough. They’ve just got to learn how to work.”

Scenario: After making some purchases at Wal-Mart, the shopper arrived at the checkout counter. He put his items on the counter. Upon being informed of the price, he proceeded to pay for the items by placing the money on the counter directly in front of the cashier. The cashier picked up the cash and made change. She held the change out for the shopper. Not looking up to see the cashier, the shopper tapped on the counter to indicate he was waiting for his change. Once she realized the shopper was refusing to take money from her hand, the cashier grew increasingly angry, uttered some profanity, and slammed the money on the counter. A friend of the shopper then asked to speak with the cashier. After ten minutes of heated conversation, the cashier replied, “Y’all gotta learn how to act right if y’all gonna say you’re God’s chosen people, especially them rabbis.”

The friend had explained to the cashier that Talmudic Law forbids most physical contact between a male and females other than direct relatives. The shopper, a

rabbi, followed an ultra-conservative form of Judaism. The passing of items from one sex to another and most eye contact between the sexes is forbidden. Furthermore, exchanging money is done with minimal discourse.

I have a one track, one culture mind, and I thought it was normal.

–Another perspective

Beginning Adjustments

As we unlock cruise control, we learn to adjust or shift gears. We move beyond the “I don’t see differences” mindset. This can be a slow, arduous, nonlinear process. For example, as we begin to uncover differences and recognize their relevance, we may find ourselves stereotyping people or pushing them all into a box that does not represent who they really are. Depending on the situation, we may revert back to cruise control. And as we explore and become more open to diversity and all of its nuances, we may become more aware of just how superficial our understanding is. But with the necessary motivation, we learn to adjust our thinking and behaviors. Such is the case with the following scenarios.

Scenario: Leonard works at a help desk. He and other coworkers offer advice to staff employed by the U.S. Department of Justice. These staff members, who track time sheets for entire offices, input the time into a system. When staff encounters technical problems, they call the help desk.

One specific woman of Asian descent would repeatedly call and was extremely difficult to understand. Her English was not proficient and her accent was very noticeable. She also had a lot of trouble understanding Leonard. For example, she would try to explain her question to Leonard. Leonard, thinking he understood what this woman was asking, would begin to explain the answer. As Leonard offered his explanation, this woman would affirm with “uh huhs” and “yes.” Leonard would then say, “Does that make sense?” and there would be silence.

By shifting perspectives and actively listening, Leonard realized that his client’s affirmations were not affirmations in the sense that she understood what Leonard was saying. Rather, his client was simply affirming that she *heard* Leonard. However, these conversations, which happened repeatedly, left Leonard feeling extremely frustrated, confused, and helpless. Soon thereafter, Leonard began asking a coworker for advice and doing some research on his own. Leonard became more aware of what “yes” might mean in different cultures, and he developed some communication techniques to ensure understanding. As an example, Leonard tries to check whether he is making himself clear by asking his client to explain certain things back to him. But Leonard still finds it difficult to talk with this client, especially at the end of a long workday.

Scenario: At Heathrow Airport in London, a 20-something woman traveling with a middle-aged woman were in the process of going through security. The younger passenger had a carry-on and a large pocketbook. The security guard

abruptly told her she could not pass through security with two bags. Airport regulations stipulated only one carry-on. At this point, the passenger tucked her chin toward her chest and clasped her hands behind her head. She started to cry out loudly, “No, I can’t do this. No, I can’t do this. I just want to go home.” Soon, she started to cry.

The security guard’s response was immediate. He stared at her disapprovingly, shook his head, and rebuked her. He said, “You need to get yourself under control. Save your tantrums for somewhere else.” Another passenger in line then caught the guard’s eye and said, “Sir, that young lady has problems you and I don’t have.” The guard stopped what he was doing, paused thoughtfully, and responded, “I’m sorry.” By this time, the distressed young woman had left with her companion. For the guard, this was a learning moment, something to reflect upon throughout the day, and reconsider the next time he was tempted to react without thinking.

The passenger who had spoken sensed the young woman was “different” rather than just acting spoiled or trying to bring attention to herself. Why did she feel this way? She attributed her response to years of teaching in a public school setting where mainstreaming is commonplace. As a teacher, she often has classes in which a student with special needs exhibits unusually inappropriate behaviors. When this happens, other students tend to react by being loud and critical. After the student in question is removed from class by a professional, the teacher talks to the students saying, “That student is dealing with problems you and I don’t have.”

Scenario: Tamara, an employee who works at the Office of Child Support Enforcement in a large city on the West Coast, recounts one of her many interactions with people who collect public assistance. Tamara assists customers from different cultural backgrounds and income brackets who need assistance, mostly from fathers who will not willingly subsidize their children’s care. Often times, when customers inquire about their child support case via phone or in person, employees are prone to stereotype.

For example, if a coworker heard the television show, *The Price Is Right*, in the background during a call, Tamara might hear a comment such as, “The customer needs to get off her bottom and get a job.” On the other hand, people that are thought to be working parents receive more respect. If an employee gets a call from someone who is whispering, this is seen as an indication that the customer is at his or her workplace and wants to use discretion when inquiring about their child support case.

Although Tamara hears and even jokingly voices these stereotypes at times, she manages to treat her customers as individuals, or at least so she thought. She clearly remembers one woman who arrived at her office desperately seeking assistance. The young lady was articulate and well dressed. The lady told Tamara she was a graduate of a nearby university. When Tamara finally accessed her case, she was taken aback by the fact that this lady had five children by three different men and she was currently receiving welfare. Tamara began to ponder how she would react if she hit “rock bottom.”

She knew her job “hands down,” but her perceptions were limiting her ability to meet her customers’ needs. And how many other times had she unknowingly made false assumptions? The magnitude of the difference between her initial perception of this customer and reality made Tamara reevaluate her entire way of thinking. Since that day, Tamara is much more mindful of how she views and treats each person she interviews.

Fine Tuning

As we survey the landscape, shift gears, reevaluate, and then fine-tune our thinking and behaviors, we become more comfortable in the midst of diversity. This happens over time, as the following scenario illustrates.

Scenario: In a suburban school district outside of Austin, Texas, Web developers are in the process of creating an online tutorial for teenagers to help them in math. The team, working with material given to them by a number of math teachers, is constructing math word problems. Mindful of the diversity of the students who will be using the tutorial, their problems include racially and ethnically diverse names and pictures. Moreover, the problems revolve around what they perceive to be common, everyday life experiences. These include:

- Renting bicycles on vacation
- Taking a “road trip”
- Getting a summer job at the beach
- Saving to buy game software system for a personal computer

Before making this new resource available to students, one member of the team suggests hiring a diversity consultant to review it. After some debate about whether this is necessary, a consultant who has an extensive background in both Web design and diversity is hired.

In her report to the team of Web developers, the consultant comments on the inclusiveness of the questions. She writes, “Minority students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, often find they have to constantly step outside of their culture or relate to experiences outside their daily lives. For many, so-called real life examples such as these are not something they experience. Of course, all of us feel that way on occasion, but for these students, it is more likely to be an everyday, ongoing experience that contributes to their feelings of alienation toward school.”

According to the consultant, middle- and upper-class students are more likely to identify with the experiences just listed. For many disadvantaged students, these same experiences are out of their realm, both economically and socially. As an example, taking a “road trip” is a concept that might be completely unrealistic because it requires leisure time and money. The same thing applies to renting a bike while on vacation. Many of these students have no computer at home, much less their own personal computer.

With the consultant’s help, the team begins to shift their thinking. Using multicultural names and pictures is a good start, but for all students to feel that this

resource is designed for them, it needs to be more inclusive in terms of the cultural context of the problems. By varying the context of life experiences, it becomes necessary for all students to sometimes step out of their cultural environment. Furthermore, all students will know their lives and lifestyles are important enough to be included.

With this awareness and knowledge, the team begins to examine math problems from a wider range of perspectives. Suggestions regarding possible scenarios include:

- Renting carpet cleaning equipment for a relative or neighbor
- Traveling to visit relatives
- Saving money for items that are more affordable, such as a pay-as-you-go cell phone
- Getting a job at the local mall

As the Web developers become more sensitive to diversity and its implications for student success, they gradually become more able to critique their own work. A greater variety of names, such as Carlos, Tran, Kashif, Shakisha, and Jorge, appear in word problems. Instead of a young white boy animation at the end of each and every lesson, the animation figure is now more abstract and inclusive. Although there are still too many math problems that are set in an upper-class white context, the team is aware of this bias and slowly revising the tutorial with input from teachers and students alike.

Regardless of our competencies in the area of diversity, we will make mistakes, sometimes unknowingly. What we learn from these mistakes will allow us to move beyond cruise control and continue making adjustments.

VIEWS OF DIVERSITY: ASSIMILATION AND PLURALISM

Throughout our nation's history, our diversity has been described as a *melting pot*, *tossed salad*, *rainbow*, *quilt*, and *kaleidoscope*. These images illustrate the fact that we are different. Our differences, and the way we view them, change constantly.

In the early twentieth century, a Jewish immigrant named Israel Zangwill offered this description of the United States in his book *The Melting Pot*: "There she lies, the great melting pot—listen! Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth—the harbour where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething—Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian, Black and Yellow . . . Jew and Gentile."²⁷

According to Zangwill, European immigrants would gradually lose their traditional ways of life and blend together. A new mixed culture would emerge from this process. This is commonly referred to as **assimilation**, the process in which people lose their cultural differences and blend into the wider society. International students as well as those born and raised in the United States sometimes sense their culture slipping away. They have many ways to deal with the pressure

to assimilate. Some see it as inevitable and desirable. Others see it as something to avoid at all costs. Still others find themselves assimilating, but not completely. As one of my students put it, “I do it up to a point, as long as it does not rob me of my identity.”

Work is a perfect example of how I assimilate my identity so that I feel comfortable. If changing the way I dress and act makes me feel more accepted on the job, then that's what I want to do.

My personal background provides me with a very strong belief that I am to be who I am. I think my Jewish background as well as my mother's influence help me deal with assimilation. I know who I am, as far as race, culture, and personality. And I know that I'm not changing for anyone. Therefore, when the idea of assimilation is presented in any way to me, I instinctively decline.

In America, everyone at some point and time will be forced to assimilate themselves with another culture or group. Being a young black male, assimilation is probably the most frequently used pattern of interaction in my life. In my neighborhood, especially with my circle of friends, it is a cardinal sin to assimilate with the white culture. We see ourselves as the shunned group. At every possible opportunity, we thumb our collective noses at white society. By learning the “rules of the game” a long time ago, I know that assimilating with the majority society is a must. When forced to assimilate, I just separate my two worlds. I'm always going to be Black with black sentiments and I'll never compromise that for anything. However, I will play by the rules dictated, at least to an extent, to further myself and my people.

—Other perspectives

Assimilation may have negative as well as positive consequences for immigrants or society in general. For instance, it can mean learning good or bad habits or values. Research has shown that sometimes students who work the hardest and show the most respect tend to be the most recent immigrants. To some immigrants, negative influences are a constant concern. They see their children taking on negative values that create tensions within families. One 32-year-old mother from Mexico worries about her children: “In the Hispanic tradition, the family comes first, not money. It's important for our children not to be influenced too much by the ‘gueros,’” a term she uses to refer to “blondies” or Americans.²⁸

Other studies have found that some immigrants consciously choose when and where to assimilate. In *Accommodation Without Assimilation*, anthropologist Margaret Gibson shared findings from her study of Asian-Indian students in a city in the Sacramento Valley of California. She discovered that the students did well in school, often outperforming their Euro-American peers, by following the advice of their immigrant parents. The Asian-Indian students were told to follow rules and regulations at school and adopt only “desirable” aspects of Euro-American behavior rather than assimilate completely.²⁹

What Is an American?

How would you define the term *American*? For some, the term applies solely to those living in the United States. Others maintain that those who inhabit any of the countries in North, Central, or South America are Americans. Still others feel that the term has a racial connotation. Toni Morrison, in her book *Playing in the Dark*, observes “deep within the word ‘American’ is its association with race . . . American means white.”³⁰ A student of color sums up her feelings this way: “Being an American is a phrase way down on my list of descriptive words. America has caused me to describe myself in a lot of ways—Black, woman, minority. The word *American* is not part of that list. I wish I could feel a part of this country. But everyday I am quickly reminded that I am not an American but a nuisance.”

Do you feel that you are an American? What does *American* mean to you? What does an American look like? In his book *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, Ronald

Takaki describes a personal experience while riding in a taxi in Norfolk, Virginia. The driver, who looked to be in his 40s, asked him how long he had been in the United States. Takaki replied that he had been born in the United States. He further explained that his family came here from Japan more than 100 years ago. The driver’s assumption was that he didn’t really look “American.”³¹

Why do we make this kind of assumption? According to Takaki, schools have to accept at least part of the blame. He argues that from kindergarten to college, teachers and textbooks have cultivated a narrow view of U.S. history. Typically, the experiences of African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian-Americans have been ignored. In addition to schools, our upbringing can influence our thinking. A college student elaborates: “The way I was brought up was to think that everybody who was the same as me were ‘Americans,’ and the other people were of ‘such and such descent.’”³²

Many now question whether the model of the melting pot fits our society. They argue that people want to be accepted for who they are. A growing number of people are unwilling to give up what makes them distinctive, even if it is only for a certain period of time each day. When they go to work or school, they do not want to leave their culture at home. They feel that like the ingredients in a salad or the colors of a rainbow, differences can coexist and complement each other (see Fig. 1.8).

Pluralism is a process through which cultural differences are acknowledged and preserved. By way of illustration, advocates of multicultural education argue that the study of U.S. history should be more pluralistic. History should reflect the distinctive cultural experiences of all people. According to this perspective, courses in history often ignore the experiences, perspectives, and contributions of women or people of color. Those who share this opinion argue that if history courses were truly inclusive, there would be no need for a Black History Month or a Women’s History Month.

Whether pluralism is positive is subject to debate. Those who oppose pluralism argue that it promotes tension and conflict at a time when we need to ignore our



FIGURE 1.8 The Melting Pot vs. The Salad Bowl

Source: "The Melting Pot vs. The Salad Bowl" by Eunice LaFate for *Everyday Democracy*, formerly the Study Circles Resource Center, www.everyday-democracy.org.

differences and come together as one, much as we did in the aftermath of the events of September 11. Proponents of pluralism maintain that cultural diversity is a national resource that we should preserve. Furthermore, they maintain that when people preserve their cultural identity, including language, religion, and customs, it can be a source of pride and motivation.

I think it is important to hold on to one's culture; it is a means of guidance. For instance, my great grand-dad was born in Cameroon in a place called Douala. In Douala, the people were said to be very wise. The story went on to say a bird used to fly around them trying to get their knowledge; and this bird actually was a human being. So they used to hide their knowledge by wearing a hat. I still do this. For me, it's fun, but it reminds me of where I am from. It reminds me I am supposed to be a wise man.

—Another perspective

DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY

Dimensions of diversity refer to specific traits viewed as distinguishing one person or group from another. Race, gender, and ethnicity are three examples. **Race** refers to a category of people who are *perceived* as physically distinctive on the basis of certain traits, such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features. Notice that what makes this group distinctive is our perception of differences. The concept of race is discussed later in more detail.

Whereas race relates to physical differences, ethnicity focuses on cultural distinctiveness. **Ethnicity** is defined as the consciousness of a cultural heritage shared with other people. **Gender** has to do with the cultural differences that distinguish males from females. For instance, in any given culture, people raise males and females to act certain ways. Do not confuse the term *gender* with *sex*. Sex refers to biological differences, such as hormones and anatomy.

Social Class Differences in the United States

Social class refers to one's status in society. In the United States, status is usually determined by a variety of social and economic criteria, including wealth, power, and prestige. Even though social class influences where we work, live, and go to school, its importance is addressed infrequently. Perhaps class distinctions are downplayed or ignored because we are uncomfortable, psychologically speaking, acknowledging the tremendous inequality that exists in this society. Moreover, the concept of social class is fuzzy and inconsistent. For example, how would we classify other students in our class? *Lower*, *middle*, and *upper class* mean different things to different people.

A groundbreaking study of social class was recently undertaken by Barbara Ehrenreich, a well-known author who has written extensively about women and poverty. She decided to assume a secret identity as a waitress to research the ramifications of changing her social class. In *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, Ehrenreich discusses her life as a waitress, working 10-hour shifts for \$2.43 an hour plus tips. She worked in Florida,

Maine, and Minnesota. With her Rent-A-Wreck car and a laptop, her goal was to earn enough money for basic necessities and to pay rent. She soon discovered that she needed additional income to keep her afloat, so she took second jobs as a motel housekeeper, professional maid, nursing home dietary aide, and Wal-Mart employee. To Ehrenreich, the experience was mentally as well as physically challenging. She says, "I wasn't prepared for how mentally challenging this was going to be. I mean intellectually challenging. I knew I was going to have to work hard and I was afraid it was physically maybe too much for me. Actually, I did fine physically—though I don't know how fine it would have been after many months. But here I am with a Ph.D. in biology and I was struggling to master all these things that were being thrown at me."³³ Ehrenreich recounts how her coworkers roomed together in hotels, slept in cars, and medicated themselves because they had no money for doctor visits. As a result of her research, she became much more aware of the separate, distinct worlds of the haves and have-nots in U.S. society.

When we talk about the dimensions of diversity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, personality, learning style, communication style, and family background are invariably ignored. Some people may perceive these and other dimensions to be more important than race or gender. When I asked workshop participants what makes them unique, their answers reflect a very inclusive view of diversity (see Diversity Box: Who Am I?).

The meaning of the term *diversity* is expanding continually. Roosevelt Thomas, a leading expert on managing diversity in the workplace, makes this point in his book *Beyond Race and Gender*. He defines diversity in a way that includes everyone. According to Thomas, workforce diversity is not something that is simply defined by race or gender. Rather, it encompasses a variety of other dimensions, such as age, personal and corporate background, education, job function and position, geographic origin, lifestyle, sexual orientation, and personality.³⁴ To this list we can add ancestry, national origin, creed, religion, social class, leadership style, personality, family background, marital status, military background, and disability. The list goes on and on. In short, it includes whatever we think distinguishes us.

As you read about diversity and, in particular, various dimensions of diversity, keep these points in mind.

1. *Dimensions of diversity may be hidden or visible.* Diversity is not only skin deep. According to one theory, diversity is like a cultural iceberg. Only about 10 percent of it is visible. To illustrate, most dimensions mentioned by the participants (see Diversity Box: Who Am I?) are not readily apparent. For example, we would not know that someone was a descendant of slaveholders, vegetarian, or born-again Christian unless the person chose to share this with us.
2. *Dimensions of diversity are found within groups as well as within individuals.* Learning and communication styles, personalities, and talents vary from person to person. Likewise, everyone seen as belonging to a group may not identify with the group, or they may identify with different group characteristics. Differences within a group are often ignored when we distinguish between groups. Diversity within groups is addressed later in the chapter.
3. *Dimensions of diversity are in a constant state of flux.* In different situations, we see ourselves and are seen by others differently. In some situations a student might want to be seen as a Muslim female. In another situation, she might simply want to be viewed as a student.
4. *Dimensions of diversity are not always clear cut or easily defined.* Diversity means different things to different people. A good example is the term *race*. Even though we talk about race as if it can be biologically defined, there is no scientific way to distinguish people based solely on their skin color, hair texture, shape or color of their eyes, or any other physical trait. Racial mixing has blurred the boundaries among races. Skin color, for example, is a common but unreliable indicator of race. There are Whites who are more dark skinned than some

Who Am I?

Participants in a diversity awareness workshop wrote down four things that describe each of them. Their descriptors appear here:

Young Sincere American
 Descendant of slave-owners Muslim
 Recovering Alcoholic Religious
 Jewish Over 50 Indo-Guyanese
 African-American woman
 Black Vegetarian Family man
 Flexible **WHO AM I?** Short
 Hard-working Blackfoot Iraq vet
 Product of an inter-racial marriage
 Born-again Christian Single parent
 Good mother
 Liberal Democrat Baby of the family
 Mother of a child with a disability

Blacks. Many Hispanics have dark skin but do not consider themselves Black. Anthropologist Ashley Montagu addressed this issue in his book *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. According to Montagu, the term *race* has no scientific basis and cannot be applied to real life.³⁵ There is almost total agreement among scientists today that race is arbitrarily and socially defined. Yet it is important because we make it important, and we model its importance for children (see Fig. 1.9).

5. *Dimensions of diversity interrelate.* For example, a recent Pew Research Center survey shows the interrelationship of race and social class. Many African American respondents in this survey see a widening gap between the values

of middle class and poor blacks. Specifically, less than a quarter (23 percent) say that middle class and poor blacks share “a lot” of values in common. In this survey, **values** refer to things that people view as important or their general way of thinking.³⁶

In summary, diversity is multidimensional. Various dimensions may be hidden or visible. Moreover, they may or may not have anything to do with race or gender.

Master Status

People are often identified and distinguished by their **master statuses**, positions that stand out in the eyes of society and hide one’s individuality. Ask yourself, What is the first thing that people see when they look at you? Is it your race, gender, disability, or some other master status?

In his autobiography, Malcolm X discusses his experiences as a student in Mason, Michigan, a town just outside Lansing. He was one of the top students in his class and excelled in English. He vividly remembers talking with Mr. Ostrowski, his English teacher, about his plans for a career.

“Malcolm, you ought to be thinking about a career,’ said Mr. Ostrowski. ‘Have you been giving it thought?’ The truth is, I hadn’t. I never have figured out why I told him. ‘Well, yes, sir, I’ve been thinking I’d like to be a lawyer.’ Lansing certainly had no Negro lawyers—or doctors either—in those days, to hold up an image I might have aspired to. All I really knew for certain was that a lawyer didn’t wash dishes, as I was doing.

Mr. Ostrowski looked surprised, I remember, and leaned back in his chair and clasped his hands behind his head.

He kind of half-smiled and said, ‘Malcolm, one of life’s first needs is for us to be realistic. Don’t misunderstand me, now. We all here like you, you know that. But you’ve got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer—that’s no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you *can* be. You’re good with your hands—making things. Everybody admires your carpentry work. Why don’t you plan on carpentry? People like you as a person—you’ll get all kinds of work.’

The more I thought afterwards about what he said, the more uneasy it made me. It just kept treading around in my mind.”³⁷

It is clear from this excerpt that race was a master status during this period of Malcolm X’s life. Although Mr. Ostrowski knew that Malcolm X was intelligent, he also understood the social norms that were in place at this time. From Mr. Ostrowski’s point of view, it did not matter that Malcolm X was smart. He had to learn that aspiring to be a lawyer was at odds with the “place” reserved for him in the wider society.

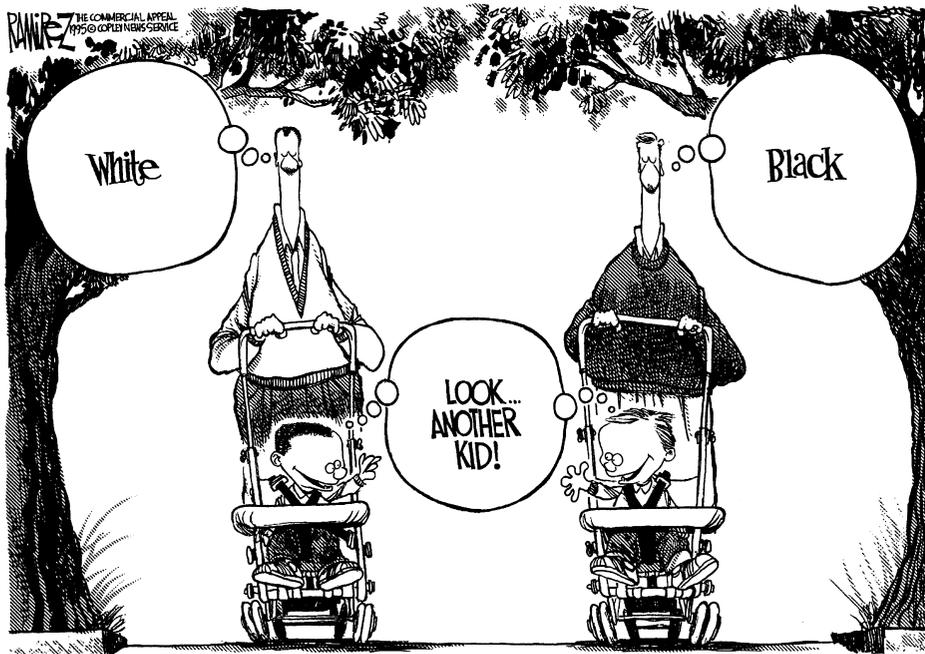


FIGURE 1.9 Race is socially defined.

Source: Used by permission of Michael Ramirez and Creators Syndicate, Inc.

DIVERSITY BETWEEN AND WITHIN GROUPS

The United States is home to one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world. Nevertheless, we often ignore or gloss over these differences. When we focus our attention on race, we may think in terms of Blacks and Whites or sometimes Asians and Whites. Our society, and even our communities, are described as biracial rather than multiracial. This can be particularly uncomfortable and offensive to those who are constantly stereotyped or left out of the picture.

An Iranian student describes how she has struggled with this dilemma: “I am an Iranian woman, one who can’t pass as white because I’m too dark, but certainly can’t pass as black because I have Middle-Eastern features. . . . When I date black men, I receive animosity from those who feel that black men belong with black women. When I date white men, I’ve been accused of selling out and trying to be white. Iranian men who expect me to fit within a certain mold find me strange. I also seem to have this peculiar power to make people at airports and train stations visibly uncomfortable.” She describes her feelings when she was informed she would not be allowed to join the BLSA—the Black Law Students Association—at her college. “My first impulse had been to argue with the man sitting behind the table with the introductory flyers. He looked me in the eye and said, ‘Look, if you’re not black, then as far as I’m concerned, you’re white.’” She goes on to say, “What was I to do, start an ‘ILSA’ of which I would be the sole member?”³⁸

We may paint diversity with such a broad brush that we fail to capture the differences that exist within groups as well as between them. Indeed, the differences within groups are often greater. For instance, we tend to get caught up with how men and women differ from each other. We forget or ignore the significant differences that can be found when we simply look at a group of men or a group of women. Women can be assertive or passive, dependent or independent, and supporters or opponents of feminism. Similar differences exist among men.

Differences exist among the largest ethnic groups in this country. These groups include African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans. For this reason, we cannot talk about the Latino family any more than we can talk about the White family. Discussing *the* Asian American or *the* Latino experience in this country ignores the diversity that exists within groups and individuals from these populations. Asian-Americans include Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians, Hmong, Koreans, Samoans, and others. Latinos are also distinguished by a wide range of skin colors, ethnic or cultural lifestyles, religions, and languages. Many object to the term *Latino* or *Hispanic* because it masks the uniqueness of the particular culture. *Mexican*, *Puerto Rican*, *Cuban*, or some other term identifying one's nationality may be preferred.

Sociologist Douglas Massey reminds us of the vastly different histories shared by Latinos and the salience of their social class backgrounds. "They may be fifth-generation Americans or new immigrants just stepping off the jetway. Depending on when and how they got to the United States, they may also know a long history of discrimination and repression or they may see the United States as a land of opportunity where origins do not matter. They may be affluent and well educated or poor and unschooled; they may have no personal experience of prejudice or discrimination, or they may harbor stinging resentment at being called a 'spic' or being passed over for promotion because of their accent."³⁹

DIVERSITY MYTHS

Diversity is a concept that means many things to many people. It can trigger a wide range of positive and negative feelings. Unfortunately, what we learn about this subject is often incomplete and inaccurate. Some of the more common misconceptions that surround diversity follow.

Myth 1: Diversity = Women + Minorities. Diversity includes everyone. All of us, for example, bring different talents and perspectives to school and work. This includes White males.

Myth 2: Diversity Is a New Phenomenon. There has always been diversity, but now it is receiving more attention. Some changes are not as new as we might believe. As an example, statistics indicate that more women are entering the job market than ever before. This masks the fact that a large percentage of women of color have always worked.

Myth 3: Diversity = Deficiency. This myth is based on the premise that diversity results in standards being lowered. Today, professionals increasingly view diversity as a resource rather than a deficit. Big businesses such as IBM, Marriott, American Express, and PepsiCo approach diversity as good business for a number of reasons. It makes companies more attuned to markets at home and abroad, it expands their talent pool, and it contributes to the creativity that fosters the development of new, innovative products.

Myth 4: Diversity = Divisiveness. Many assume that our society is divided because of our differences. Does the problem lie with our differences or our inability to respect and learn from these differences? Being exposed to diversity can bring people together.

In *What Matters in College?* Alexander Astin discusses findings from his research on 217 colleges and universities.⁴⁰ He found that a student's diversity experiences in college can be a potent way of bridging the gap between various groups and easing tensions. These experiences might take the form of a workshop or a course on diversity. Equally important was the frequency with which students interacted socially with persons from different racial and ethnic groups.

Myth 5: Diversity Is to Be Feared. By focusing exclusively on our differences and ignoring our similarities, we create fear. Fear is cultivated by our ignorance of differences and similarities. Fear is compounded by our inability to communicate effectively with people who disagree with us about difficult issues. People often shy away from talking about diversity because it is so emotionally charged. As one student put it, "All it takes is one slip of the tongue." How we approach diversity can make all the difference. If we approach it with a sense of humility and a sincere desire to learn more about others and ourselves, it need not be something to fear or avoid.

In a film entitled *The Color of Fear*, a group of men of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds attend a retreat and open up to each other about the issue of race. After a few days, it appears the racial divisions among the men are insurmountable. Their fear and mistrust almost make it impossible for them to communicate effectively. Toward the end of the retreat, they begin to connect with each other by confronting their fears, sharing intimate feelings, and really listening. They become more aware of some of the feelings they have in common.

The kind of dialogue that unfolds in this film is rare because it is genuinely open and honest. Consequently, it can be very painful at times. Toward the end of the film, one of the participants comments on the anger and hurt that surfaces during the group's discussions. "Sometimes," he says, "the cure for the pain is in the pain."⁴¹

Differences aren't necessarily a burden but a blessing.

—Another perspective

WHAT IS DIVERSITY CONSCIOUSNESS?



THINKING THROUGH DIVERSITY

Should we always treat everybody the same and ignore differences? Are there any situations in which we should treat people differently?

The definition of *consciousness* in the dictionary is being fully aware or sensitive to something. Another way of defining it is the full activity of the mind or senses. This state of mind is necessary to develop **diversity consciousness**: understanding, awareness, and skills in the area of diversity.

Diversity consciousness is not simple and straightforward. It cannot be manufactured during a one-hour TV talk show or a day-long training session. Try to keep the following points in mind as you read about diversity consciousness.

Diversity Consciousness Is NOT

- *Simply common sense*—Common sense is not sufficient. We need to educate ourselves and each other. Adam’s Mark, a large hotel chain that recently settled a racial discrimination suit filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), incorporates real-life scenarios as part of its training for all 11,000 of its employees, including senior executives. A scenario might target something as simple as exchanging money with a customer, a common interaction in the hotel industry that many people do not even give a second thought. For example, some minorities are aware that some people will not put money directly in their hands; rather, they will lay the money on the counter. This may create the impression that an employee does not want to touch the hands of certain people because of their race, disability, or for some other reason. If employees are not taught this, many will not be sensitive to it.
- *The result of good intentions*—I have heard people say, “If my heart is in the right place, that is enough.” Trying extra hard to be fair and respectful of others or having the best of intentions is a good start, but only a start. It is possible to show insensitivity and ignorance even though you mean well. People who talk to adults with disabilities in a childlike manner may think that they are being kind. People who tell you to forget our differences and just “be human” may think they are offering helpful advice. Leonard Pitts, a columnist for the *Miami Herald*, writes, “I’ve lost count of the times well-meaning white people have advised me to quit being black and ‘just be a person.’”⁴²
- *The result of some simple formula or strategy*—This is a reflection of what George Ritzer terms the “McDonaldization” of our society.⁴³ Sociologists use this phrase to describe our preoccupation with doing things quickly and efficiently, much like McDonald’s restaurants. However, diversity consciousness requires lifelong soul searching, self-reflection, and active learning.
- *Important for just some of us*—Are events held during African-American History Month more apt to attract African-Americans? How many men are in attendance at Women’s History Month events? All of us need to be culturally literate and responsive to survive and succeed in the twenty-first century. According to Dr. Benjamin Carson, one of the world’s most renowned surgeons, it is a

mistake to think that someone else's problems or struggles do not affect me. "All of our ancestors came to this country in different boats. But we're all in the same boat now. And if part of the boat sinks, eventually the rest of it goes down too."⁴⁴

- *Simply ignoring differences and treating everybody the same*—It is necessary to distinguish between sameness and equal opportunity. Should an instructor, for example, always treat everybody the same? On one hand, she should have high expectations for all of her students regardless of who they are. That same instructor, however, will have to distinguish among students in determining how she can teach the material most effectively and how she can help individual students succeed.
- *Some "feel-good" activity*—Diversity consciousness is not a matter of merely feeling good about ourselves and others. It goes deeper. Superficial acceptance is replaced by a deeper and more critical understanding.
- *A passing fad*—Diversity has always been with us, and responding to it with ease and competence will become more and more important. A good example is our increasing life span. Hallmark Company reports selling thousands of centenarian birthday cards each year, and recently introduced their first 75th wedding anniversary card. Census predictions point to a much grayer population by the year 2050 because we are living longer. Shortly, America's "baby boomers" will begin to reach age 65. By 2020, nearly a fifth of the U.S. population will be 65 years of age or older.⁴⁵ People are not only living longer, but they are also healthier and retiring at a later age. Therefore, the older population will be a growing part of the diversity that surrounds us daily.

DIVERSITY EDUCATION

Diversity education refers to all the strategies that enable us to develop diversity consciousness. Through diversity education, we develop awareness, understanding, and a variety of skills in the area of diversity. Throughout this book, these skills are referred to as **diversity skills**. Among these are flexible thinking, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, as well as the ability to overcome personal and social barriers.

Diversity education takes many forms. It is something we can initiate and control, such as reading a book, volunteering to help others in need, attending a workshop, and exchanging ideas about diversity issues with thousands of people over the Internet. One form of diversity education, which has proliferated throughout the country in recent years, is study circles. Anyone can form a study circle.

Diversity has always been a powerful, even a necessary, catalyst for intellectual progress.

—David H. Porter, President Emeritus, Skidmore College

The Circle of Learning

The idea behind study circles is to involve communities in ongoing dialogues on diversity. Anyone or any group can initiate a study circle. In many communities, organizations such as churches, businesses, schools, and clubs sponsor study circles. Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) provides free discussion materials and assistance (www.everyday-democracy.org).⁴⁶

People who join study circles agree to meet regularly over an extended period of time. This long-term proactive approach to dialogue allows study circle participants to get to know one another and begin to share their innermost feelings. Everyone is given a “home” in the conversation. By participating in study circles, everyday people gain ownership of issues that relate to diversity. Typically, the discussion focuses initially on personal experiences and perspectives. Participants then examine how

personal and community issues interrelate and what action needs to be taken. Unlike many other forms of diversity education, which do not go beyond dialogue, study circles combine talk with action.

The experiences of study circles throughout the country show promise. In some cases, hundreds and even thousands of people participate in community-wide dialogues. Roughly 500 people and 30 organizations in Minneapolis/St. Paul are involved in study circles on the challenge of racial segregation in housing and education. A statewide program in Oklahoma helped initiate sweeping changes in the corrections system. In Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the “Changing Faces, Changing Community” project is addressing ways to help the Latinos and European-American cultures dispel myths, overcome language barriers, and increase cross-cultural understanding.

Typically, long-term relationships form out of circles. I have a best friend that I met in a study circle. Often, there is a need for a second level of the same circle that further narrows the focus. If the first circle was good, the participants are reluctant to leave. There is a bonding that takes place that transcends culture and race. This makes us simply human beings who have gained a wiser understanding of one another and the need to know more.

—Another perspective

Although much of the literature uses the terms *diversity education* and *diversity training* interchangeably, there are important differences. Unlike training, diversity education is a lifelong process. The term *education* refers to a complex and unpredictable process that is both cognitive and affective. Training, however, tends to be more straightforward, standardized, and descriptive. Education, as opposed to training, is more apt to entail questioning, disagreement, and reflection. In essence, diversity training may constitute one component of diversity education.

Much of the dialogue in recent years regarding diversity equates diversity with diversity education. They are not the same. Diversity simply refers to our individual and collective differences. Without formal and informal education, diversity is simply untapped potential.

Unlike many other forms of learning, true diversity consciousness requires continual, fundamental change. Change of this nature, what best-selling author Stephen Covey terms *real change*, takes place “from the inside out.” In *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*, Covey elaborates. Real change “doesn’t come from hacking at the leaves of attitude and behavior with quick fix personality ethic techniques. It comes from striking at the root—the fabric of our thought, the fundamental essential paradigms which give definition to our character and create the lens through which we see the world.”⁴⁷ In other words, fundamental changes involve growing as a person, both intellectually and emotionally. Although change of this nature is not easy, the rewards are worth it.

In summary, the cultural landscape in the United States is changing due to the influence of demographic, technological, and social changes. The term *diversity* has gained new meaning; it is not limited to racial, ethnic, and gender differences. Despite the attention diversity receives, our views and understanding of diversity are often influenced by myths about diversity and the role it plays in our lives. Diversity education enables us to move beyond these myths and develop our diversity consciousness.

In the next chapter, we focus on skills that enable us to capitalize on diversity. We examine how diversity consciousness makes us more successful at school and on the job. Additionally, we explore the numerous ways in which organizations benefit from the diversity consciousness of their employees.

CASE STUDIES

The following three case studies follow three individuals (Ligua, Mary, and Michael) through each chapter. Even though the stories are rooted in real-life experiences, the characters are fictitious. You will learn about each of the three—their backgrounds, day-to-day challenges that revolve around diversity, and how they attempt to resolve certain complex issues addressed in each chapter. This chapter simply introduces each individual. In Chapters 2 through 7, you will learn more about Ligua, Mary, and Michael. After reading each case study, you will be asked a series of questions that will challenge your diversity consciousness. The final chapter brings each case study to a close.

Case Study One

Name: Ligua Querling

Education: High school diploma

Marital Status: Married

Children: Kenneth, 3 years; Lisa, 6 years; Michael, 8 years

Hometown: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Current Residence: Northern California

Ligua aspires to be a high school math teacher. Like many of her friends, she somehow manages to find the time to be a mother, an employee, and a part-time student. She is taking courses at a predominantly white, suburban community college that is a short commute from her two-bedroom apartment. Ligua works a full 40-hour work-week as a salesperson at a nearby car dealership.

As a working mom, Ligua's biggest challenges are giving 100 percent on her job, 100 percent at school, and most importantly, 100 percent to her family. Given all there is to do in the course of a day, she tries to make every minute count. Often, Ligua's needs are an afterthought. **Role conflict** (interference among the duties associated with the multiple positions held by an individual), stemming from her multiple statuses as a mother, wife, student, and employee, consume her at times. For financial reasons, she needs her job. But she wants her job too. Her husband, a building contractor who works long hours, helps out when he can. Ligua feels there's nothing balanced about her life at home and at work. Sometimes, she feels like she neglects her family because she is playing "catch-up" at work and school. At other times, the scale shifts much more toward her family, with family illnesses, running errands, and just "being there" when her children and husband need her.

Case Study Two

Name: Mary Stuart

Education: College senior

Marital Status: Single

Children: None

Hometown: Rushville, Illinois

Current Residence: Chicago, Illinois

Mary is a 21-year-old White woman attending an undergraduate university in a large city. Mary's family, that she describes as upper middle class, resides in a rural area of the same state in which she attends college. Going to school in a large city enables Mary to experience new ideas and cultures. Mary is currently in her fourth year of the university's social work program. She is completing two practicums, one at a children's mental hospital and one at a private, nonprofit agency that provides both outpatient services and in-home family preservation counseling services. After graduating with her bachelor's degree in social work, Mary wants to pursue a master's degree in social work and become a licensed clinical social worker. The majority of Mary's friends are White women with similar backgrounds.

Mary is a descendant of highlander Scots originating in four different regions of Europe. During the last few years, Mary has taken a much greater interest in her cultural heritage. She enjoys celebrating her cultural heritage by taking part in Scottish games and Celtic festivals. The atmosphere is very sociable, especially with the "clan" gatherings. Clans are groups of families or households, the heads

of which claim descent from a common ancestor. Music is a big part of the festivals. Also, clan gatherings provide a time to reflect on more traditional times when community values seemed to hold more importance. Now things seem more impersonal to her.

Case Study Three

Name: Michael Butler

Education: College degree in computer engineering

Marital Status: Divorced; won custody of only child

Children: Aaron, 11 years

Hometown: Greensboro, North Carolina

Current Residence: Atlanta, Georgia

Michael describes himself as multiracial. His mother identifies herself as part Cherokee Indian, part African-American. His father refers to himself as Black, although his ancestry is mixed (African-American, Caucasian, Asian). With so many different racial groups running through his bloodline, Michael rejects any attempt to categorize himself into one race. If he did, he says that he would be depriving himself of much of his heritage.

Michael works as a senior manager for a small consulting firm. The job requires quite a bit of travel and a great deal of networking. Over the years, the firm's workforce has become more diverse, especially in terms of race, ethnicity, and age. With regard to gender, however, few women can be found at the management and decision-making levels. Overall, Michael's evaluations have been excellent. He enjoys the long hours his job requires.

When life gets difficult, Michael takes comfort in his strong spiritual background. He was brought up as a Baptist and is an active member of his church. According to Michael, his religious and ethnic background gives him peace and helps him get through the day. Michael is intent on passing on his strong religious beliefs to his son.

Key Terms

Diversity	Cultural lag	Ethnicity
Culture	Glass ceiling	Gender
Cultural landscape	Digital divide	Social class
Digital natives	Cultural cruise control	Values
Digital immigrants	Assimilation	Master statuses
Globalization	Pluralism	Diversity consciousness
Global perspective	Dimensions of diversity	Diversity education
Glocalization	Race	Diversity skills
Role conflict		

EXERCISES

In-Class

Exercise 1: Dear Gabriella

Directions for Instructor

1. Ask students to write a “Dear Gabriella” letter. Gabriella is a graduate student with a dual major in psychology and social work. She provides an ear and an answer to those students struggling with a wide variety of diversity issues on campus. Her “Dear Gabriella” column is a regular feature in the student-run newspaper.
2. In writing the letter, tell students to describe a personal struggle that deals with diversity in some way. It can be real or fictitious. Then students should ask Gabriella for her advice. At the bottom of the letter, students write their names.
3. Instruct students to pass letters to another student. Next, students should take the role of “Gabriella” and answer the letter in front of them. In writing their response, they should explain the diversity issue, suggest how this person might deal with this issue, and sign Gabriella’s name at the bottom.
4. Instruct students to pass the letter on to still another student. Students should write an analysis of both the letter and response, and sign their name.
5. Finally, ask students to return the letter to the original writer.

Please note: This exercise can be done using computers. If computers are used, follow the same set of instructions but have students type their letters so they appear on the computer screen. Have students switch seats rather than pass letters.

Exercise 2: What Is an American?

Directions for Instructor

1. Provide each student with a sheet of poster paper and magic markers.
2. Ask students, “What does it mean to be an American?” Students should respond by drawing pictures or images on the poster paper (*no* writing).
3. Have students display their pictures. If possible, tape them to the wall of the classroom or somewhere else where they can all be seen at once.
4. Ask each student to explain her or his drawing. Then ask the entire class to analyze their responses. What patterns emerge? Who is included and excluded in their visual representations?

Out-of-Class

Exercise 1: What Is Diversity?

1. Ask 10 students not in this class to complete the sentence:
Diversity is _____.
Record their responses.

- Write a paragraph describing the similarities and differences in the responses of the ten students. Do any of their responses reflect diversity myths? Explain.

Exercise 2: What's in a Name?

- What is your full name? How do you feel about your name? Why?
- Find out as much as you can about your name. For example, what is the history and significance of your name? What is the meaning of your name?

INTERNET ASSIGNMENT

- Click on <http://zipskinny.com>.
- Enter your zip code. Once you do, you will see how the demographics of your area compare with neighboring ZIPs. Included is census data on educational attainment, marital status, household income, and occupation.
- Write a two-page summary of what you learned from visiting this Web site. In particular, what similarities and differences are apparent when you compare your ZIP and neighboring ZIPs?



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