

Diversity: An Overview

Learning Outcomes

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

- Analyze significant changes in the cultural landscape of the United States.
- Differentiate among people's reactions to the changing cultural landscape.
- Contrast assimilation and pluralism.
- Elaborate on various dimensions of diversity.
- Give examples of diversity within and among groups.
- Critique the diversity myths.
- Explain diversity consciousness.
- Elaborate on diversity education.



"There never were in the world two opinions alike, no more than two hairs or two grains; the most universal quality is diversity."

—Michel de Montaigne¹

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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 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). To Dr. Mary Linn, a linguist from the University of Oklahoma, “Every language is a huge library. And once that disappears, we really cannot get it back.”³

- *Work/Life Issues.* Work schedules are becoming more flexible as mothers and fathers look to balance their careers with child-raising responsibilities. As employees attach greater importance to flexibility, the traditional career path is being rewritten. Work/life policies, including paid and unpaid time off, dependents' care, flextime, and telecommuting, are becoming increasingly important considerations for working men and women.
- *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 twenty-five, and four—Garcia, Rodriguez, Martinez, and Hernandez—are among the top fifteen (see Table 1.1). According to several demographers, this is in all likelihood the first time that non-Anglo names are among the most common in the United States.⁴

Top Fifteen Surnames in the United States

Surname	Number of Occurrences
SMITH	2,376,206
JOHNSON	1,857,160
WILLIAMS	1,534,042
BROWN	1,380,145
JONES	1,362,755
MILLER	1,127,803
DAVIS	1,072,335
GARCIA	858,289
RODRIGUEZ	804,240
WILSON	783,051
MARTINEZ	775,072
ANDERSON	762,394
TAYLOR	720,370
THOMAS	710,696
HERNANDEZ	706,372

Table 1.1 Top Fifteen Surnames in the United States.
Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau.

- *Generational Issues.* Different generations, which have been shaped by different life experiences, are characterized as having divergent values, priorities, communication styles, and leadership styles. While differences do exist, such as the reliance of **Millennials** (born from about 1980 to 2000) on technology, they are not absolute and uniform. Generational differences tend to vary depending on one's cultural background and upbringing. For instance, there are subcultural and demographic differences within each generation. As we communicate and interact, we need to take into account possible differences and similarities. One business leader, for example, advocates using different channels of communication to reach multiple generations. In doing this, we recognize that "the same message delivered through four or five or six types of media will reach different parts of your organization and different generations in different ways."⁵

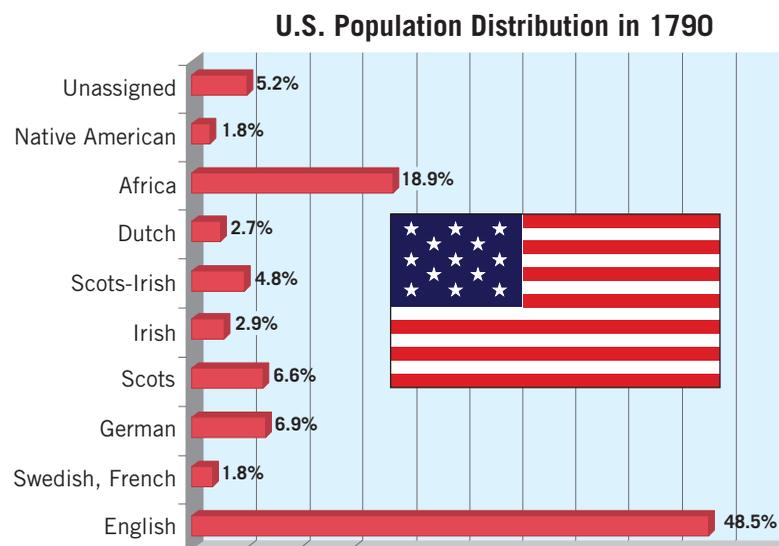


Figure 1.1 U.S. Population Distribution in 1790.

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.

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.⁶ 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 was White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (English, Scots, Scots-Irish); 25 percent were mainly Dutch, French, German, Irish, and Swedish.⁷ 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. Slightly more than 80 percent of our population lives in urban areas.⁸ Our racial and ethnic mix has a different look as well (see Fig. 1.2).

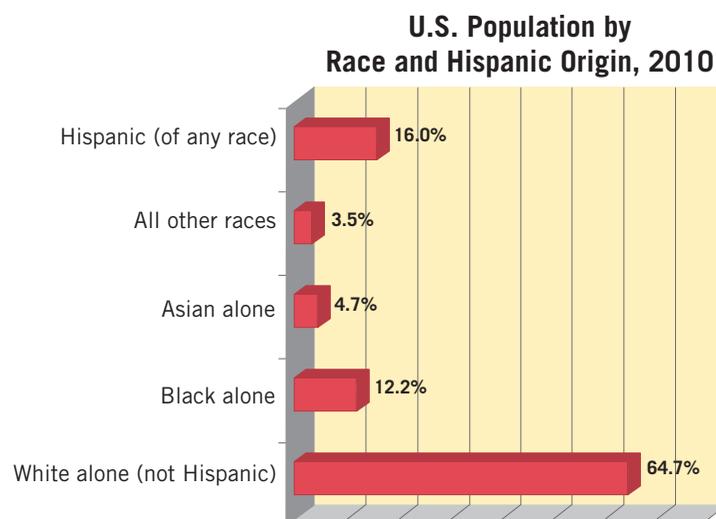


Figure 1.2 Population of the United States, by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2010.

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau.

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. Since 2000, Hispanics have accounted for more than half of the total population growth in the United States. Note that the term *Hispanic* or *Latino* refers to a cultural attribute, rather than race or a specific country of origin.

The rapid growth in U.S. minority populations is being fueled by immigration. And for the first time, a majority of babies born in the United States are racial and ethnic minorities. William Frey, a well-known demographer with the Brookings Institution, comments on the changing cultural landscape: “We are pivoting from a white–black dominated American population to one that is multiracial and multicultural.”⁹ 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 become the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, after Mexico, Spain, Argentina, and Colombia.”¹⁰

In comparison to Asians and Hispanics, the growth rate among non-Hispanic Whites was significantly less in recent years. 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, and *Black, White, and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self* by Rebecca Walker. 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?”

For three years, Kip Fulbeck, an artist, filmmaker, and professor, conducted an artistic survey of Hapas. The term *hapa*, as defined in his book *part asian – 100% hapa*, is slang for “mixed racial heritage with partial roots in Asian and/or Pacific Islander ancestry.” Traveling the United States, Fulbeck interviewed hundreds of Hapas of varying ages and genders. He asked each of them the same question; a question Fulbeck says he has been asked every day of his life. *What are you?*¹¹ This question, and others like it, reveal varying levels of discomfort with people who do not seem to conform to our oversimplified and antiquated perceptions of race. Likewise, intrusive questions of this nature can make members of the mixed-race community feel devalued and stigmatized (see Photo 1.2).



Photo 1.2 Have you been asked...?

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 appeared before race. Figure 1.3 shows other major changes.

In the 2010 U.S. Census, 9 million Americans, or roughly 3 percent, identified themselves as members of more than one race. Many demographers expect this figure to increase dramatically by 2050. Evidence for this can be found in the growing number of young people who identify themselves as multiracial. U.S. Census officials maintain that the major reason for this response is the significant increase in the number of interracial couples. According to Paul Taylor of Pew Research Center,



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 the Multiracial and Biracial Student Association at the University of Maryland are becoming more common on college campuses. This trend will likely continue as interracial marriages become more common and society becomes more comfortable with different and new ways of defining one's heritage.

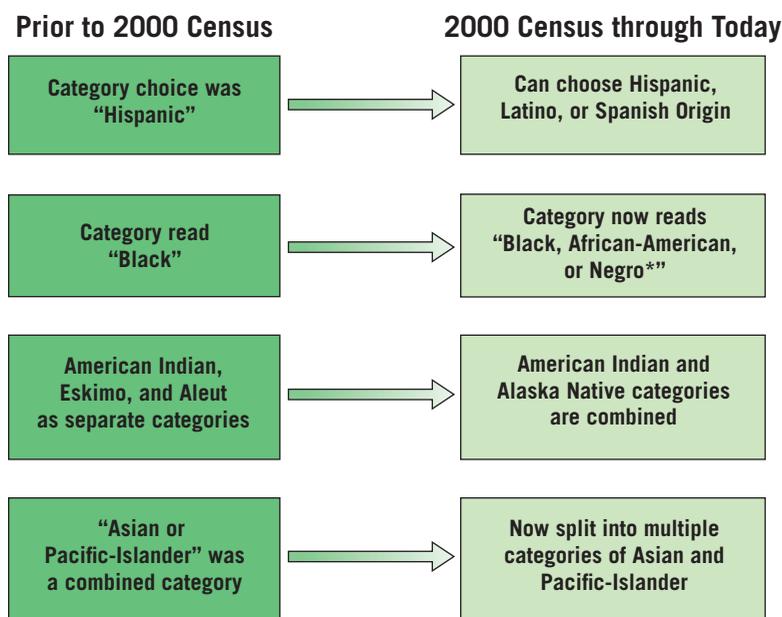


Figure 1.3 U.S. Census Changes: Race and Hispanic Origin. *The Census Bureau recently announced it will no longer include the term "Negro" to describe Black/African-Americans in its population surveys.

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>).

"Interracial marriage has gone from taboo to a rarity, and with each passing year, it's less of a rarity."¹²

Latinos, who can be of any race, often find it difficult to relate to the rigid racial categories found in the census. Clara Rodríguez, author of *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States*, points out 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.¹³

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. 1.4). Sociologically speaking, the term **minorities** refers to categories of people whose members are singled out and denied equal power and opportunity in the larger society. This definition places the emphasis on power rather than numbers. For instance, even though women constitute a numeric majority in the United States, they lack political, economic, and social power relative to men and therefore constitute a minority. With regard to minorities, immigration and population changes will alter workforce demographics for years to come. As more women are added to the labor force, their share will approach that of men. Employment projections for 2050 show that women will comprise nearly half of the U.S. labor force. The new elders, as they become even healthier and better educated, are more likely to continue working rather than fully retiring. 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 protection afforded by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the removal of both attitudinal and physical barriers. Recent census data point to future growth in the number of employed people with physical and mental disabilities.
- Students at all levels of education will continue to grow increasingly diverse. One indication of this trend is the dramatic upsurge in the number of K–12 public school students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities. Likewise, the number of ELL (English Language Learner) students has increased dramatically, accounting for more than 10 percent of students enrolled in U.S. public schools.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵
- The international student population in the United States is growing. The Institute of International Education estimates that there are now more than 700,000 international students in the United States.¹⁶ Most of these students come from

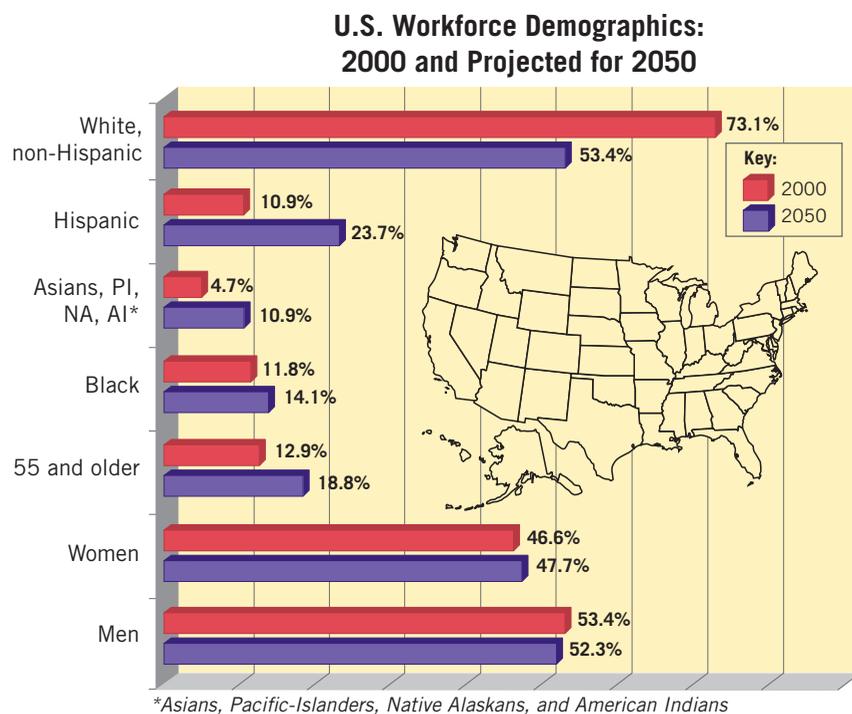


Figure 1.4 U.S. Workforce Demographics: 2000 and Projected for 2050.
Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey Annual Averages*.
Projections: M. Toossi, "A New Look at Long-Term Labor Force Projections to 2050,"
Monthly Labor Review, November 2006, 19–39.

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*, Thomas 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*.¹⁷ 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, 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.

Terrorist attacks and global conflict, 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 U.S. 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, as well as 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. 1.5). 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).¹⁸
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.¹⁹ *Polychronic* time means people engage in multiple activities within a certain time frame and plans are subject to change, especially if they interfere with personal commitments. This cultural preference is at odds with *monochronic* time, in which people follow a strict schedule and focus on one activity or project at a time. Whereas the United States, Canada, and many

World Trade Center Tragedy: Victims from Over 60 Countries

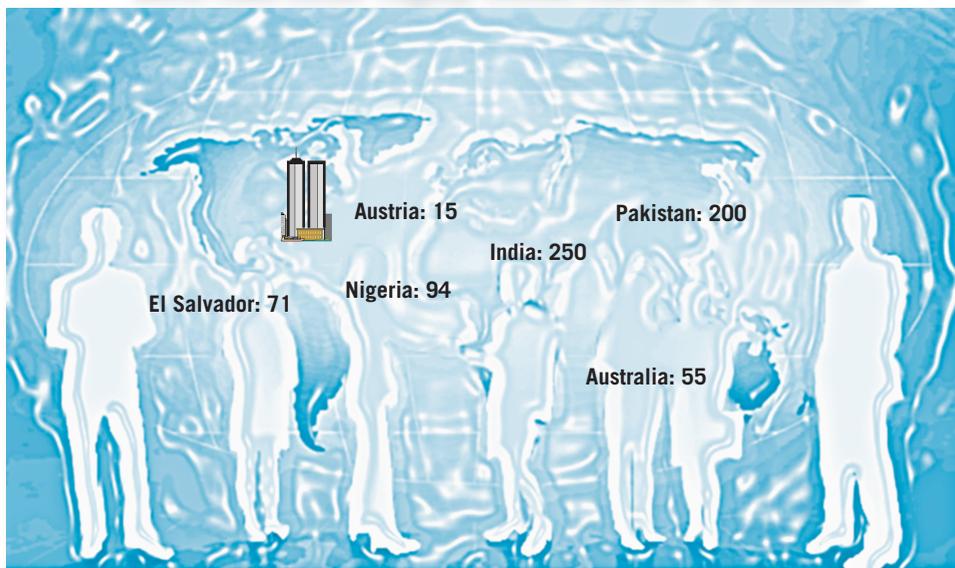


Figure 1.5 World Trade Center Tragedy: Victims Worldwide.

Western cultures tend to be predominantly monochronic, countries in the Middle East and Latin America are 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. Keeping up with world news each day 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 news story or commentary about *his* country, except for a shootout with a madman.²⁰

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. Workplace complaints filed by Muslims have increased significantly since the 2001 attacks. According to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, more than one-third of respondents report having an unfavorable view of Islam. At the same time, a majority of respondents report knowing “not very much” or “nothing at all” about the Muslim religion. This same survey shows that as people become more knowledgeable about Islam and develop relationships with individuals who happen to be Muslim, the more positive their views of Muslims in general.²¹ Since 9/11, in an effort to promote awareness of their cultural practices and religion, Muslim groups

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

—Socrates

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 one's 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. For instance, the election of President Obama in 2008, and his re-election in 2012, generated considerable discussions on many issues, such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and the ability of candidates to reach out to diverse constituencies.

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 becomes increasingly evident when we look at where we live, worship, go to school, and work. Consider the following examples.

1. While residential segregation has declined in many areas, U.S. residents continue to live in neighborhoods that are divided along racial, ethnic, and economic lines. Rich and poor are increasingly unlikely to live in the same neighborhoods and attend the same schools. Neighborhood diversity is uneven. In some neighborhoods, white flight continues. But in other areas, there has been a significant upturn in *global neighborhoods*, communities where large varieties of people from diverse cultures and ethnicities live together.
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. For example, the U.S. Labor Department's Federal Glass Ceiling Commission reported that the upper levels of big business remain mostly White and mostly male.²²

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. More recent studies show some incremental progress, although barriers remain.²³



Thinking Through Diversity

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

These barriers include informal networks that exclude women, pervasive stereotypes of women as weak and soft, and a lack of women role models in leadership positions. Fortunately, the track record of Fortune 500 companies shows that improving opportunities for women in top executive positions is not only a moral issue but a market-based issue.

3. Martin Luther King once referred to the weekly worship service as 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.²⁴
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. 1.6). Furthermore, future U.S. census projections leave little doubt that this gap will continue for some time.
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 phone 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.

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 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.

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.
—Marcel Proust

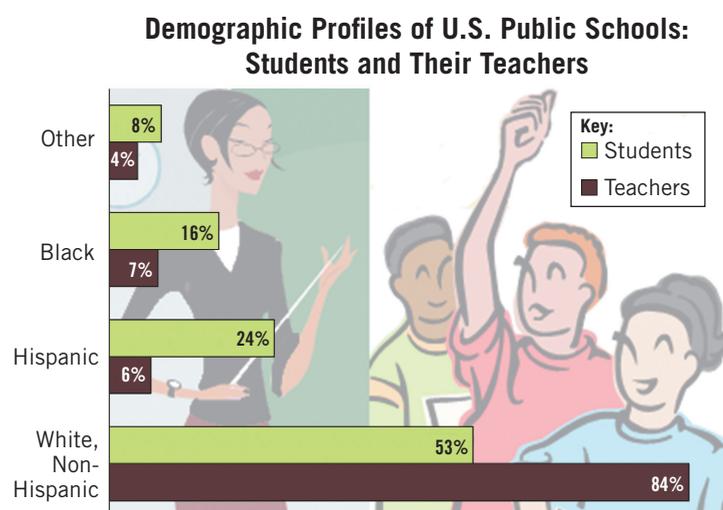


Figure 1.6 Public School Students and Teachers: A Growing Racial and Ethnic Gap.
Source: National Center for Education Information.²⁵

A RANGE OF REACTIONS

As individuals, 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 ourselves and our world, to being able to shift gears and easily adjust to a multitude of individual and situational factors.



Thinking Through Diversity

As you read the following scenarios that represent a range of reactions (Cultural Cruise Control, Beginning Adjustments, and Fine Tuning), with whom do you most identify? Why?

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 scenarios illustrate some of the pitfalls that are inherent in simply using our own culture to guide our actions.

Good Teachers, So Why Change?

A teacher who grew up in a small New Jersey town 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.”

A Rabbi Shops at Walmart

After making some selections at Walmart, the shopper brings his items to the checkout. When his total was announced, he proceeds to pay for the items by placing money on the counter directly in front of the cashier, who picks up the cash and makes change. She holds the change out for the shopper. Not looking up to see the cashier, the shopper taps on the counter to indicate he is waiting for his change. Once she realizes the shopper is refusing to take money from her hand, the cashier grows angry, utters a profanity,

and slams the money on the counter. A friend of the shopper then asks to speak with the cashier. After ten minutes of heated conversation, the cashier replies, “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, follows 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 three scenarios.

“Yes” at the Help Desk

Leonard works at a help desk. He and other coworkers assist 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 they encounter technical problems, they call the help desk.

One woman of Asian descent repeatedly calls and is extremely difficult to understand. Her English is not proficient and her accent is very noticeable. She also has a lot of trouble understanding Leonard, as a recent call reveals. When she tries to explain her question to him, he responds, thinking he understands what she was asking. As Leonard continues to offer his explanation, she seemingly affirms with “uh huhs” and “yes.” Leonard then asks her, “Does that make sense?” and there is silence.

By shifting perspectives and actively listening, Leonard realizes that his client’s affirmations are not affirmations in the sense that she understands what Leonard is saying. Rather, his client is simply affirming that she hears him. However, these conversations, which happen repeatedly, leave Leonard feeling extremely frustrated, confused, and helpless. Soon thereafter, Leonard asks a coworker for advice and does some research on his own. He becomes more aware of what “yes” might mean in different cultures, and he develops some communication techniques to ensure understanding. For 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.

An Airport Security Guard’s Encounter

At Heathrow Airport in London, a 20-something woman is traveling with a middle-aged woman. They go through the security check process. The younger passenger has a carry-on and a large pocketbook. As they go through security, the guard abruptly tells her she cannot pass through security with two bags because airport regulations

stipulate only one carry-on. At this point, the passenger tucks her chin toward her chest and clasps her hands behind her head. She starts to cry out loudly, “No, I can’t do this. No, I can’t do this. I just want to go home.” Soon, she starts to cry.

The security guard’s response is immediate. He stares at her disapprovingly, shakes his head, and rebukes her. He says, “You need to get yourself under control. Save your tantrums for somewhere else.” Another passenger in line then catches the guard’s eye and says, “Sir, that young lady has problems you and I don’t have.” The guard stops what he is doing, pauses thoughtfully, and responds “I’m sorry.” By this time, the distressed young woman has left with her companion. For the guard, this is a learning experience, something to reflect upon throughout the day, and reconsider the next time he is 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.”

Stereotyping at the Office of Child Support

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, when customers inquire about their child support case via phone or in person, employees are prone to stereotype.

For example, if a coworker hears a television show such as *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 who are thought to be working parents receive more respect. If a call comes in from someone who is whispering, this is seen as an indication that the customer is at his or her workplace and wants to be discreet when inquiring about child support.

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 woman, who was articulate and well dressed, 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 woman had five children by three different men and was currently receiving welfare. Tamara began to ponder how she herself would react if she hit “rock bottom.”

Tamara knew her job well, but her perceptions were limiting her ability to meet customers’ needs. 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.



Thinking Through Diversity

Describe a life experience in which you were in cultural cruise control. Then describe another experience in which you were engaged in beginning adjustments or fine tuning. Compare these two experiences.

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.

Improving an Online Tutorial

In a suburban school district in southern Florida, Web developers are in the process of creating an online tutorial for teenagers to help them in math. The team, working with materials 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 some racially and ethnically diverse names and pictures. Moreover, the math problems revolve around what the developers consider to be interesting and engaging everyday life experiences for adolescents. These include:

- Renting bicycles on vacation
- Taking a “road trip”
- Getting a summer job at the beach
- Saving to buy computer games

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, the team hires a consultant who has an extensive background in both Web design and diversity.

In her report to the team of Web developers, the consultant comments on the (lack of) inclusiveness of the problem sets. 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 students, 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 experiences are outside their realm, both economically and socially. For example, taking a “road trip” is a concept that might be completely unrealistic because it requires leisure time and money. The same applies to renting a bike while on vacation. And 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 images 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. If the context of life experiences is varied, all students will need 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 is systematically revising the tutorial with input from teachers and students alike.

Regardless of our competencies in the area of diversity, we will make mistakes, often unknowingly. What we learn from these mistakes allows 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.”²⁶

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 student put it, “I do it up to a point, as long as it does not rob me of my identity.”

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



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.”²⁹

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 every day I am quickly reminded that I am not an American but a nuisance.”

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

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.²⁷

Other studies have found that some immigrants consciously choose when and where to assimilate. In *Accommodation Without Assimilation*, anthropologist Margaret Gibson shares 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.²⁸

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 Takaki how long he had been in the United States. He 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 Takaki didn't really "look" American.³⁰

Why do people 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 cultivate 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.'" ³¹

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



Photo 1.3 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, info@everyday-democracy.org.

unwilling to give up what makes them distinctive, even for only 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 Photo 1.3).

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 differences and come together as one, much as we have done in the face of natural disasters, mass killings,

and threats to our national security. 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 the larger society. Moreover, the concept of social class is fuzzy and inconsistent. For example, how would we classify other students or employees with whom we interact? *Lower*, *middle*, and *upper class* mean different things to different people.

A groundbreaking study of social class was 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 Walmart 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."³² 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.



Thinking Through Diversity

If you were to determine people's social class, what criteria would you use and why?

Social class, another dimension of diversity, is a complex subject. However, as Julio Alves points out, even if "the definition of class evades us... the consequences certainly don't."³³ Clearly, grasping the significance of social class in all of our lives is fundamental to our awareness and understanding of differences among individuals, groups, and societies.

When we talk about dimensions of diversity, factors such as social class, sexual orientation, religion, personality type, learning style, communication style, and family background are typically overlooked, yet some people may perceive these and other dimensions to be more important than race or gender. When I conduct workshops and ask participants what makes them unique, their answers reflect a very inclusive view of diversity (see Fig. 1.7).

The meaning of the term *diversity* is expanding continually. The late Roosevelt Thomas, a pioneer in the field of corporate diversity, made 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, and sexual orientation.³⁴ To this list we can add ancestry, national origin, creed, religion, social class, leadership style, personality type, family background, marital status, military background, and disability status. 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



Figure 1.7 Who Am I? Participants in a diversity awareness workshop wrote down four things that describe each of them. Some of their descriptors appear in this figure.

visible. To illustrate, most dimensions mentioned by the workshop participants alluded to earlier (see Figure 1.7: 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.* Certain dimensions, such as abilities, talents, and interests, 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 this 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



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, age, disability, or some other master status? Perhaps, acquaintances notice, first and foremost, our religion, our failing health due to a serious illness, or our lack of a job. When we view people in terms of their master status, we assume one label or one aspect of their identity is much more important than any other. In *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport describes a master status as the "label of primary potency."

How we may view transgender persons illustrates the problematic nature of master statuses. **Transgender** does not imply sexual orientation; rather, it refers to a category of people who identify with a gender that is different than the sex they were assigned at birth. When transgender takes the form of a master status, it can lead to false and potentially harmful assumptions. For instance, we might assume that the

life experiences of transgender persons necessarily relates to their gender. If a transgender teenager lives a very isolated life, our thinking might erroneously establish gender identity as the reason why. Perhaps an older, Native American transgender person encounters discrimination when he applies for a position at a clothing store. Our immediate reaction might be that gender identity is behind this unequal treatment, when in reality, discrimination of this nature might be due to this individual's age, ethnicity, and/or some other factor.

All of us identify with numerous statuses, groups, roles, and labels. How we see ourselves may not align with how others see us. Moreover, the salience of different identities may vary from situation to situation, or society to society. Knowing one or two things about someone, whether it is their status as a transgender person, their socioeconomic status, or some other aspect of who they are, provides us with an incomplete picture. Consequently, it is important to look beyond master statuses in order to better appreciate and value what is really important to individuals.

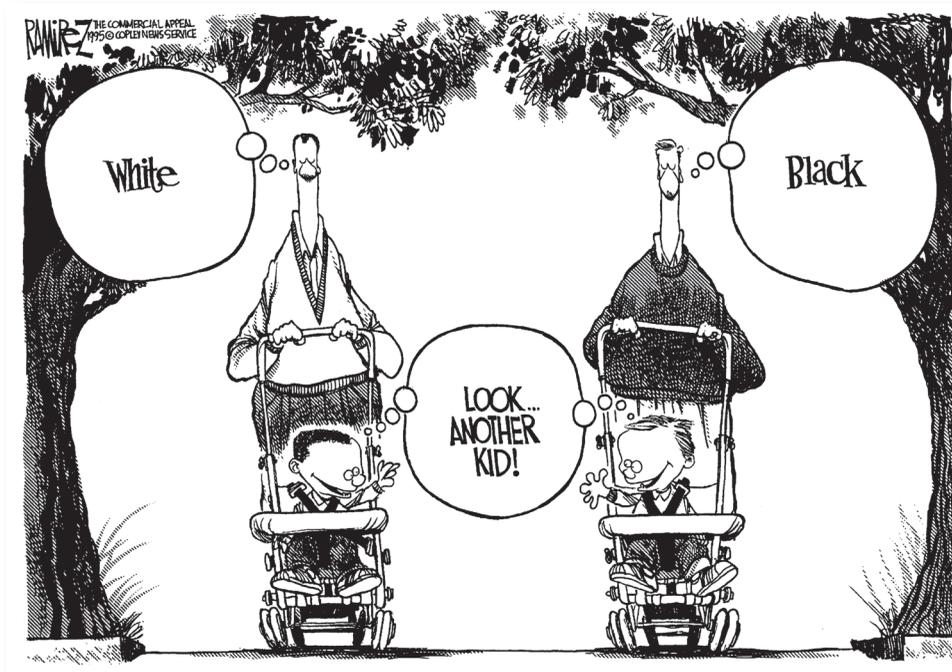


Figure 1.8 Race is Socially Defined.
Source: By permission of Michael Ramirez and Creators Syndicate, Inc.

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 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. 1.8).

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.

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 societies, 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 her struggle 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?”³⁷

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 and Pacific Islanders include Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians, Hmong, Koreans, Samoans, and many others. Latinos are also distinguished by a wide range of skin colors, socioeconomic backgrounds, 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.”³⁸

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. As an example, service learning, study abroad, and diversifying our social network can expand our appreciation of diverse people and cultures and promote understanding as well as tolerance.

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 surfaced during the group’s discussions. “Sometimes,” he says, “the cure for the pain is in the pain.”³⁹

Differences aren’t necessarily a burden but a blessing.

—Another perspective

WHAT IS DIVERSITY CONSCIOUSNESS?

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.



Thinking Through Diversity

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

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; rather, we need to educate ourselves and each other. For example, common sense might tell us that individuals share our **ethics**, those standards that guide behaviors and help us determine what is right or wrong. Yet others, raised with different teachings and cultural values, may abide by a different set of standards. Consider the issue of plagiarism. A professor may assume that *all* of her students understand that plagiarism is unethical, and why. But is this assumption accurate? If she were to reexamine the context of her values, it might become evident that some of her students may come from different cultural backgrounds where they have been taught that knowledge belongs to society, not to the individual. Therefore, these students do not necessarily recognize that information borrowed from others requires appropriate citation. Since common sense can prove unreliable, especially in a global environment, it becomes clear why recognizing, understanding, and evaluating ethical dilemmas can seem like a daunting task. For this reason, many organizations offer workshops and training to help professionals develop their diversity consciousness in order to understand better how to manage workplaces where professionals from all over the world have different ideas regarding proper conduct.
- *The result of good intentions*—You may 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.’”⁴⁰
- *The result of some simple formula or strategy*—This is a reflection of what George Ritzer terms the “McDonaldization” of our society.⁴¹ 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? To survive and succeed in the twenty-first century, all of us need to be culturally literate and responsive. 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 us. "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."⁴²

- *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. America's earliest "Baby Boomers" have already begun to reach age 65. By 2020, nearly a fifth of the U.S. population will be 65 years of age or older.⁴³ 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, leadership, and social networking, 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.

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.



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 and temples, businesses, schools, and clubs sponsor study circles. Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) provides free discussion materials and assistance.⁴⁴

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 and the world show promise. Study circles in Australia and Sweden have been used extensively to engage citizens in various political and social issues. In the United States, hundreds and even thousands of people participate in community-wide dialogues. For example, a statewide program in Oklahoma helped initiate sweeping changes in the corrections system. In Montgomery County, Maryland, more than 1,700 parents, staff, and students representing 57 countries participated in study circles to address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement.

One parent reflects on what she learned as a participant, “I don’t think this group will heal the world...[nor] completely understand the complexities of being in the other person’s shoes. I do, however, believe that it is important to know that we are all human and everyone has a story. . . . We’re not obligated to agree with one another, skip off and sing ‘Happy Together.’ I think varying people having an open space to respectfully share and listen to the viewpoints of others is something I can really get down with.”⁴⁵

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

Unlike many other forms of learning, true diversity consciousness requires continual, fundamental change. Change of this nature, what best-selling author Stephen Covey termed *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.”⁴⁶ 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.



Case Studies

The following three case studies introduce three individuals (Ligua, Mary, and Michael) who you will follow through subsequent chapters. 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. After reading each case study, you will be asked a series of questions about Ligua, Mary, and Michael 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: San Miguel, El Salvador

Current Residence: Northern California

Ligua, an immigrant from El Salvador, 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 workweek as a salesperson at a nearby car dealership.

As a working mom, Ligua feels her biggest challenges are giving 100 percent at 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 own 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, which she describes as upper middle class, lives in a rural area of the state where 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 (whose ancestors, in turn, originated in four different regions of Europe). During the last few years, Mary has taken a much greater interest in her cultural heritage. She enjoys 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. Modern community life seems more impersonal to her.

Case Study Three

Name: Michael Butler

Education: College degree in computer engineering

Marital Status: Divorced; custody of only child

Children: Aaron, 11 years

Hometown: Greensboro, North Carolina

Current Residence: Atlanta, Georgia

Michael is multiracial but identifies himself as African American. 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. Michael's performance evaluations have been excellent. He enjoys the long hours his job requires.

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.

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	Social class
Diversity consciousness	Glass ceiling	Master statuses
Culture	Cultural cruise control	Transgender
Cultural landscape	Assimilation	Values
Millennials	Pluralism	Ethics
Minorities	Dimensions of diversity	Diversity education
Globalization	Race	Diversity skills
Global perspective	Ethnicity	Role conflict
Glocalization	Gender	



Exercises

Exercise 1: What Is Diversity?

1. Ask ten students who are *not* in this class to complete the sentence:
Diversity is: _____.
Record their responses.
2. 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?

1. What is your full name? How do you feel about your name? Why?
2. 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?



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