



# What Is Diversity?

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## Purpose

“Diversity” often means different things to different people. The first step toward a meaningful discussion of diversity is to clarify what the term actually means so that we’re all on the “same page.” The purpose of this chapter is to clearly define diversity and identify its key components.

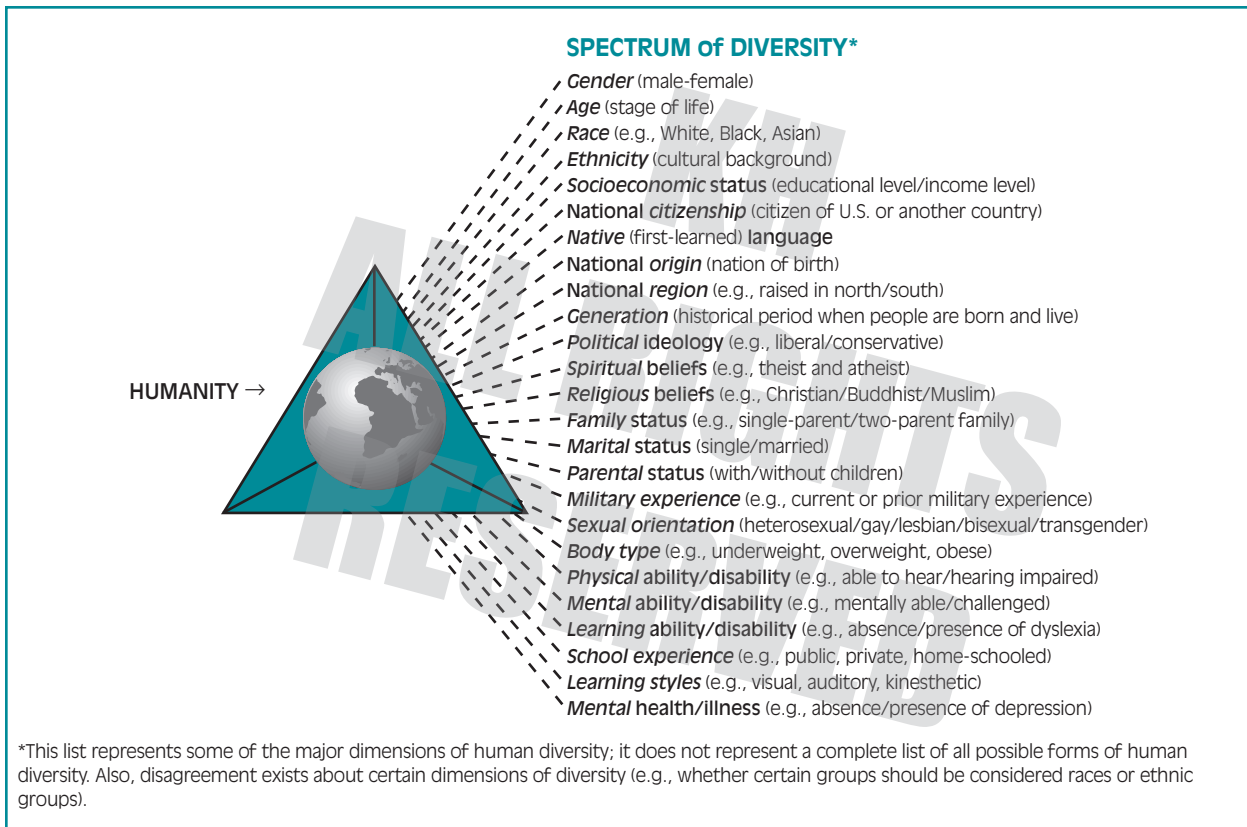
## Activate Your Thinking

Complete the following sentence:

When I hear the word “diversity,” the first thoughts that come to my mind are . . .

# The Spectrum of Diversity

The word “diversity” derives from the Latin root *diversus*, meaning “various.” Thus, human diversity refers to the variety of differences that exist among groups of people who comprise humanity (the human species). The relationship between humanity and diversity may be viewed as being similar to the relationship between sunlight and the spectrum of colors. Just as sunlight passing through a prism is dispersed into the variety of colors that comprise the visual spectrum, the human species spanning planet earth is dispersed into the variety of groups that comprise the human spectrum (humanity). The relationship between diversity and humanity is represented visually in **Figure 1.1**.



**Figure 1.1** Humanity and Diversity

## WORDS OF WISDOM

“We are all brothers and sisters. Each face in the rainbow of color that populates our world is precious and special. Each adds to the rich treasure of humanity.”

MORRIS DEES, CIVIL RIGHT LEADER AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

As can be seen in Figure 1.1, human diversity expresses itself in a multiplicity of ways, including differences in external features, national origins, cultural backgrounds, and sexual orientations. Some of these dimensions of diversity are obvious; others are subtle, and some are invisible.

## Pause for Reflection

Look back at the diversity spectrum (Figure 1.1 on p. 2) and review the list of groups that make up the spectrum. Do you notice any groups that are missing from the list that should be added, either because they have distinctive characteristics or because they have been targets of prejudice or discrimination?

Equal rights and social justice are key aspects of diversity; however, they're not the only aspects. In a national survey of American voters the vast majority of respondents agreed that diversity is more than just political correctness (National Survey of Voters, 1998). While diversity may still be viewed narrowly by some people as strictly a “political” issue, in this book we take a broader view of diversity that includes political issues of equal rights and social justice, but also considers diversity to be an essential *educational* issue—an integral element of the college experience that enriches the learning, personal development, and career success of all students.

**KEEP IN MIND:** Diversity is a *human* issue that embraces and benefits *all* people; it's not a code word that stands for “some” people.

Since diversity has been interpreted (and misinterpreted) in different ways by different people, we begin by defining some key terms related to diversity that should help clarify its meaning and value.

## What Is Racial Diversity?

A *racial group* (*race*) is a group of people who share distinctive physical traits, such as skin color or facial characteristics. The differences in skin color we now see among different human beings are largely due to biological adaptations that evolved over thousands of years among human groups living in different regions of the world. Darker skin tones developed among humans who inhabited and reproduced in hotter geographical regions nearer the equator (e.g., Africans). Their darker skin color helped them adapt and survive by providing their bodies with better protection from the potentially damaging effects of intense sunlight (Bridgeman, 2003). In contrast, lighter skin tones developed over time among humans inhabiting colder climates that were farther from the equator (e.g., Scandinavia). Their lighter skin color enabled their bodies to absorb greater amounts of vitamin-D supplied by sunlight, which was in shorter supply in their region of the world (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2002).



## Did You Know?

The “Out of Africa” theory is the most widely accepted explanation of the geographic origin of modern humans. Genetic studies and fossil evidence indicate that all *Homo sapiens* inhabited Africa 150,000–250,000 years ago; over time, some migrated from Africa to other parts of the world (Mendez, et al., 2013; Meredith, 2011; Reid & Hetherington, 2010).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) identifies five races:

- **White:** a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- **Black or African American:** a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- **American Indian or Alaska Native:** a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Asian:** a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander:** a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

However, as Anderson and Fienberg (2000) caution, racial categories are social-political constructs (concepts) not based on scientific research, but on group classifications constructed by society. No identifiable set of genes distinguishes one race from another, and there continues to be disagreement among scholars about what groups of people constitute a human race or whether distinctive races actually exist (Wheelright, 2005). In other words, you can’t do a blood test or some type of internal genetic test to determine a person’s race. Humans have simply decided to categorize people into races on the basis of certain external differences in physical appearance, particularly the color of their outer layer of skin. The U.S. Census Bureau could just as easily have divided people into categories based on such physical characteristics as eye color (blue, brown, and green) or hair texture (straight, wavy, curly, and frizzy).

### **Personal Experience**

My father stood approximately six feet tall and had light brown straight hair. His skin color was that of a Western European with a very slight suntan. My mother was from Alabama and she was dark in skin color with high cheekbones and long curly black hair. In fact, if you did not know that my father was of African American descent, you would not have thought of him as black. All of my life I’ve thought of myself as African American and all people who know me have thought of me as African American. I have lived half of a century with that as my racial identity. Several years ago, I carefully reviewed records of births and deaths in my family history; I discovered that

I had fewer than 50% of African lineage. Biologically, I am no longer black; socially and emotionally, I still am. Clearly, my “race” has been socially constructed, not biologically determined.

—Aaron Thompson, *Professor of Sociology*  
and co-author of this text

The word “race” did not even exist until Americans introduced the term in the 18th and 19th centuries. Prior to that point in history, the term was not used anywhere else in the world. English settlers created the phrase “white race” to distinguish themselves from Native Americans and African Americans whom they deemed to be “uncivilized” and “savages.”

At that time, the cotton industry was booming, which created demand for more land and a larger labor force. To meet these needs, white Anglo-Protestant elite devised and disseminated the idea of a privileged “white race” to justify their taking land occupied by Native Americans and using African Americans as slaves to build a larger labor force (Berlin, 2004; Fogel, 1989). This was also seen as a means of providing privileges to incoming British and European immigrants who did not own property. Immigrants who initially defined themselves as German, Irish, or Italian slowly began to refer to themselves as “white” as they began to move up to higher levels of socioeconomic and political status (Feagin & Feagin, 2003). Thus, white privilege was gained at the expense of oppressing groups deemed to be “non-white.”

While humans may display diversity in the color or tone of their outer layer of skin, the reality is that all members of the human species are remarkably similar at an underlying biological level. More than 98% of the genes of humans from all racial groups are exactly the same (Bridge-man, 2003; Molnar, 1991). This large amount of genetic overlap among humans accounts for the many similarities that exist among members of the human species, us, regardless of the differences in color that appear at the outer surface of their skin. All of us have physical features that give us a “human” appearance and clearly distinguish us from other animal species. All humans have internal organs that are similar in structure and function, and whatever the color of our outer layer of skin, when it’s cut, we all bleed in the same color.



*There are many more physical similarities among humans than there are differences in their skin tone.* © 2014 Monkey Business Images. Under license from Shutterstock, Inc.

I was sitting in a coffee shop in Chicago O’Hare airport while proofreading my first draft of this chapter. I looked up from my work for a second and saw what appeared to be a white girl about 18 years of age. As I lowered my head to return to work, I did a double-take and looked at her again because something about her seemed different or unusual. When I took a closer look at her the second time, I noticed that although she had white skin, the

## **Personal Experience**



features of her face and hair appeared to be those of an African American. After a couple of seconds of puzzlement, I figured it out: she was an *albino* African American. That satisfied my curiosity for the moment, but then I began to wonder: Would it still be accurate to say she was “black” even though her skin was not black? Would her hair and facial features be sufficient for her to be considered or classified as black? If yes, then what would be the “race” of someone who had black skin tone, but did not have the typical hair and facial features characteristic of black people? Is skin color the defining feature of being African American or are other features equally important?

I was unable to answer these questions, but found it amusing that all of these thoughts were taking place while I was working on a book dealing with diversity. Later, on the plane ride home, I thought again about that albino African American girl and realized that she was a perfect example of how classifying people into “races” is clearly not based on objective, scientifically determined evidence, but on subjective, socially-constructed categories.

—Joe Cuseo, *Professor of Psychology*  
and co-author of this text

### Pause for Reflection

What “race” do you consider yourself to be? Would you say you identify strongly with your race, or are you rarely conscious of it?

## What Is Culture?

“Culture” may be defined as a distinctive pattern of beliefs and values learned by a group of people who share the same social heritage and traditions. In short, culture is the whole way in which a group of people has learned to live (Peoples & Bailey, 2008), which includes their style of speaking (language), fashion, food, art and music, as well as their beliefs and values.

Sometimes, the terms “culture” and “society” are used interchangeably as if they have the same meaning; however they refer to different aspects of humanity. *Society* refers to a group of people who are organized under the same social system. For example, all members of American society are organized under the same system of government, justice, and education. On the other hand, culture is what members of a certain group of people actually have in common with respect to their traditions and lifestyle—regardless of how their society or social system may be organized (Nicholas, 1991). Cultural differences can exist within the same society (multicultural society), within a single nation (domestic diversity), or across different nations (international diversity).

Listed below is a snapshot summary of some of the most important dimensions or features of a culture that its members may share, and which may distinguish their culture from others.



## Key Components of Culture

→ SNAPSHOT SUMMARY

**Language:** How members of the culture communicate through written or spoken words, certain dialect, and nonverbal communication (body language).

**Space:** How cultural members arrange themselves with respect to the dimension of physical distance (e.g., how closely they position themselves in relation to each other when they communicate).

**Time:** How the culture conceives of, divides, and uses time (e.g., the speed or pace at which they conduct business).

**Aesthetics:** How cultural members appreciate and express artistic beauty and creativity (e.g., visual art, culinary art, music, theater, literature, and dance).

**Family:** The culture's attitudes and habits with respect to parents and children (e.g., customary styles of parenting and caring for aging family members).

**Economics:** How the culture meets its members' material wants and its habits with respect to acquiring and distributing wealth (e.g., gap between rich and poor).

**Gender Roles:** The culture's expectations for "appropriate" male and female behavior.

**Politics:** How decision-making power is distributed in the culture (e.g., power shared equally or held by a minority of its members).

**Science and Technology:** The culture's capacity and attitude toward the use of science or technology (e.g., the degree to which the culture is technologically "advanced").

**Philosophy:** The culture's ideas or views on wisdom, goodness, truth, and values (e.g., emphasis on individual competition or collective collaboration).

**Spirituality and Religion:** Cultural beliefs about a supreme being and an afterlife (e.g., predominant faith-based organizations and belief systems about the supernatural).

I was once watching a basketball game between the Los Angeles Lakers and Los Angeles Clippers. During the game, a short scuffle broke out between the Lakers' Paul Gasol—who is Spanish, and the Clippers' Chris Paul—who is African American. After the scuffle ended, Gasol tried to show Paul there were no hard feelings by patting him on the head. Instead of interpreting Gasol's head pat as a peace-making gesture, Paul took it as putdown and returned the favor by slapping (rather than patting) Paul in the head!

### *Personal Experience*

This whole misunderstanding stemmed from a basic difference in nonverbal communication between the two cultures. Patting someone on the head in European cultures is a friendly gesture; European soccer players often do it to an opposing player to express no ill will after a foul or collision. However, this same nonverbal message meant something else to Chris Paul—who was raised in a very different culture—urban America.

—Joe Cuseo



## Did You Know?

Fiorello La Guardia, mayor of New York City from 1933–1945 was fluent in English, Italian, and Yiddish. Researchers viewed films of his campaign speeches with the sound turned off and were able to detect which language he was speaking just by observing his nonverbal behavior. For instance, when speaking Italian he used the most body language; when speaking English, he used the least (Adler, Rosenfield, & Protor, 2004).

## What Is an Ethnic Group?

An *ethnic group* is simply a group of people that share the same culture. Thus, “culture” refers to *what* an ethnic group has in common and “ethnic group” refers to the *people* who share a common culture. Unlike members of a racial group, whose shared physical characteristics have been *inherited*, members of an ethnic group share similar cultural characteristics that have been *learned* through common social experiences. Members of the same racial group may still be members of different ethnic groups. For instance, white Americans belong to the same racial group, but differ in terms of their ethnic group (e.g., French, German, Irish) and Asian Americans belong to the same racial group, but are members of different ethnic groups (e.g., Japanese, Chinese, Korean).

Members of ethnic minority groups who are white can more easily “blend into” or assimilate into the majority (dominant) culture because their minority status cannot be easily identified by the color of their skin. To further accelerate their assimilation into American culture and acquire the privileges the majority group, a number of white minority immigrants of European ancestry changed their last name to appear to be Americans of English descent. In contrast, the immediately-detectable minority status of African Americans, or darker-skinned Hispanics and Native Americans, didn’t allow them the option of presenting themselves as members of an already-assimilated majority group (National Council for the Social Sciences, 1991).

Currently, the major cultural (ethnic) groups in the United States include:

- Native Americans (American Indians)
  - Cherokee, Navaho, Hopi, Alaskan natives, Blackfoot, etc.
- European Americans (Whites)
  - Descendents from Western Europe (e.g., United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands), Eastern Europe (e.g., Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria), Southern Europe (e.g., Italy, Greece, Portugal), and Northern Europe or Scandinavia (e.g., Denmark, Sweden, Norway)
- African Americans (Blacks)
  - Americans whose cultural roots lie in the continent of Africa (e.g., Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria) and the Caribbean Islands (e.g., Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica)



*Culture is a distinctive pattern of beliefs and values that develop among a group of people who share the same social heritage and traditions.* © 2014 by Anna Omelchenko. Under license from Shutterstock, Inc.



- Hispanic Americans (Latinos)
  - Americans with cultural roots in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America (e.g., El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua), and South America (e.g., Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela)
- Asian Americans
  - Americans who are cultural descendents of East Asia (e.g., Japan, China, Korea), Southeast Asia (e.g., Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia), and South Asia (e.g., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh)
- Middle Eastern Americans
  - Americans with cultural roots in Iraq, Iran, Israel, etc.

## Pause for Reflection

What ethnic group(s) do you belong to or identify with? What key cultural values do you think are shared by your ethnic group(s)?

European Americans still are the majority ethnic group in the United States; they account for more than 50% of the American population. Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans are considered to be ethnic *minority groups* because each of these groups represents less than 50% of the American population. America's two most populated states, California and Texas, are called "minority-majority" states because more than half of the population in these states is now comprised of people from minority groups; the same is for Hawaii and New Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008a).

As with racial grouping, classifying humans into different ethnic groups can be very arbitrary and subject to different interpretations. Currently, the U.S. Census Bureau classifies Hispanics as an ethnic group, rather than a race. However, among those who checked "some other race" in the 2000 Census, 97% were Hispanic. This finding suggests that Hispanic Americans consider themselves to be a racial group, probably because that's how they feel they're perceived and treated by non-Hispanics (Cianciotto, 2005). Supporting this perception is use of the term "racial profiling" by American media to describe Arizona's controversial 2010 law that allows police to target people who "look" like illegal aliens from Mexico, Central America and South America. Once again, this illustrates how race and ethnicity are subjective, socially constructed concepts that depend on how society perceives and treats certain social groups, which, in turn, affects how these groups perceive themselves.

In the United States, it's going to be increasingly difficult to categorize groups of people into distinct racial or ethnic groups because it's becoming more common for members of different ethnic and racial groups to form

## STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

"I'm the only person from my race in class."

HISPANIC STUDENT COMMENTING ON WHY HE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE IN HIS CLASS ON RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER

cross-ethnic and interracial families. By 2050, the number of Americans who identify themselves as being of two or more races is projected to more than triple, growing from 5.2 million to 16.2 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008a).

### **Personal Experience**

As a child of a black man and a white woman, someone who was born in the racial melting pot of Hawaii, with a sister who's half Indonesian but who's usually mistaken for Mexican or Puerto Rican, and a brother-in-law and niece of Chinese descent, with some blood relatives who resemble Margaret Thatcher and others who could pass for Bernie Mac, family get-togethers over Christmas take on the appearance of a U.N. General Assembly meeting. I've never had the option of restricting my loyalties on the basis of race, or measuring my worth on the basis of tribe.

—Barack Obama, *President of the United States*

## **What Is Humanity?**

Although humans are members of different cultural groups, all cultures are still cultivated from the same soil—they're all grounded in the common experience of being human. Thus, cultural diversity represents variations on the common theme of *humanity*. Human variety and human similarity coexist and complement each other. To appreciate human diversity is to appreciate both our differences and *similarities* (Public Service Enterprise Group, 2009). Diversity appreciation includes appreciating the unique perspectives of different groups of people as well as the universal aspects of the human experience that are common to all groups—whatever their particular cultural backgrounds happens to be. For example, despite our racial and cultural differences, all of us experience and express the same human emotions with the same facial expressions (see [Figure 1.2](#)).

Other human characteristics that anthropologists have found to be shared by all groups of people in every corner of the world include storytelling, poetry, adornment of the body, dance, music, decoration with artifacts, families, socialization of children by elders, a sense of right and wrong, supernatural beliefs, and mourning of the dead (Pinker, 2000). Although different ethnic groups may express these shared experiences in different ways, these universal experiences are common to all human cultures.

The relationship between humanity and diversity is well illustrated by the development of language in children. Although groups of people around the world speak distinctively different languages, every newborn baby entering the world babbles in sounds made by all human languages; this gives every newborn human being the potential to speak the sounds of any human language. However, what language(s) that newborns eventually speak will depend on the language sounds they hear spoken by their particular cultural group; the other babbling sounds they used as newborns will eventually drop out of their oral repertoire (Oller, 1981). The same set of sounds that all humans use at birth (the “universal language”) reflects our common humanity; the distinctive set of sounds that different groups of humans learn to speak as their “native language” reflects our cultural diversity.



“Above all nations is  
humanity.”

MOTTO OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF HAWAII



**Figure 1.2** Humans all over the world display the same facial expressions when experiencing certain emotions. See if you can detect the emotions being expressed in the following faces. (To find the answers, turn your book upside down.)

### Pause for Reflection

List three human experiences that you think are universal—that are experienced by all humans in all cultures.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

"We are all the same, and we are all unique."

GEORGIA DUNSTON, AFRICAN-AMERICAN BIOLOGIST AND RESEARCH SPECIALIST IN HUMAN GENETICS

**KEEP IN MIND:** Although people have different cultural backgrounds, they're still cultivated from the same soil—all forms of ethnic diversity are grounded in the common experience of being human.

You may have heard the question: "We're all human, aren't we?" The answer to this important question is "yes and no." Yes, we are all the same, but not in the same way. A good metaphor for understanding this apparent contradiction is to visualize humanity as a quilt in which we're all united by the common thread of humanity—the universal bond of being human. The different patches comprising the quilt represent diversity—the

distinctive or unique cultures that comprise our common humanity. The quilt metaphor acknowledges the identity and beauty of all cultures. It differs from the old American "melting pot" metaphor, which viewed cultural differences as something that should be melted down and eliminated, or the "salad bowl" metaphor that suggested America was a hodgepodge or mishmash of cultures thrown together without any common connection. In contrast, the quilt metaphor suggests that the cultures of different groups should be recognized and valued; yet, these distinctive cultures can be woven together to form a unified whole. This seamless blending of diversity and unity is captured in the Latin expression *E pluribus unum* ("Out of many, one")—the motto of the United States—which you'll find printed on all of its coins. When we appreciate diversity in the context of hu-

manity, we capitalize on the variety and beauty of our differences (diversity) while still preserving the power and strength of our unity (humanity).

## Personal Experience

When I was 12 years old and living in New York City, I returned from school one Friday and my mother asked me if anything interesting happened at school that day. I mentioned to her that the teacher went around the room asking students what we had for dinner the night before. At that moment, my mother began to become a bit concerned and nervously asked me, "What did you tell the teacher?" I said, "I told her and the rest of the class that I had pasta last night because my family always eats pasta on Thursdays and Sundays." My mother exploded and fired back at me, "Why didn't you tell her we had steak or roast beef!" For a moment, I was stunned and couldn't figure out what I'd done wrong or why I should have lied about eating pasta. Then it suddenly dawned on me: My mom was embarrassed about being Italian American. She wanted me to hide our family's ethnic background and make it sound like we were very "American."

As I grew older, I began to understand why my mother felt the way she did. She grew up in America's "melting pot" generation—a time when different American ethnic groups were expected to melt down and melt away their ethnicity. They were not to celebrate diversity; they were to eliminate it.

—Joe Cuseo

"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic."

JIMMY CARTER, THIRTY-NINTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND WINNER OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

## What Is Individuality?

It's important to keep in mind that the differences among individual within groups are greater than the average differences between groups. For example, differences in physical attributes (e.g., height and weight) and psychological characteristics (e.g., introvert and extrovert) among individuals within the same racial group are greater than any average difference that may exist between racial groups (Caplan & Caplan, 2009). Thus, the reality is that more variability (individuality) than similarity exists among members of a particular racial or ethnic group.

**KEEP IN MIND:** While it's valuable to learn about diverse cultures and common characteristics shared by members of a culture, differences among individuals sharing the same cultural background should neither be ignored nor overlooked. Don't assume that individuals of the same race or ethnicity share the same personal characteristics.

As you proceed through this book, remember the following key distinctions that have been made in this chapter:

- **Humanity.** All humans are members of the *same group* (e.g., the human species).
- **Diversity.** All humans are members of *different groups* (e.g., different gender and ethnic groups).
- **Individuality.** All humans are *unique individuals* who differ from other members of any group to which they may belong.

### WORDS OF WISDOM

"You can't judge a book by the cover."

HIT RECORD, 1962, BY ELIAS BATES, A.K.A. BO DIDDLEY (NOTE: A "BO DIDDLEY" IS A ONE-STRINGED AFRICAN GUITAR.)

### WORDS OF WISDOM

"Every human is, at the same time, like all other humans, like some humans, and like no other human."

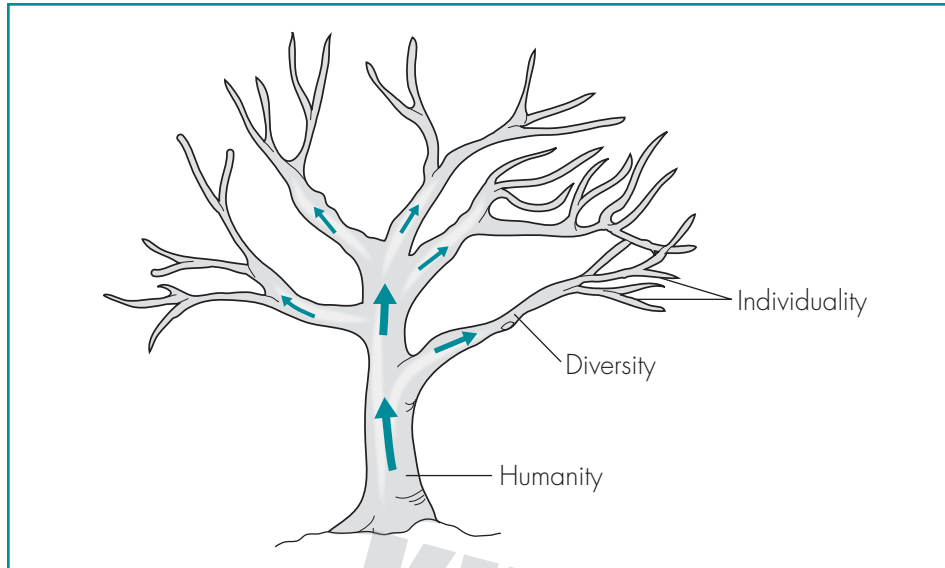
CLYDE KLUCKHOLN, AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

### Pause for Reflection

In what key ways do you think you are:

1. Like all other humans,
2. Like some humans, and
3. Like no other human?





**Figure 1.3** The Relationship between Humanity, Diversity, and Individuality

## Diversity and the College Experience

There are more than 3,000 public and private colleges in the United States. They vary in size (small, mid-sized, large), location (urban, suburban, and rural), and purpose or mission (research universities, comprehensive state universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges). This variety makes America's higher education system the most diverse and accessible in the world (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002). The diversity and accessibility of educational opportunities provided by American colleges and universities embodies the nation's commitment to the democratic principle of equal opportunity (American Council on Education, 2008).

America's diverse system of higher education is becoming increasingly more diverse with respect to the type of students enrolled. The ethnic and

racial diversity of students in America is rapidly rising. In 1960, whites made up almost 95% of the total college population; in 2010, that percentage had decreased to 61.5%. Between 1976 and 2010, the percentage of ethnic minority students in higher education increased from 17% to 40% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

The rise in ethnic and racial diversity on American campuses is particularly noteworthy when viewed in light of the historical treatment of minority groups in the United States. In the early 19th century, education was not a right, but a privilege available only to those who could afford to attend private schools. It was experienced largely by Protestants of European descent. Later, white immigrants from other cultural



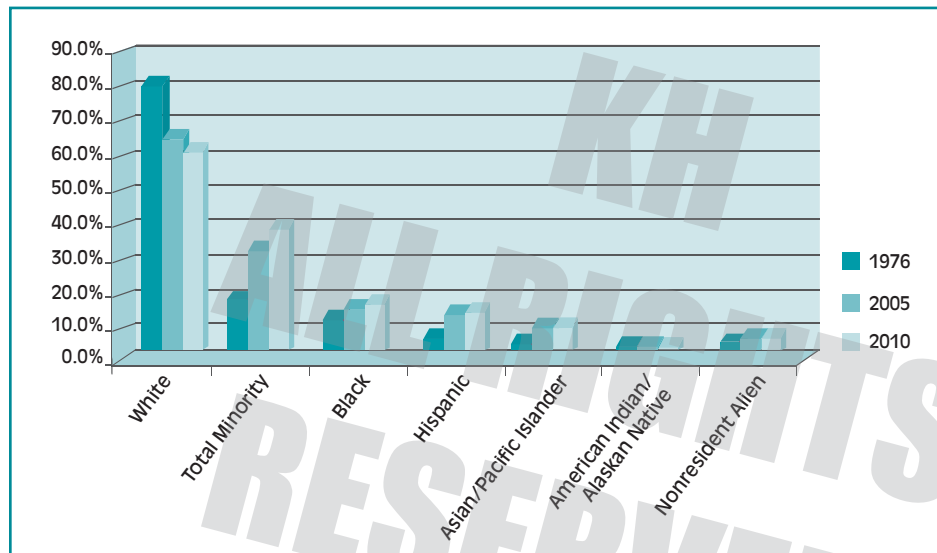
*The ethnic and racial diversity of students in American College is increasing.* © 2014 RyFlip. Under license from Shutterstock, Inc.

backgrounds began migrating to the U.S. and public education was then made mandatory—with the goal that education would “Americanize” these new immigrants and obliterate their own cultural identities in the process (Luhman, 2007). Members of certain minority groups were left out of the educational process altogether or were forced to be educated in racially segregated settings. Americans of color were taught in separate, segregated schools that were typically inferior in terms of educational facilities. It was not until the groundbreaking Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* (May 17, 1954) that the face of education was changed for people of color. On that day, the United States Supreme Court ruled that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” This decision made it illegal for Kansas and 20 other states to deliver education in segregated classrooms.

## WORDS OF WISDOM

“Education, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer . . . the balance-wheel of social machinery.”

HORACE MANN, ARCHITECT OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, SOCIAL REFORMER, AND ABOLITIONIST



**Figure 1.4** College Enrollment Fall 1976–Fall 2010 Comparison

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). Digest of Education Statistics

## WORDS OF WISDOM

“Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.”

W.E.B. DUBOIS, AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGIST, HISTORIAN, AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

My mother was a direct descendent of slaves and moved with her parents from the deep south at the age of seventeen. My father lived in an all-black coal mining camp, into which my mother and her family moved in 1938. My father remained illiterate because he was not allowed to attend public schools in eastern Kentucky.

## Personal Experience

In the early 1960s, I was integrated into the white public schools along with my brother and sister. Physical violence and constant verbal harassment caused many other blacks to quit school at an early age and opt for jobs in the coal mines. But my father remained constant in his advice to me: “It doesn’t matter if they call you n\_\_\_\_; don’t you ever let them beat you by walking out on your education.” He’d say to me, “Son, you will have opportunities that I never had. Many people, white and black alike, will tell you that you are no good and that education can never help you. Don’t listen to them because soon they will not be able to keep you from getting an

## WORDS OF WISDOM

"The most important thing I got out of college was self-confidence. All my life, I heard subtle and not so subtle messages that I was inferior, and that I couldn't really succeed like a white person could. College taught me I could. Besides, going to college was the key to a good job—a one-way ticket out of the ghetto and the means to give something back to my community. Now I have a real reason to have black pride. I think the most important thing I learned in college was that we must fight for equality not just by demonstrating, but by showing the world that we can."

AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE GRADUATE, QUOTED IN NEMKO (1988)

education like they did me. Just remember, when you do get that education, you'll never have to go in those coal mines and have them break your back. You can choose what you want to do, and then you can be a free man."

Being poor, black, and Appalachian did not offer me great odds for success, but constant reminders from my parents that I was a good person and that education was the key to my future freedom and happiness enabled me to beat the odds. My parents were not able to provide me with monetary wealth, but they did provide me with the gifts of self-worth, educational motivation, and aspiration for academic achievement.

—Aaron Thompson

American colleges have also grown more diverse with respect to *gender* and *age*. In 1955, only 25% of college students were female; in 2000, the percentage had jumped to almost 66% (Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2001). From 1990 to 2009, the proportion of women between the ages of 18 and 29 enrolled in college increased at a rate that was almost triple that of males in the same age range (Kim, 2011). The percentage of college students 24 years of age or older has also grown to 44% of the total student body (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2003), up from 28% in 1970 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). By 2010, more than one-third of American students enrolled in college were over the age of 25 (Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success, 2011).

Adding further to the diversity on college campuses are *international* students. From 1990 to 2000, the number of international students attending American colleges and universities increased by over 140,000 (Institute of International Education, 2001). By the 2010–2011 academic year, a record-high number of nearly 820,000 international students were enrolled on American campuses (Institute of International Education, 2013).



### Did you Know?

Persons with disabilities once had little access to colleges and universities, but due primarily to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) act of 1990, their access to and participation in higher education has increased dramatically (Schuh, 2000). In 2010, there were over 700,000 students with disabilities enrolled in American colleges and universities (Raue & Lewis, 2011).

## WORDS OF WISDOM

"Empirical evidence shows that the actual effects on student development of emphasizing diversity and of student participation in diversity activities are overwhelmingly positive."

ALEXANDER ASTIN, *WHAT MATTERS IN COLLEGE*

**KEEP IN MIND:** The wealth of diversity on college campuses today represents an unprecedented educational opportunity. You may never again be a member of a community that includes so many people from such a rich variety of backgrounds. Seize this opportunity! You're in the right place at the right time to experience the type of human diversity that will enrich the quality of your educational, personal, and professional development.

## Pause for Reflection

1. What diverse groups do you see represented on your campus?
2. Are there groups on campus that you didn't expect to see or to see in such large numbers?
3. Are there groups on your campus that you expected to see but don't see or see in smaller numbers than you expected?

## Summary

Diversity refers to the wide variety of differences that exist among groups of people who comprise humanity (the human species). Humans can and do differ from one another in multiple ways, including physical features, religious beliefs, mental and physical abilities, national origins, social backgrounds, gender, and sexual orientation. Diversity is concerned with the important political issue of securing equal rights and social justice for all people; however, it's also an important *educational* issue—an integral element of the college experience that enriches learning, personal development, and career preparation.

Racial diversity involves grouping humans into categories that are not scientifically based, but socially determined. There are no specific genes that differentiate one race from another; no “blood test” or genetic marker can be used to detect a person's race. Humans have simply decided to classify themselves into “racial” categories on the basis of certain external differences in physical appearance, particularly the shade of their outer layer of skin.

An ethnic group is a group of people who share a distinctive culture (i.e., a particular set of shared traditions, customs, and behavioral patterns). Unlike a racial group, whose members share physical characteristics that they were born with; an ethnic group's shared characteristics have been *learned* through shared social experiences. Thus, *ethnic diversity* refers to different groups of people with different cultural characteristics. Cultural differences can exist within the same nation (multicultural diversity) and between different nations (international diversity).

Diversity not only involves respecting and valuing human differences; it also involves appreciating our similarities and common experiences. Diverse groups represent variations on the common theme of humanity. Although people have different cultural backgrounds, their group differences emerge

from the same soil; they are all grounded in the universal experience of being human. Thus, experiencing diversity not only enhances our appreciation of the unique features of different cultures, it also provides us with a larger perspective on the universal aspects of the human experience that are common to all of us—no matter what our particular cultural background may be.

Embedded within humanity and diversity is *individuality*. Studies show that individual differences *within* the same racial or ethnic group are *greater* than the average differences between groups. The key distinctions among humanity, diversity, and individuality may be summarized as follows:

- **Humanity.** All humans are members of the *same group* (e.g., the human species).
- **Diversity.** All humans are members of *different groups* (e.g., different gender and ethnic groups).
- **Individuality.** All humans are *unique individuals* who differ from other members of any group to which they may belong.

There is greater diversity among college students today than at any other time in the nation's history. This rich diversity represents an unprecedented educational opportunity. By intentionally infusing diversity into your college experience, you can increase the power of your college education and your prospects for future success.

## Internet-Based Resources for Additional Information

**Race:** *RACE—The Power of an Illusion*, at [www.pbs.org/race/001\\_WhatIsRace/001\\_00-home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/001_WhatIsRace/001_00-home.htm)

*Are we so different? A project of the American Anthropological Association*, at [www.understandingrace.org/home.html](http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html)

**Ethnicity:** *Ethnicity Online*, at [www.ethnicityonline.net/](http://www.ethnicityonline.net/)

**Disabilities:** *Resources, Programs and Services*, at <https://www.disability.gov/>

**Culture:** *Culture Crossing*, at <http://www.culturecrossing.net/index.php>





# Chapter 1 Exercises

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## 1.1 Cultural Differences Interview

Find a student, faculty member, or an administrator on campus whose cultural background is differs from yours, and if you could interview that person about his or her culture. Use the following questions in your interview:

- a. How is “family” defined in your culture? What are the traditional roles and responsibilities of different family members?
- b. What are the traditional gender (male/female) roles associated with your culture? Are they changing?
- c. What is the culture’s approach to time? (For instance: Is there an emphasis on punctuality? Is doing things fast valued or frowned upon?)
- d. What are your culture’s staple foods or favorite foods?

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e. What cultural traditions or rituals are highly valued and commonly practiced?

f. What special holidays are celebrated by your culture?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## 1.2 Sudden Realization

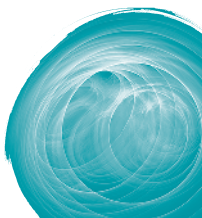
You meet someone sitting at a party; after talking with this person for several hours, you realize that you really like this person and you have a lot in common. The attraction is mutual, so you both exchange phone numbers. As you both leave the party, the other person gets into a motorized wheelchair (that you had not noticed previously) and drives away.

What thoughts and feelings do you think would cross your mind immediately after you discovered this person had a physical disability?

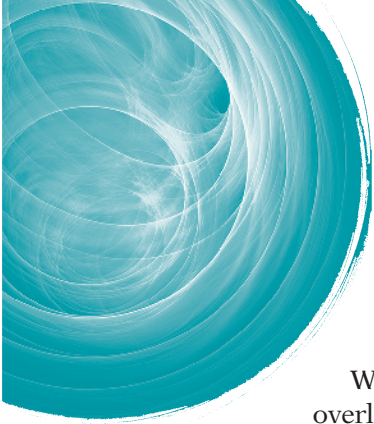
Would you still give the person a call? Why?

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Source: University of New Hampshire Office of Residential Life (2001)



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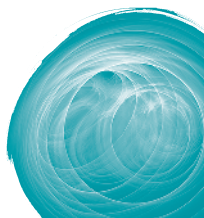
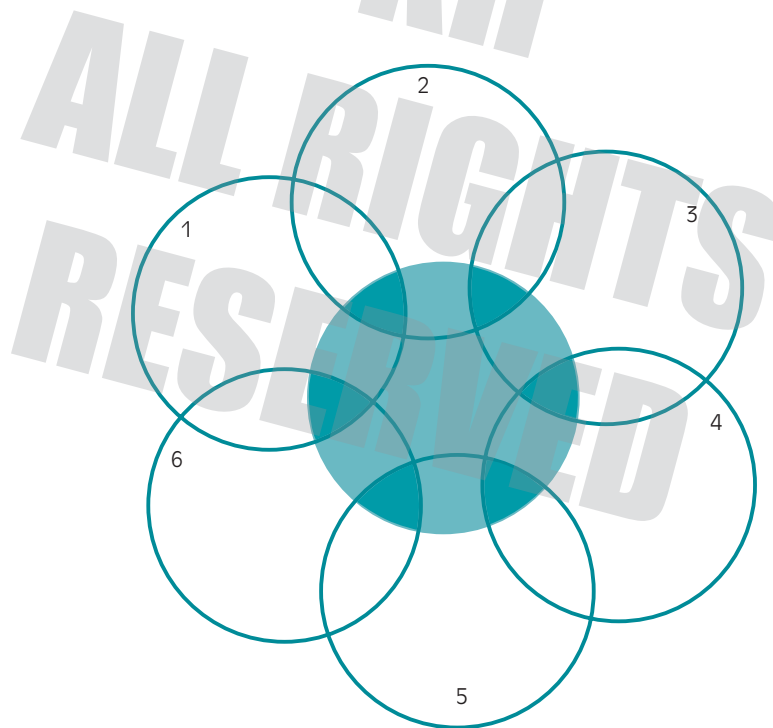
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.3 Gaining Awareness of Your Group Identities

We are members of multiple groups at the same time, and our membership in these overlapping groups has likely influenced our personal development and identity. In the figure that follows, consider the shaded center circle to be yourself and the six non-shaded circles to be six groups you belong to that you think have influenced your personal development or personal identity.

Fill in the non-shaded circles with the names of groups to which you belong that have had the greatest influence on your personal identity or development. You can use the diversity spectrum that appears on page 2 of this chapter to help you identify different groups. You don't have to come up with six groups and fill all six circles. What's most important is to identify those groups that you feel have had the most influence on your development and identity.





## Self-Assessment Questions

- a. Of the groups you've identified, which one do you think have had the greatest influence on your personal identity? Why?
- b. Have you ever felt limited or disadvantaged by being a member of any particular group(s) you've identified?
- c. Have you ever felt that you experienced advantages or privileges because of your membership in any particular group(s) you've identified?



Name \_\_\_\_\_

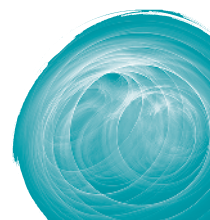
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## 1.4 Social Identities

For each of the identities listed in the far left column:

- Use the boxes under columns 1 and 2 to rate each identity on a scale from 1–10 (10 = the highest)
- Use the boxes under columns 3 and 4 to provide a short written response for each identity.

	1	2	3	4
Identity	How important do you consider this piece of your identity?	If someone sees you but does not know you personally, how obvious is this piece of your identity to them?	Is this identity regarded in a positive manner by society at large?	Is this identity regarded in a negative manner by society at large?
Race or ethnicity				
Gender				
Socio-economic class				
Sexual orientation				
Religion				
Generation				
National region (where you were raised)				
Marital status				



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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.5 Switching Group Identity

If you were to be born again as a member of a different racial or ethnic group:

- a. What group would you choose? Why?
  - b. With your new group identity, what things would change in your personal life? What things would remain the same in your life despite the fact that your group identity has changed?
  - c. What group would you not want to be born into? Why?
- Watermark: KH ALL RIGHTS RESERVED*

Source: Adapted from University of New Hampshire Office of Residential Life (2001)