

Cultural Diversity

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Learning Objectives

- Recognize the working definitions of race, ethnicity, culture, cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity.
 - Understand the elements of cultural competence
 - Recognize the importance of cultural sensitivity.
- Understand the importance of working effectively in a culturally diverse workplace.
 - Increase own awareness of cultural identity.
- Recognize the impact one's own cultural perspectives can have on individuals for other groups.
- Set a personal plan to develop and build alliances with people who are culturally different from one's own self.

Definitions

- **Race:** a system of classifying humans into sub-groups according to biological and physical characteristics such as; skin color, facial features and stature.
- **Ethnicity:** that part of our identity derived from membership, usually through birth, in a racial, religious, national or linguistic group, which share a unique cultural and social heritage from one generation to another.
- **Culture:** refers to the sum total of acquired values, beliefs, practices, laws, customs, traditions and knowledge reasoned and experienced by a group.
- **Cultural Diversity:** is the idea that cultural identities should not be assimilated or ignored but instead should be maintained and valued.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** knowledge that cultural differences as well as similarities exist, without assigning values, i.e., better or worse, right or wrong, to those cultural differences.





What is Cultural Diversity?

"At the beginning of this (the 20th) century, as steamers poured into American ports, their steerages filled with European immigrants, a Jew from England named Israel Zangwill penned a play whose story line has long been forgotten, but whose central theme has not. His production was entitled "The Melting Pot" and its message still holds a tremendous power on the national imagination—the promise that all immigrants can be transformed into Americans, a new alloy forged in a crucible of democracy, freedom and civic responsibility."

William Booth in the Sunday, February 22, 1998 Washington Post

The United States was and is often thought of as the great melting pot where any person from any background can assimilate into a single society.. This melting pot ideal is not appropriate in our society today.

Diversity has gone from a moral issue to a legal issue and business necessity. When a group or any part of our society is excluded, all of us are denied.

To survive, each of us has to be aware and sensitive to all members of the community. The Women's Business Center describes many of us as living on the "margins" of society. This group describes that being in a margin means that you are not a part of the mainstream, popular culture. In this country, our popular culture, or the ideal for business success is:

- White
- Young
- Heterosexual
- Christian
- Male

This means you are on the margins if you are:

- A Woman
- Have ANY ethnic background that is non-white
- Are not a heterosexual
- Are not a Christian
- Are not between the ages of 21-50

If you can answer "yes" to any one of these criteria, you live in the margins. This means that there are obstacles, prejudices and stereotypes about YOU as an individual. More of us live IN the margins than do not. More of us DO NOT fit the societal prescription of what is normal and acceptable.

Why Does Cultural Diversity Matter?

When a group or segment of our population is excluded or oppressed, all of us are denied. For our communities and businesses to survive and thrive, each of us needs to be aware and sensitive to ALL the members of the community.

America is the most diverse nation in the world. Our ethnicity makes each of us unique. We need to learn to accept what is different from us, embrace, and respect it.



What Can We Do?

- Strive for change.
- Be proactive in our decisions and lifestyles rather than ignorance and intolerance.
- Be aware that intolerance toward someone who lives on the margins is harming everyone who lives on the margins, including you.

My Personal Code of Ethics

I will accept people as they are.

*

I will make everyone feel welcome and appreciated.

*

I will respect others' property, feelings, ideas, opinions and privacy.

*

I will treat others, as I want to be treated.

*

I will seek first to understand and then to be understood.

*

I will not put-down others because of race, religion, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality, economic status or personal appearance.

*

I will not listen to racial, ethnic or sexist jokes.

*

I will not pre-judge, stereotype or criticize other people.

*

I will make a conscious effort to learn and get to know different cultural styles and values to better understand and appreciate individual and group differences.

*

I will solve problems in ways other than fighting.

Life Lessons

Life lessons are those experiences in our lives that teach us about our place in a group, a community, an organization or in society. Positive life lessons can make us feel like we are appreciated or accepted. Negative life lessons are experiences that teach us that we are just tolerated.

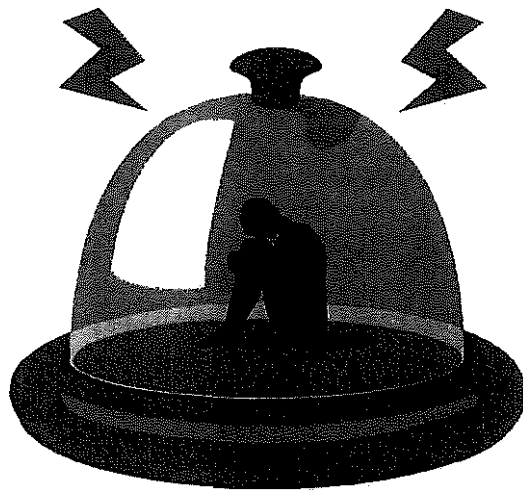
When we are appreciated and accepted:

- We feel included, part of the group
- We feel that others depend on us, are interested in us and care about our fate.
- Others identify with us, appreciate and care about us.
- We have two-way communication.
- Our differences are valued and seen as a resource.
- Our opinions are solicited and they matter.
- We are included in opportunities.
- We bring our whole self to the world.



When We are Made to Feel Tolerated/Avoided

- We feel excluded, apart from the group.
- We share the cultural life and traditions of two distinct and separate groups.
- We are not ready to leave the old culture behind and are not yet a member of the new group.
- We are silent about who we were.
- We fear feeling separate.
- We feel contradictory feelings-pride and shame.
- We tend to be more sensitive.

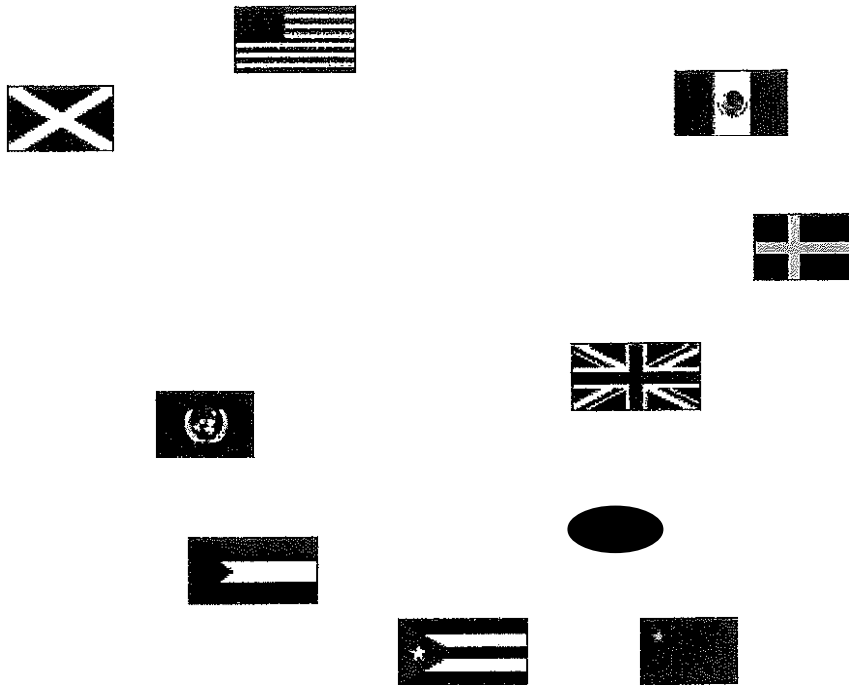


Aspects of Culture	Mainstream American Culture	Other Cultures
Sense of Self and Space	Informal Handshake	Formal Hugs, bows, handshakes
Communication and Language	Explicit, direct communication Emphasis on content (meaning found in words)	Implicit, indirect communication. Emphasis on context (meaning found around words)
Dress and Appearance	“Dress for Success” ideal. Wide range of accepted dress	Dress seen as a sign of position, wealth and prestige. Subject to religious rules
Food & Eating Habits	Eating is a necessity – fast food	Dining as a social experience. Subject to religious rules
Relationships, Family & Friends	Focus on nuclear family. Responsibility for self. Value on youth, age seen as handicap	Focus on extended family. Loyalty & responsibility to family; Age = status & respect
Values & Norms	Individual Orientation, Independence. Preference for direct confrontation of conflict	Group orientation conformity. Preference on harmony
Beliefs and Attitudes	Egalitarian; Challenging of authority. Individuals control their destiny. Gender equity	Hierarchal; respect for authority and social order; individuals accept their destiny; different roles for men women
Mental Processes and Learning Styles	Linear, logical, sequential. Problem-solving focus	Lateral, holistic, simultaneous. Accepting of life’s difficulties
Time Consciousness	Linear and exact time consciousness. Value on promptness (time=money)	Elastic and relative time consciousness; Time spent on enjoyment of relationships
Work Habits & Practices	Emphasis on task; Reward based on individual achievement; work has intrinsic value	Emphasis on relationships. Reward based on seniority. Work is a necessity of life

Areas of Cultural Diversity Which Staff Should Be Sensitive

They include:

- Family Structure
- Important events in the life cycle
- Roles of individual family members
- Rules of interpersonal interactions
- Communication and linguistic rules
- Rules of decorum and discipline
- Religious beliefs
- Standards for health and hygiene
- Food preferences
- Dress and personal appearance
- Perceptions of work and play
- Perceptions of time and space
- Explanations of natural phenomena
- Attitudes towards pets and animals
- Artistic and musical values and tastes
- Life expectations and aspirations
- History and traditions
- Education and teaching methods
- Holidays and celebrations



HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS.....

December 28TH: MenlOsa Barnens Dag
(The Day of the Meaningless/Pointless)

A National holiday in Sweden, to honor children with developmental disabilities.

A Closer Look at Two Important Groups in Our Culture

Culture Issues on Aging

Staff should be reminded:

- At the time when older consumers grew up, values were different. No computers, fewer cars, different foods, more person-to-person contact, a handshake meant something.
- People were taught not to complain and "professionals" are the "experts".
- There is a big cultural difference between younger direct care staff and the older population.
- During the time older adults grew up, there was a stigma in having a mental illness.
- Every 95 minutes a senior citizen completes suicide. Sixteen times higher than the national average.
- Fifty (50%) percent of the older adults receiving mental health services have substance abuse problems.

What Can We Do?

- Meet the unique safety needs of the older adult with items such as brighter lights in the home, bigger signs, contrasting paint around doorways.
- Talk louder without shouting.
- Slow down the pace.
- Listen
- Respect differences.

Issues with Homosexuality

Homosexuality is not a medical or psychiatric disorder, but it is an aspect of the human condition that has a profound effect on individuals, communities and society as a whole.

Despite the ubiquitous presence of homosexual individuals in history and society, the subject of homosexuality remains one of contention and controversy.

Discussions of homosexuality are often influenced by ignorance, fear and avoidance.

In the United States, there is very little tolerance for varying expressions of sexual orientation.

---Military, religious, educational and voluntary organizations have marginalized homosexual individuals.

---In contrast, there is less discrimination of homosexual individuals in the arts.

Certain entertainers have found commercial advantages in cultivating an image in sexual orientation, even though it may still lead to controversy.

According to the 2000 Census, at least 500,000 same-sex couple households exist in the United States with the number expected to increase by 10-20% when all statistics are completed.

Additional numbers live as singles. Even more have had lifetime experiences that qualify them as homosexual. The most important conclusion from the U.S. Census is that homosexual individuals are sufficiently numerous that any institution serving the public, must take homosexuality into account when planning and delivering services.

What Can We Do?

- Gain knowledge about factors such as the identity, viewpoints and lifestyle of each individual.
- Understand individuals on their own terms and appreciate the forces that shape their lives.
- We don't have to abandon our own views, but we can't impose our perspective of our own subculture.
- Understand each individual's cultural frame of reference.
- Recognize your own anxiety and avoidance when it occurs and choose to overcome that behavior.