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Diversity Is Unavoidable, and *That's a Good Thing*



Great achievements are not born from a single vision but from the combination of many distinctive viewpoints. Diversity challenges assumptions, opens minds, and unlocks our potential to solve any problems we may face.

—Source unknown¹

Bob was living and teaching in a Siberian Yup'ik² village on Saint Lawrence Island, off the west coast of Alaska. The Siberian Yup'ik people are known for exceptional survival skills and awareness of the environment that help them to survive in an extreme climate. Listening, observing, and silence are highly valued, which makes sense when you consider that talking, loud noises, and fast movements scare away the fish and animals on which the people depend. Bob is a friendly person and throughout the day, whenever he passed one of the 33 students in the small school, he would always say “good morning” or “hi.” One day one of his students said to him with

¹Retrieved from <http://multiracialfamily.org/2011/07/24/quote-great-achievements-are-not-born-from-a-single-vision/>

²Pronounced Yoo-pik.

genuine curiosity, “Why do you [White] guys say hi so much? Once is enough.” From the Siberian Yup’ik perspective, one hello per day was sufficient.

When I asked Bob how he responded to the student’s question, he said it caught him off guard, but after that he made an effort to say hello only once each day to the student. He confessed that he continued to say hello several times to all the other students because it was ingrained in him as polite behavior.

I call Bob’s experience of surprise at learning a totally new perspective the *aha!* experience. The thought that often accompanies such an experience is, “Wow, I never thought of it that way.” Because people often assume that their own culture, beliefs, and ways are the best and only ways, the *aha!* experience can be unsettling and even painful. But if we avoid defensiveness and stay open to new ideas, the *aha!* experience can change our assumptions and behavior in ways that facilitate our relationships, broaden our perspectives, and enrich our lives. And much of the time, this learning can be fun.

Consider this: Have you ever had an *aha!* experience? Did it change your behavior or perspective?

❖ YOUR LIFE IS MULTICULTURAL, EVEN IF YOU DON’T KNOW IT

The world is in the midst of a multicultural revolution that touches everyone and offers possibilities for a richer, more interesting, and sustainable future. For example, in today’s multicultural America, people of Latino, Asian, Native, Middle Eastern, Pacific Island, and African heritage make up over one third of the country.³ Approximately 381 languages are spoken or signed.⁴ Religious minorities include 2.6 million Jews, 1.3 million Muslims, 1 million Buddhists, and half a million Hindus.⁵ People who identify as LGBT⁶

³U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *2010 shows America’s diversity* (American Community Survey). Retrieved from <http://2010.census.gov/news/releases/operations/cb11-cn125.html>

⁴U.S. Census Bureau. (2005–2009). *New Census Bureau report analyzes nation’s linguistic diversity* (American Community Survey). Retrieved from www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/american_community_survey_acs/cb10-cn58.html

are gaining increasing visibility, and approximately 19% of Americans have disabilities.⁷ Generational differences cross all of these groups, as the average age of Americans increases, and 13% of Americans are now older adults.⁸

Consider this: In today's issue of your local newspaper, count how many articles are reporting on a cross-cultural conflict, cultural event, or person of a minority culture (i.e., defined broadly to include ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual minorities and people with disabilities). Are you surprised by the number?

To give you an idea of the positive possibilities all this diversity brings, consider some of the creations, solutions, and contributions of diverse minority cultures (i.e., ones you may have taken for granted or assumed were European American):

1. Healing practices such as Chinese acupuncture, tai chi, and chi gong; Buddhist meditation and mindfulness practices; and East Indian Ayurvedic medicine and yoga
2. Knowledge used to understand the impact of humans on the environment and develop pollution prevention strategies (e.g., Inuit and Inupiaq⁹ elders' firsthand observations of the effects of global warming on ice, habitats, and animal populations)
3. Survival knowledge held by many Indigenous people of medicinal plants, hunting, fishing, farming, and navigation

⁵*American religion identification survey*. (2008). Retrieved from <http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/6>.

⁶Acronym for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

⁷U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). 20th anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act. Retrieved from www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb10-ff13.html

⁸U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Older Americans month. Retrieved from www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb10-ff06.html

⁹Pronounced Ih-nyoo-it and Ih-nyoo'-pee-ak.

4. Music and musical instruments, including Caribbean reggae, Algerian rai, Tuva throat singing, the Aboriginal didgeridoo, Hindu chants, and African American jazz, blues, and rap
5. Artwork such as Navajo tapestries, South American pottery, Alaska Native ivory carvings, African wood carvings, and Chinese calligraphy
6. Dance, including Hawaiian hula, Louisiana Creole zydeco, African American break dancing, Latin American tango and salsa, and AXIS—the collaborative dance of people with and without disabilities
7. Diverse languages that include words for concepts that do not exist in all cultures and find expression in, for example, Arabic poetry, Japanese haiku, Native storytelling, Greek mythology, and Russian literature
8. Innovations such as the Chinese inventions of the clock, paper money, movable type printing, fireworks, and compass; Arab inventions of the decimal system, Arabic numerals, the symbol for zero, artificial insemination for breeding horses, and the mechanical calendar; the Persian invention of sugar extraction; the Aztec invention of hydroponics (plants grown without soil)
9. Unique foods, herbs, spices, and cooking techniques, including Japanese sushi, African couscous, Chinese stir-fry, East Indian samosas, American Indian fry bread, Tibetan lentil soup, and Turkish baklava
10. Clothing and fabrics that are beautiful, practical, inspirational, and/or derived from Indigenous plants and materials—for example, the African caftan, Hawaiian muumuu, Indian sari, embroidered Mexican dresses, colorful Indonesian fabrics, and the Gay Pride flag
11. Architecture—for example, domes that naturally cool homes in North Africa and Spain; Japanese gardens and pagodas; beautiful and inspiring mosques, synagogues, cathedrals, and Buddhist and Hindu temples; and the East Indian Taj Mahal
12. Forms of celebration, including Disability Pride parades, Chinese New Year, Mardi Gras, the Muslim celebration of Eid at the end of Ramadan, Mexican fiesta, African American Kwanzaa, Jewish bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah, Gay Pride parades, and diverse wedding rituals

❖ WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU

Many White people believe that they do not have a culture, perhaps because when you are immersed in the dominant European American culture, it is difficult to see its influence. Think of asking a fish to describe how it is affected by water, when the fish has never been out of water. Perceiving cultural influences is easier when there is some sort of contrast. For many European Americans, this contrast and the first recognition of having a culture comes when visiting another country. But for members of minority groups, being in the minority brings continual awareness of one's culture and minority status.

With or without awareness, culture influences us all. And as diversity increases, so do misunderstandings and conflicts. Well-intentioned members of dominant groups are often unaware of the ways in which their language and behavior communicate bias. Take the following quiz and see if you can figure out what the dominant-culture member did that offended the other person.

EXERCISE 1.1

Awareness Quiz

Situation 1

Not long after she was hired, a 50-year-old European American manager named Sharon¹⁰ noticed the tension between Linda (a White employee) and Rhadiya (the department's only African American and only Muslim). Sharon initiated separate conversations with each woman to look for a way to facilitate that person's working relationship. Rhadiya told Sharon that she felt less valued by the department and gave examples of team meetings in which she had expressed her opinion and Linda ignored her. She acknowledged that this had occurred only with Linda but felt irritated that none of the other White employees seemed to notice or care. When Sharon talked with Linda, Linda became defensive and denied any negative feelings or disrespectful behavior on her part. Sharon felt concerned about the situation so she asked Rhadiya if she would be interested in making a presentation to the department on cultural issues ("a sort of minitraining to increase our awareness," she said). To Sharon's surprise, Rhadiya appeared irritated and said she had no interest in doing such a presentation.

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¹⁰All examples are composites with pseudonyms.

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Question: Why was Rhadiya offended?

Answer: Rhadiya took Sharon's request as evidence of Sharon's unwillingness to take the time to learn about African Americans and Muslims or find a diversity expert to train the department. Rhadiya resented the implication that it was her responsibility to educate her White coworkers. She knew from experience that talking about race and religion with European American non-Muslims often elicits defensiveness, and to conduct such a training would place her in a vulnerable position. A defensive reaction already appeared to be occurring with Linda's denial that there was any problem, and based on the other White employees' lack of reaction, Rhadiya guessed that she could not count on their support. Although Sharon recognized the need for the White employees to be more culturally sensitive, by asking Rhadiya to do the training, she was putting the problem back on Rhadiya, reinforcing Linda's implication that "*Rhadiya* is the one with the problem, not me."

Situation 2

On the first day of a college social studies class, the topic of gay marriage came up. The teacher (who identified as heterosexual) was aware that there were two students who identified as gay and made the statement "No one should be discriminated against because of his or her sexual preference." After class, the teacher moved toward the two students (who were sitting together) in order to make a personal connection with them. As they stood up, they nodded at her to acknowledge her presence but then turned away and quickly left. It was clear they did not want to talk with her, which left her feeling hurt and confused.

Question: What did the teacher do or say that offended the students?

Answer: The teacher's use of the term *sexual preference*, rather than *sexual orientation*, assumed that a person chooses to be gay, with the implication that one can choose not to be. This assumption of choice is commonly used by antigay groups to justify discrimination. Although the teacher may have been open to feedback about her language, she did not have the opportunity because her words offended the students who then avoided her. In addition, she may have embarrassed the students when she moved toward them immediately after the discussion, especially if they were not open about their sexual orientation in this setting. Her move toward them also assumed that they were the only students who identified as gay or lesbian, which may not have been the case.

Situation 3

A man in his late 50s was exiting an elevator at the same time as a woman who was using a wheelchair. As the woman began to move her wheelchair

forward, the man said, "Oh, let me help you" and quickly reached for the handlebars to give her a push. The woman stated firmly, "Please don't touch my wheelchair." He was surprised, then felt irritated because as he later told a friend, "I was just trying to help. A person can't even be polite anymore."

Question: What did the man do wrong?

Answer: The man was unaware of social norms from the perspective of a person with a disability. For people who have disabilities, assistive animals and devices (e.g., wheelchairs, canes, and walkers) function as extensions of the person's body. As the psychologist Rhoda Olkin¹¹ notes, you would never touch a person's legs without asking, so you wouldn't want to touch someone's assistive device or assistance animal without permission. By reaching for her wheelchair handlebars, the man was violating the woman's personal space and taking control of her mobility without asking if this was what she wanted.

Situation 4

Mark came to his college counseling center asking for help in figuring out what jobs to apply for after graduation. In response to the young White counselor's questions about Mark's background, Mark said his mother was Iñupiaq (Alaska Native) and father White (Russian/European American). After his parents divorced, he and his older siblings took turns staying with their father in the city and their mother in a rural area. When he was 18, his father died, and he decided to stay with his mother for a semester, during which time, his maternal grandparents both died. Mark became tearful when he said this and changed the subject back to his career search. The counselor was familiar with the many losses experienced by Alaska Native people and told Mark that he could see Mark had experienced many losses in his life and might need an opportunity to grieve more fully. He added that counseling might be of assistance. At his encouragement, Mark made another appointment, but the next week, Mark did not appear, and the counselor did not hear from him again.

Question: Why didn't Mark return?

Answer: The counselor had a limited knowledge of Alaska Native cultures, and the little he knew was from a dominant cultural lens that focused on negatives. He had heard of alcoholism, domestic violence, and historical oppression, but he did not know of the many positive, healthy parts of Alaska Native cultures. If he had had a more holistic understanding of Native cultures and more experience with Native people, he could have seen

¹¹Olkin, R. (1999). *What psychotherapists should know about disability*. New York: Guilford.

Mark's cultural heritage as a source of strength and support. If he had asked questions from this positive perspective, he would have learned that Mark belonged to a Native dance group, which was a source of pride, fun, and social support; that he was a role model for his younger nieces and nephews; and that his extended family and church provided plenty of emotional, social, and physical support. Mark had many opportunities to grieve with people who knew his father and grandparents well and did not need a counselor for help in coping with these feelings.

Although all of the dominant-culture members above were well-intentioned, their good intentions did not automatically eliminate their biases, and these biases led to hurtful mistakes.

Consider this: Have you ever had an experience similar to one above where something went wrong and you didn't know what? Were you able to keep a connection with the person?

Most of us have learned how to interact with others largely by trial and error, and in the process, we make mistakes. *Relationship* mistakes are difficult to correct because the people who could give us feedback often pull away and stop interacting with us. When culture is added to the mix, relationship mistakes become more complex and difficult. Culture is like an iceberg; in the midst of all this complexity, it is the enormous part you can't see and risk crashing into if you don't know it's there.¹²

If one is a member of a minority group, relationship mistakes may be experienced as what psychologist Derald Wing Sue calls *microaggressions*—verbal or behavioral insults from members of the dominant culture.¹³ When the action is unintentional, the dominant member may be oblivious to the pain his or her comment or action has caused the minority member. If the dominant member does become aware, he or she often feels embarrassed and becomes defensive. Meanwhile, the minority member is left feeling hurt, confused, and sometimes angry.

¹²Comas-Díaz, L. (2011). *Multicultural care: A clinician's guide to cultural competence*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

¹³Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life. *American Psychologist*, 62, 271–286.

In her essay “My Black Skin Makes My White Coat Vanish,” Dr. Mana Lumumba-Kasongo describes her ongoing experience with microaggressions related to dominant cultural stereotypes:

Over the years, the inability of patients and others to believe that I am a doctor has left me utterly demoralized. . . . How can it be that with all the years of experience I have, all the procedures I’ve performed and all the people I’ve interacted with in emergency situations, I still get what I call “the look?” . . . I walk in the room and introduce myself then wait for the patient—whether he or she is black, white or Asian—to steal glances at the ID card that is attached to my scrubs or white coat. (I’ve thought of having it changed to read something like: “It’s true. I’m a real doctor. Perhaps you’ve seen a black one on TV?”)¹⁴

Consider this: Have you ever experienced or unintentionally performed a microaggression? Did you realize that it was a microaggression at the time? How did you feel afterward?

Hidden Information

Because the dominant culture is so dominant, minority perspectives are often outvoted, hidden from, or ignored by the dominant culture, and the identities of successful members of minority cultures are overlooked or de-emphasized. For example, did you know that the following individuals are Latino?

- Musicians Joan Baez, Gloria Estefan, Linda Ronstadt, Mariah Carey, opera star Plácido Domingo, Cuban-born Desi Arnaz of *I Love Lucy*, Carlos Santana, Trini Lopez, teenage group Menudo, and Jon Secada
- Actors Martin Sheen (born Ramón Estevez), Rita Hayworth (born Rita Cansino), Cuban-born Andy García, Mexican-born Anthony Quinn, Raquel Welch (born Raquel Welch Tejada), Puerto Rican Rita Moreno, and Raul Julia
- Baseball player Roberto Walker Clemente, golfer Lee Trevino, tennis star Rosemary Casals, and former Raiders quarterback and coach Tom Flores

¹⁴Lumumba-Kasongo, M. (2006, April 3). My Black skin makes my White coat vanish. *Newsweek*, 147(14), 20.

- Former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros; former New Mexico governor and presidential candidate Bill Richardson; Head of the White House Office of Public Liaison under President Carter, Linda Chavez; and first Latina U.S. Surgeon General under President Bush, Antonia Novello¹⁵

Similarly, mainstream history books rarely mention the enormous agricultural, scientific, and medical contributions by African Americans to the United States before, during, and after slavery. The U.S. Patent Office's refusal to grant patents to slaves (which would have countered the view of African Americans as incapable) persisted despite the large number of inventions by African Americans.

These African American inventors included Elijah McCoy, who developed the automatic engine lubricator; so many people made cheap imitations of his invention that would-be purchasers coined the phrase "Is this the real McCoy?" Garrett Augustus Morgan invented the gas mask in 1912, which saved the lives of hundreds of soldiers during World War I. Postal worker Shelby Davidson invented the adding machine; Frederick McKinley Jones, the portable X-ray machine; and Lloyd Augusta Hall, curing salts that revolutionized the meat-packing industry. Dr. Mae Jamison was a pioneering astronaut who flew on the shuttle *Endeavor*; Dr. Lewis Wright developed the neck brace; Dr. William Hinton developed the Davies-Hinton test for syphilis detection; and Dr. Samuel Kountz founded the largest kidney transplant research center and made history by transplanting a kidney from mother to daughter.¹⁶

The scientific and medical contributions of Arab and Muslim cultures are similarly unrecognized by the dominant European American culture. Between the 9th and 13th centuries (known as the Golden Era of Islam) an enormous number of inventions and cultural developments took place as the Arabs spread Islam beyond Arabia. Arabs developed a hospital routine that is still practiced today including formal registration of patients, case notes taken on daily morning rounds, and medical examinations with pulse taking, tapping to sound out internal organs, questioning the patient, and examination of the color and feel of the skin, type and depth of breathing, and the patient's

¹⁵Novas, H. (1994). *Everything you need to know about Latino history*. New York: Penguin.

¹⁶Stewart, J. C. (1996). *1001 things you should know about African American history*. New York: Broadway Books.

urine. At a time when surgeons were considered butchers in Europe, Arabs were using anesthesia for surgery and had a formal text describing routine surgical procedures, including catheterization of a male patient.

The surgical manual developed by al-Zahrawi (AD 1000) was still in use by Oxford's medics during the 18th century, and Al-Majusi described a variety of contraceptive methods that were used in the Middle East for more than 1,000 years. Before Jenner developed the cowpox vaccine, the European Lady Montague learned the technique of smallpox vaccination from the Muslims (specifically the Turks), which she then brought to England. And long before Freud developed his talking cure, Al-Razi wrote of the *ilaj-il-nafsani*, a talking treatment for the psyche.¹⁷

Although one can find information *about* minority perspectives in the mainstream media, the bulk of this information is written, directed, and produced by members of the dominant culture—people who are predominantly European American, middle class, heterosexual, non-disabled, monolingual, and of Christian heritage. Because such information is filtered through a dominant cultural lens, it is skewed in favor of the dominant culture. For this reason, it is not enough to simply be open to new perspectives. True cross-cultural understanding requires extra work—looking for and learning the culture-specific information and communication skills necessary for relationship success.

EXERCISE 1.2

Expanding Your View

Make a list of at least 10 positive minority cultural influences that affect or could affect your life. If you have difficulty finding influences, search online using the name of a minority culture and positive terms such as *Muslim/ Islamic inventions, discoveries; African American accomplishments, innovations; lesbian/gay contributions, community building*. For example, if you do a search regarding *well-known successful people with disabilities*, you will find information on people with disabilities who are successful actors and

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¹⁷Ashrif, S. (1987). Eurocentrism and myopia in science teaching. *Multicultural Teaching*, 5, 28–30.

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musicians (Tom Cruise, Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, Marlee Matlin, Robin Williams, Beethoven); professional athletes (Magic Johnson, Jim Abbott); inventors (Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell); and political leaders (Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Kansas Senator Bob Dole).¹⁸ Use this information to think about how these individuals may have influenced you or created influences that positively affect your life or perspective.

¹⁸Palsson, J. (2008, December). 10 famous people with disabilities. *ArticleDoctor*. Retrieved from www.articledoctor.com/disability/10-famous-people-disabilities
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2

The Starting Place

Knowing Who You Are



Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves.

—Adrienne Rich

Take a minute to think about how you identify yourself with the following exercise. Fill in the blanks of the statement “I am _____” with whatever words you use to describe who you are. For example, I am *a woman, Jewish, an elder, father of an adopted child, a soldier, Japanese American, middle class, gay, a person with a disability, Buddhist, an American, Spanish-speaking, a single mother, an immigrant,* and so on. Use as many blanks as you need.

As the multicultural expert Beverly Greene points out, all of the following individuals are Christians: members of the Ku Klux Klan, Nazis and their sympathizers, Martin Luther King Jr., Condoleezza Rice, and George Bush—but this tells us little about Christians or Christianity. As she notes, Martin Luther King Jr. had more in common with Gandhi than with any of these Christians, but Gandhi was Hindu.¹

¹Greene, B. (2009). The use and abuse of religious beliefs in dividing and conquering between socially marginalized groups: The same-sex marriage debate. *American Psychologist*, 64, 698–709.

EXERCISE 2.1**Who Am I?**

I am _____.

I am _____.

I am _____.

I am _____.

I am _____.

I am _____.

I am _____.

I am _____.

Now look at your self-description. If you were able to fill in several of the blanks, apparently you identify yourself in many ways. Most of us think of ourselves as complex and interesting people. We would be reluctant to say that a sole characteristic defines who we are.

In contrast, we often think of other people in singular terms, particularly members of groups with whom we have little experience. This narrow perception of others limits our ability to accurately understand and connect with those we perceive as different from ourselves. An example includes assuming that a person's identity as Muslim explains everything about him—who he is, what he values, his political and religious beliefs, and so on.

No one identity can summarize the wholeness of any given person. Just as we perceive our own richness, recognizing the richness in others is the first step toward understanding and connecting. When we begin to see, or better yet, *look for* this richness, a world of difference and possibilities opens.

The ADDRESSING Culture Sketch

To understand how cultural influences shape what you think, feel, and do, let's start with an exercise I call the ADDRESSING Culture Sketch. The acronym ADDRESSING stands for nine cultural influences that affect us all. As you can see in Table 2.1 each of the ADDRESSING influences has a dominant cultural group and a nondominant (minority) group associated with it.

Defining a person as belonging to a dominant or minority group can be complicated, because what constitutes dominant or minority status depends on the situation. In general, a dominant group is one that has privileges, power, and resources that minority groups do not. Many times the dominant group is a numerical majority (e.g., White

people in the United States) but not always. For example, women in the United States are considered a minority because women are underrepresented in positions of power, status, and high pay.

Complicating the distinction further is that many people belong to *both* minority and dominant groups—for example, a biracial woman whose father is African American and mother European American or a European American man who has a disability. Within an individual, some dominant influences are more powerful than others and can override minority influences to determine one's status. For instance, older European Americans generally experience lower status in the United States because of their age, even though they are White. However, if that older White person is male and wealthy, he will experience especially high status. Wealthy and White trump old age.

Table 2.1 ADDRESSING Cultural Influences²

Cultural Influences	Dominant Group	Nondominant/Minority Group
Age and generational influences	Young/middle aged adults	Children, older adults
Developmental disabilities & other Disabilities	Nondisabled people	People with cognitive, sensory, physical, and/or psychiatric disabilities
Religion and spirituality	Christian & secular	Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, & other minority religions
Ethnic and racial identity	European Americans	Asian, South Asian, Latino, Pacific Island, African, Arab, African American, & Middle Eastern people
Socioeconomic status	Upper & middle class	People of lower status by occupation, education, income, or inner-city/rural habitat
Sexual orientation	Heterosexuals	People who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual

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²Adapted from Hays, P. A. (2008). *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and therapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Cultural Influences	Dominant Group	Nondominant/Minority Group
Indigenous heritage	European Americans	American Indians, Iñuit, Alaska Natives, Métis, Native Hawaiians
National origin	U.S.-born Americans	Immigrants, refugees, & international students
Gender	Men	Women and people who identify as transgender

As Table 2.1 indicates, *A* stands for “Age and generational influences,” including not just your chronological age but any cultural influences that have profoundly affected members of your generation. If you are an American in your late 50s, this could include post–World War II economic prosperity, Vietnam War protests, drugs, rock ‘n roll music, and the civil rights and women’s movements, to name just a few. In contrast, if you are in your early 20s, your generation has been strongly affected by computer technology, social media, widespread use of psychotropic medications, the economic downturn, and unemployment. Granted, older people have also been affected by these more recent influences; however, younger people have never experienced life without them.

Generational influences can also include generational *roles* that have shaped who you are. For example, being an oldest son may have contributed to your particular opportunities and choices in ways that are quite different from those of a youngest daughter. Other roles that are important for many people include those of parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle.

In some cultures, particular generational roles carry responsibilities that are different from those of the dominant culture. For example, in the traditional Alaska Native culture of the Tlingit, the maternal uncle takes responsibility for rearing a woman’s son, even when the woman lives with the son’s father. In the dominant European American culture, children and older people are commonly considered minorities, although in many cultures, older adults are accorded higher status and are the dominant group.

DD stands for “Developmental disabilities” (e.g., disabilities related to Down syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder) and “other Disabilities” (e.g., those acquired at birth or later in life or secondary to chronic health conditions). Minority groups include

people who have cognitive, sensory, physical, and/or psychiatric disabilities.

If you do not have a disability and belong to the dominant group of nondisabled people, this influence is a reminder of the cognitive, sensory, physical, and psychological abilities you do have, and their influence on you. Like the fish in water, if you have never had a disability or been a caregiver for someone who has, you probably take your abilities for granted. You may never have thought of yourself as part of nondisabled, dominant culture.

At the same time, it is important to note that having a disability does not mean that a person automatically identifies with Disability Culture—a community that has its own norms, language, and beliefs. For example, people who are born or later become deaf or hard of hearing may not identify with Deaf Culture (which is signified by a capital *D*) and has its own language, norms, and beliefs.

R stands for “Religion and spirituality.” In the United States, religious minorities include Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists, along with a smaller number of people who hold other non-Christian identities (e.g., Shinto, Zoroastrian, and Sufi). Although some groups of Christians consider themselves minorities (e.g., fundamentalist Christians, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses), the dominant U.S. culture gives particular privileges to those of any Christian heritage over people of non-Christian heritage.

E stands for “Ethnic and racial identity.” In the United States, ethnic and racial minorities include people of African, Latino, Asian, Native, South Asian, Pacific Island, Arab, and Middle Eastern ethnicities (along with cultures within these broader groups—e.g., Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and people of other Asian identities). Middle-Eastern cultures include many non-Arab cultures (e.g., Kurdish, Turkish, and Iranian people).

S stands for “Socioeconomic status,” which is commonly defined by income, occupation, and education. Minority groups include people who are living in poverty, often in rural or inner-city areas, where resources are limited and educational opportunities are poor.

The second *S* stands for “Sexual orientation.” Minority groups include people who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

I stands for “Indigenous heritage,” which refers to American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Indigenous people. Although in the United States many Native people consider themselves to be members of an *ethnic* minority, this is not the case in all countries. For example, in Canada many Indigenous people refer to themselves as the *First Nations* because they preceded everyone who

immigrated to the country. This includes the French and English who came as colonizers and are referred to as the *Second Nations*, and all other ethnic groups who are described as the *Third Nations*. First Nations people encounter prejudice and discrimination as do Third Nations people; however, the former have unique concerns related to land, water, fishing, and other rights. Many Native people identify with the worldwide movement of Indigenous people.

N stands for “National origin.” Minority groups include people who were born in another country and often speak English as a second language (e.g., immigrants, refugees, and international students).

G stands for “Gender.” Minority groups include women and people who identify as transgender.

When you read this list, you may be thinking of other groups that could be defined as minority cultures and wondering why they are not included in the ADDRESSING list (e.g., the business world, the military, academia, the Alcoholics Anonymous recovery community). The reason for choosing the particular ADDRESSING groups is that they are groups that have experienced a history of systematic, institutionalized oppression—not isolated incidents of prejudice or discrimination. In addition, these groups have been highlighted by several major helping professions (e.g., the American Psychological Association, the American Counseling Association, and the National Association of Social Workers) as requiring special attention due to chronic neglect by the helping professions and the dominant culture.

Consider this: Although this book focuses on nine minority cultures within the United States, the ADDRESSING framework can be used to think about the diversity within any group (e.g., diversity within the U.S. military related to age and generational influences, disability/physical abilities, religion, ethnic and racial identity, and so on). Is there a group not included here that you are thinking of?

One way to begin exploring cultural influences on yourself is to start with the ADDRESSING acronym, using it as a mirror to recognize and reflect on the cultural influences on you. Whether you belong to the dominant cultural group or minority group (or both) in each domain, you have still been influenced. Take a look at the example of Diane in Table 2.2 to gain an idea of the kind of information to be looking for with regard to yourself.

Table 2.2. Diane's ADDRESSING Culture Sketch

<p><i>Age and generational influences:</i> I am in my 50s; a post–World War II baby boomer; affected by the women’s movement, Vietnam War, and hopefulness of college years in Chicago in the 1970s.</p>
<p><i>Developmental or other Disability:</i> I am 40 pounds overweight, but I don’t consider this a disability, although it contributes to my back pain and knee problems. My back pain and knee problems do not keep me from most activities, so I don’t consider them disabilities either. I was a caregiver for one year for my dad who was disabled by a stroke before he died.</p>
<p><i>Religion and spirituality:</i> I grew up Methodist but no longer practice. I occasionally attend a Unitarian church and hold some Buddhist beliefs. Being in nature feels spiritual to me.</p>
<p><i>Ethnic and racial identity:</i> Mom was French/German and from her I learned French words and how to make pastries, but she minimized the German because of prejudice against Germans after World War II. My father was Scotch/English/Irish. I married into a Puerto Rican family and have two bicultural, bilingual kids.</p>
<p><i>Socioeconomic status:</i> Dad and Grandpa worked for the railroad, and Mom was a homemaker. I grew up in a rural, working-class town in Illinois. My brother and I were the first in our family to attend college, and I am now an urban, middle-class high school teacher.</p>
<p><i>Sexual orientation:</i> I am heterosexual, but my brother is gay. Our parents have finally accepted this and his partner.</p>
<p><i>Indigenous heritage:</i> I do not have any Indigenous heritage that I know of, nor do I know any Native people personally.</p>
<p><i>National origin:</i> I was born and grew up in the United States; English is my first language, but I speak functional Spanish.</p>
<p><i>Gender:</i> I had a traditional upbringing regarding women’s roles, but the women’s movement influenced my values and beliefs. Currently, I am in a female-dominated profession (teacher). My roles as wife and mother are very important to me.</p>

Source: Adapted from Hays, P.A. (2008). *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and therapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Now take a few minutes to answer the following questions regarding each influence on you. There may be some overlap between the areas of influence, so feel free to add information that is not addressed

by these questions. Try to approach the exercise with curiosity, letting go of judgments of yourself or what you think you “should have” experienced. There are no right or wrong answers, no right or wrong identities, because every individual is unique. The point is to increase awareness of the influences on your values, decisions, behaviors, and opportunities that you may never have considered. When you finish, you will have outlined your own Culture Sketch.

EXERCISE 2.2

Your Culture Sketch

Age and generational influences: When you were born, what were the social expectations for a person of your identity? Do you identify with a particular generation (e.g., baby boomers, Gen X or Y, second-generation immigrant, etc.)? How have your values and worldview been shaped by the social movements of or influences on your generation (e.g., the Great Depression, World War II, the Vietnam War, the women’s movement, Stonewall, Americans with Disabilities Act, the civil rights movement, social media, an economic downturn, political events in another country)?

Developmental or other Disability: Do you identify as someone living with a visible disability or a nonvisible disability (e.g., chronic pain, psychiatric, or learning disability)? If no, has your personal or professional life been affected by others with disabilities (e.g., friend, family member, partner, or coworker with a disability)? How have your abilities or disability affected your life and opportunities?

Religion and spirituality: Were you brought up in a religious or spiritual tradition? Do you identify with a religion or have a spiritual practice

now? How were your values and goals shaped by your religious or non-religious upbringing?

Ethnic and racial identity: What do you consider your ethnic or racial identity? If you were adopted, what are the identities of your biological and adoptive parents? How do other people identify you? Are these the same? Are there ethnic or racial differences within your family?

Socioeconomic status: What social class did you grow up in, and what do you consider your socioeconomic status now? When you were in high school, what were the educational and work opportunities available to you?

Sexual orientation: Do you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual? If you are heterosexual, do you have a family member or friend who is gay? Is your family accepting of a gay member?

Indigenous heritage: Do you belong to a Native tribe or nation (e.g., Native Hawaiian, First Nations, Alaska Native, or American Indian)? Did you grow

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up on or near a reservation or Native community? Do you seek to connect or reconnect with your Native community?

National origin: Are you a U.S. citizen, an international student, or immigrant? Were you born in the United States? Do you (and your parents and grandparents) speak English as a first language? How has your nationality affected your life and opportunities?

Gender: What were and are the gender-related roles and expectations for you in your family of origin and current family, in your work setting, and in relation to your other cultural identities? How have these expectations affected your choices in life?

Now look back over your sketch and see if there is anything that strikes you about it. You may notice that this brief description only touches the surface and, as with the Who Am I? exercise, there are many layers to who you are. I have found it helpful to discuss one's sketch with a partner or in a small group, sharing whatever you feel comfortable with but also listening to the sketches of others. I am often surprised at the identifications that people hold, which are not visibly apparent—one more reminder of the richness of human experience.