

# Diversity in the Classroom

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# Diversity in the classroom

List examples of diversity that we are faced with in the classroom.

# Areas of Diversity

Race, Ethnicity and Nationality

Religion

Age (Veteran, Baby Boomer, x, y and ...)

Educational entry status (17 to Second Career)

Socio-economic status/employment status

Gender, Gender identity, Sexual orientation

Wellness/illness and Mobility, Abilities/disabilities

# Areas of Diversity

- Focusing mainly on cultural distinctions
- Remember the other factors/dimensions cause differences in sharing or not sharing meaning.
- Each of the dimensions listed can be seen as a subculture with its own language, values, behaviour patterns and treasured material possessions

What cultural trait from another culture might you have difficulty being non-judgmental about?

# Components of Culture

- **Language** – the underlying basis of culture

Think of 3 idioms or slang phrases in current use (e.g. words or sayings from youth culture, sports and the arts) which taken literally would confuse people who were speaking English as a second language.

Describe the worst misunderstanding resulting from differential use of language you have ever witnessed.



# Restricted v. Elaborate Code

First year student (restricted code) v. Queen Elizabeth II (elaborate code)

My Bad

- I apologize for my inconsiderate error

LOL

- I am amused by what I just wrote and I presumptuously assume that you will be similarly titillated

24-7

- This activity will continue every hour of every day, all week

Stop mad dawgin me, I'm packing toast and I'll bust a cap in your ass

- Be careful with this libelous approach, as I possess a firearm and am in danger of committing homicide via rectal insertion of said implement

Whorra u sayin

- Are you anticipating taking up some organized leisure time activity this evening

# Components of Culture

- **Belief Systems** – Language shapes beliefs, ideas, attitudes, values etc.

What is the strangest  
compliment or blessing you  
have ever heard of?

Describe the most surprising reaction to gift giving or receiving you have ever heard of (e.g. something seemingly trivial that caused great joy)?

Describe an occasion when it was clear that your concept of time and time-keeping was at odds with someone else's.

# Components of Culture

- **Behaviours** – for the most part we behave in a way consistent with our beliefs

Describe an intercultural encounter that did or would make you nervous.

What “inappropriate-to-our-culture” behaviour pattern have you witnessed?

Touching Behaviour

Greeting Behaviour



Describe sounds from other cultures that you find it hard to adjust to.

Describe smells from other cultures that you find it hard to adjust to.

# Components of Culture

- **Material Possessions** – As we behave some material possessions become more important to our activities than others

What visual image  
from another culture do you  
find the most startling?

# The Iceberg of Culture

Fine Arts

Classical music

Drama Literature Games

Popular music Folk Dancing Cuisine

Sea Level ~~~~~ Sea Level

Notions of modesty Concepts of Beauty Artifacts

Ideas on child-rearing Rules of descent Patterns of interaction

Superior/subordinate relationships Courtship practices Ideas on justice

Ideas on sin Tempo of work Ideas on leadership Cleanliness Body language

Furniture style Concept of time Defining insanity Notions about adolescence

Display of emotions Social interaction pattern Rhythms of speech Social institutions

# Cultural Relativity

- A cultural trait can only be fully understood in the context of the culture in which it originated.
- An activity may appear harmful, sinful, illegal, disgusting to us but it may have a completely different meaning to the people of another culture

Describe a North American  
obsession/fascination that other  
cultures might consider shallow.

# Ethnocentrism

- The tendency to judge other cultures using our own standards
- See our culture as being central
- Judge others by how close they come to us in language, beliefs, practices and prized possessions



Describe 2 stereotypes that  
are still generally believed  
in our society.

Describe the biggest screw  
up you've made in  
intercultural encounters.

# Acculturation

- Adjusting to the ways of a new social situation.
- An immigrant moving to a new country
- Migrating between regions within a country
- Moving from a rural area to the city
- Returning to school after a number of years away from education
- Moving to an area where the dominant religion is not yours
- Coming from a restricted code environment to post-secondary elaborate code

# Stages in Acculturation

- The acculturation process presupposes that:
  - 1. The person possesses the ability to acculturate.
  - This is enabled by some familiarity with the language and symbols of the new place and familiarity with technical skills
- i.e. some beginning skills

# Stages in Acculturation

- 2. The person possesses the desire to acculturate to the new social situation.
- Could depend initially on the reason they left their former place. (second career)
- Their own perception of their capability to adapt.
- Has the person developed the motivation to belong to the new group

# Stages in Acculturation

- 3. The degree of accommodation by the host society.
- Accommodation is the acceptance of the newcomer
- Could depend on such factors as race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, costume etc.
- Sometimes may be simply perceived discrimination, rather than actual
- Up to the host to make first contact

# Culture Shock

- A sense of being overwhelmed by new stimuli
- Symptoms similar to physical shock:
- Depression – vague far-away look
- Disorientation
- Inappropriate responses
- Homesickness

# Remember

Life is often stressful for student's who are sub-culturally "different" when surrounded by a dominant culture

Be inclusive – ask these student as many questions as others. Don't "protect"

Don't assume that all members of a subculture know each other, think alike, behave alike or, even, like each other



# Remember

Use inclusive language:

Up to 10% of your class will be gay do not presume heterosexuality in discussions

Men and Women (not ladies)

Alternate between he and she

Don't presume middle class background – e.g. talk re. material possessions

Don't presume the family structure a student comes from.

# Remember

Do not presume Christianity in your discussions. Many in your class will be of faiths other than Christian and others will be non-religious

Acknowledge and allow absence for non-Christian religious holidays – Eid, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, Diwali, Festivus.

Also be aware of Orthodox Christmas & Easter

# Remember

Consider student's prior knowledge – those with considerable life experience could be useful resources

Remember you are a product of a time and place – your cultural, literary or historical references, metaphors and analogies may carry zero value to some students

Most students entering college last fall born in 1991/2.  
South Africa's official apartheid not existed during their lifetime.  
Cars have always had eye-level rear stop lights, CD players,  
and air bags.  
"Big Brother" is merely a television show.  
George Foreman has always been a barbecue grill salesman  
The "Fab Four" are not a male rock group, but four women  
enjoying "Sex and the City."  
They never "rolled down" a car window.  
The NHL season has always gone on and on and on and on.  
U2 has always been more than a spy plane.  
They never saw Johnny Carson live on television.  
Avatars have nothing to do with Hindu deities.  
The World Wide Web has been an online tool since they were  
born.  
What Berlin wall?

# Discussion

- What difficult-to-deal-with diversity problems have you faced?
- How did you deal with it/them?
- Anybody else got any ideas on how to handle this?