

### Cultural Heritage

Most people are knowledgeable and open about some aspects of their culture. About other aspects, they may have either less information or a heightened sense of privacy. In some matters they might fear judgment or discrimination. People from the dominant culture may not recognize their own values, behaviors, or traditions as cultural at all— they may think of them simply as “normal.”

As a foundation for expanding your understanding of other cultures, it is important to be thoroughly acquainted with your own. Cultural competence begins with understanding and appreciating your own identity. You are a “culturally rich” individual with your own blend of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religion or spirituality, geographic location, and physical and mental abilities.

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Names are an important element of identity. Perhaps your first or last name has family or cultural significance, or maybe you have changed your name to better reflect who you are. Think about the following questions:

- Who gave you your name? Why?
- What is the ethnic origin or meaning of your name?
- Does your name have cultural significance?
- Do you have more than one ethnic origin?
- Is the ethnic origin of your name different from the ethnic origin with which you most identify or the ethnic group of which you are a member?
- Do you have a nickname?
- Have you taken a name different from the one you were given at birth?
- Has your name ever caused any obstacles for you?

**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TIP:** Names hold a lot of significance for people. They may have personal, familial, and cultural meanings. Learning them and pronouncing them correctly is a sign of respect, especially if the name is unfamiliar to you. Using student names and pronouncing them correctly is a way of showing the teens that you “see” them and care about them as individuals.

## Your Personal Biases

Use the questions below to explore your own biases.

1. Where did I live while I was growing up and what experiences did I have? How did these influence who I am now?
2. As a child, what messages did I receive about my identity? What adults had major influences in my life?
3. What are one or more values or behaviors that I have learned from my cultural background.
4. We are all complex individuals with a variety of influences. What values or behaviors have I adopted that may conflict with each other?
5. What human characteristics am I most judgmental of in other people?
6. What specific words or behaviors are “red flags” or triggers for me?
7. Who are my closest 3 friends? What similarities do we share (race, social class, etc)?
8. Who are my neighbors?
9. When was the last time I noticed a prejudice in myself (automatic or considered)?
10. When was the last time I remember letting something slide that could be racist, prejudice, or discriminatory in some way?
11. When did I last get uncomfortable or feel like a didn’t fit in because I was a minority in some way?
12. When was the last time I took leadership to welcome a person different from myself into an activity, event or space?

### 13 Tips on How to Become More Culturally Humble

1. Learn about your culture and values, focusing on how they inform your attitudes, behavior and verbal and nonverbal communication.
2. Don't think that "good" and "right" values exist in your own culture exclusively; acknowledge that the beliefs and practices of other cultures are just as valid.
3. Question your cultural assumptions: Check their reality, rather than immediately acting on them.
4. Accept cultures different from your own and understand that those differences can be learned.
5. Learn to contrast other cultures and values with your own.
6. Learn to assess whether differences of opinion are based on style (communication, learning or conflict) or substance (issue).
7. Practice the communication loop; don't rely on your perceptions.
8. Examine the circle in which you live and play (this reflects your choice of peers). Expand your circle to experience other cultures, values and beliefs.
9. Continue to read and learn about other cultures. Do your homework: Know something about another culture group prior to approaching them.
  - Follow appropriate protocol: Know and demonstrate respectful behavior based on the values of the group.
  - Use collaborative networks—church (spiritual), community or other natural support groups of that culture.
  - Practice respect.
10. Understand that any change or new learning experience can be challenging, unsettling and tiresome; give yourself a break and allow for mistakes.
11. Remember the reciprocal nature of relationships—give something back.
12. See multiculturalism as an exciting, fulfilling and resourceful way to live.
13. Have fun and keep your sense of humor!

### Glossary of Terms

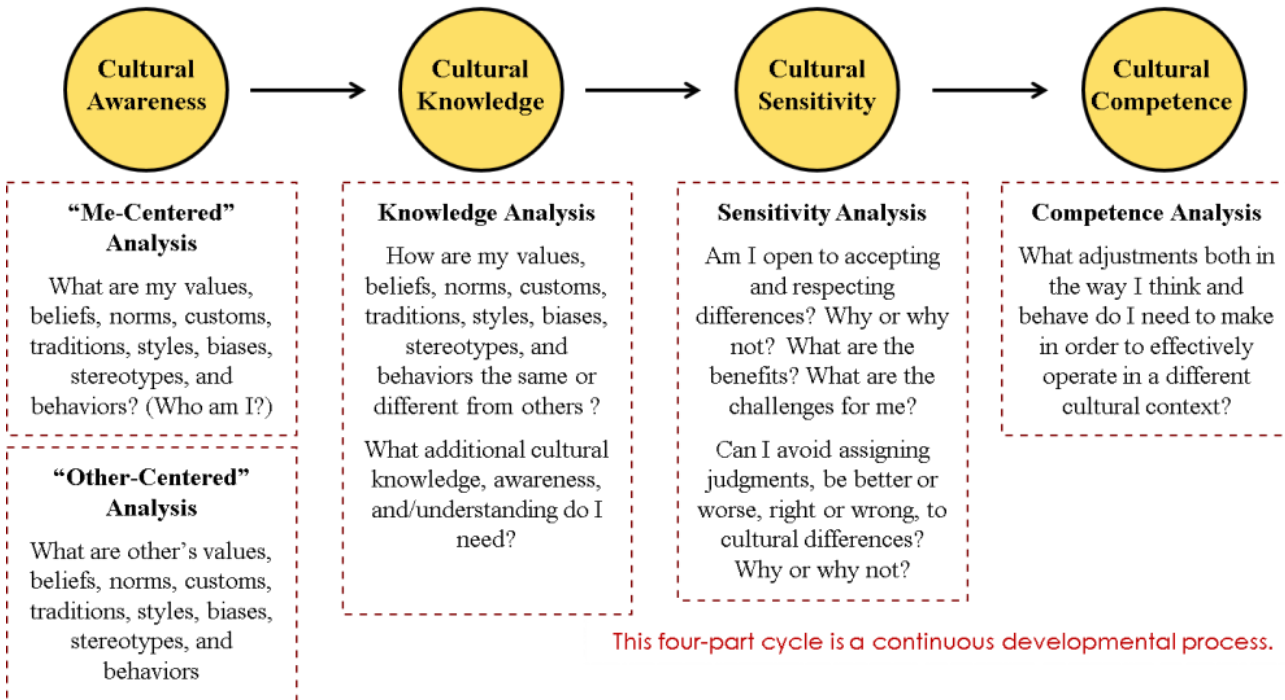
- **Ableism:** Discrimination or prejudice based on a limitation, difference or impairment in physical, mental or sensory capacity or ability
- **Ageism:** Discrimination or prejudice based on age, particularly aimed at the elderly
- **Bias:** A personal judgment, especially one that is unreasonable or unfair
- **Biracial:** Of two races; usually describing a person having parents of different races
- **Classism:** Discrimination or prejudice based on socioeconomic status
- **Cultural Dominance:** The pervasiveness of one set of traditions, norms, customs, literature, art and institutions, to the exclusion of all others
- **Cultural Competence:** The ability to work effectively with people from a variety of cultures, ethnicities, races, religions, classes, sexual orientations and genders
- **Cultural Group:** A group of people who consciously or unconsciously share identifiable values, norms, symbols and some ways of living that are repeated and transmitted from one generation to another
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** An awareness of the nuances of one's own and other cultures
- **Culturally Appropriate:** Demonstrating both sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities and effectiveness in communicating a message within and across cultures
- **Culture:** The shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore and institutions of a group of people who are unified by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation and/or religion
- **Disability:** A limitation, difference or impairment in a person's physical, mental or sensory capacity or ability. Many communities prefer the term "differently-abled" over "disabled."
- **Discrimination:** An act of prejudice or a manner of treating individuals differently due to their appearance, status or membership in a particular group
- **Disproportionality:** Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of various groups in different social, political or economic institutions
- **Dominant Group/Culture:** The "mainstream" culture in a society, consisting of the people who hold the power and influence
- **Ethnicity:** The classification of a group of people who share common characteristics, such as language, race, tribe or national origin
- **Ethnocentrism:** The attitude that one's own cultural group is superior
- **Gender:** A social or cultural category generally assigned based on a person's biological sex (typically defined by the appearance of their genitalia at birth)
- **Gender Identity:** A person's sense of being masculine, feminine, or some combination thereof
- **Heterosexism:** An ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity or relationship
- **Homophobia:** Fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality, homosexuals or same-sex relationships
- **Institutional Racism:** Biased policies and practices within an organization or system that disadvantage people of a certain race or ethnicity

### Glossary of Terms

- **Language:** The form or pattern of communication—spoken, written or signed—used by residents or descendants of a particular nation or geographic area or by any body of people. Language can be formal or informal and includes dialect, idiomatic speech and slang.
- **Minority:** The smaller in number of at least two groups; can imply a lesser status or influence and can be seen as an antonym for the words “majority” and “dominant”
- **Multicultural:** Designed for or pertaining to two or more distinct cultures
- **Multiracial:** Describing a person, community, organization, etc., composed of many races
- **National Origin:** The country or region where a person was born
- **Person of Color:** Usually used to define a person who is not a descendant of people from European countries. Individuals can choose whether or not to self-identify as a person of color.
- **Prejudice:** Over-generalized, oversimplified or exaggerated beliefs associated with a category or group of people, which are not changed even in the face of contrary evidence
- **Race:** A socially defined population characterized by distinguishable physical characteristics, usually skin color
- **Racism:** The belief that some racial groups are inherently superior or inferior to others; discrimination, prejudice or a system of advantage and/or oppression based on race
- **Sexism:** Discrimination or prejudice based on gender or gender identity
- **Sexual Orientation:** Describes the gender(s) of people to whom a person feels romantically and/or sexually attracted:
  - Heterosexual: Attracted to the other gender
  - Homosexual: Attracted to the same gender (i.e., gay or lesbian)
  - Bisexual: Attracted to either gender
  - Pansexual: Attracted to all people regardless of their gender identity
  - Asexual: Not sexually attracted to people of any gender
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Individuals’ economic class (e.g., poor, working-class, middle-class, wealthy) or position in society based on their financial situation or background
- **Stereotype:** A highly simplified conception or belief about a person, place or thing, based on limited information
- **Transgender:** Describes a person whose gender identity differs from his/her assigned gender and/or biological sex
- **Transsexual:** A person whose gender identity differs from his/her assigned gender and/or biological sex. Many transsexuals alter their biological sex through hormones and/or surgery.
- **Values:** What a person believes to be important and accepts as an integral part of who he/she is
- **Xenophobia:** A fear of all that is foreign, or a fear of people believed to be “foreigners”

**Models for Understanding Cultural Humility**

**Cultural Competence Model™**



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The contemporary spectrum can be represented like this:

