The following material has been excerpted from Thompson & Cuseo (in press), *Diversity & The College Experience* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

**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?

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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**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 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?

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**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?

*Source:* Adapted from University of New Hampshire Office of Residential Life (2001). *The hate that hate produced.* Retrieved from http://www.unh.edu/residential-life/diversity/kn\_article6.pdf.

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**Family Ties**

Answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

a. What is the race or ethnicity of your father, mother, and grandparents?

b. How strongly do your family members identify with their race or ethnicity?

c. How strongly do you identify with your race or ethnicity?

d. How do your views of other racial or ethnic groups differ from those of your parents and grandparents?

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**Community Ties**

a. What was the majority racial or ethnic group in the neighborhood where you grew up?

b. How much exposure did you have to other racial or ethnic groups during your elementary and high school years?

c. If you had contact with members of other ethnic or racial groups, where did this contact typically take place?

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**Personal Heroes & Role Models**

a. My personal hero is . . .

b. For me, the historical figure that has had the most positive influence on America was . . .

Do you think that your answers to either of the above questions were influenced by your membership in any of the groups you identified with in Exercise 2.1?

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**Diversity Curiosity**

Write down (in question form) one thing you have always wondered about, or would like to know more about, the following groups of people:

a. Native Americans (American Indians)

b. Hispanic Americans (Latinos and Latinas)

c. African Americans

d. Asian Americans

e. Elderly (senior citizens)

f. Gays or lesbians.

Would you feel comfortable approaching members of these groups to ask your question about their experiences?

Which of these groups would feel least comfortable approaching to ask your question about their experiences? Why?

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**Case Study: Celebrating a Tradition or Perpetuating a Stereotype?**

In Dutch Christmas tradition, Sinterklaas (St. Nicholas) is accompanied by a character known as Zwarte Piet (Black Pete)—a black helper—whose role is typically played by a white person in blackface with a frizzy wig, big gold earring and very large, red lips.

An intense debate is taking place in Holland among those who think Black Pete is an offensive stereotype and symbolic of slavery, while others claim that it’s just a beloved part of the Dutch Christmas tradition. The head of a working group at the United Nations Office for Human Rights has called for an end to the tradition, stating that members of her working group “cannot understand why it is that the people in The Netherlands cannot see it is a throwback to slavery.”

Organizers for this year’s Dutch Christmas festivals say they will try to defuse the situation by having the Black Peters not wear golden earrings, have some remove their large, curly wigs, and encourage children attending the festivals to paint their faces in various colors.

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. How or why do you think the Black Peter tradition began in the first place?

2. Do you think that the presence of Black Peter at Christmas festivals may affect the development of Dutch children’s views or attitudes toward black people in general?

3. Do you think the Black Peter tradition should be allowed to continue? Why?

Source: McClatchy Newspapers (2013).

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**Intercultural Interview**

1. Identify someone on your campus from an ethnic or racial group that’s unfamiliar to you and

ask that person for an interview. During the interview, ask the following questions:

a) What does “diversity” mean to you?

b) What prior experiences have affected your current viewpoints or attitudes about diversity?

c) What would you say have been the major influences and turning points in your life?

d) Who would you cite as positive role models, heroes, or sources of inspiration in your life?

e) What societal contributions made by your culture would you like others to be aware of and

acknowledge?

f) What do you hope will never again be said about your ethnic or racial group?

2. If you were the interviewee instead of the interviewer, how would you have answered the

above questions?

3. What do you think accounts for the differences (and similarities) between your answers and

those provided by your interviewee?

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**Diversity Comfort Zones**

Prejudice and discrimination can be subtle and only begin to surface when the social or emotional distance among members of different groups grows closer.

Honestly rate your level of comfort with the following situations.

Someone from another racial group:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. going to your school | high | moderate | low |
| 2. working in your place of employment | high | moderate | low |
| 3. living on your street as a neighbor | high | moderate | low |
| 4. living with you as a roommate | high | moderate | low |
| 5. socializing with you as a personal friend | high | moderate | low |
| 6. being your most intimate friend or romantic partner | high | moderate | low |
| 7. being your partner in marriage. | high | moderate | low |

For any item you rated “low,” why did you give it a low rating?

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**Hidden Bias Test**

Go to https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/selectatest.html and take one or more of the *“hidden bias tests”* on the website. These tests assess subtle biases with respect to gender, age, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, religious denominations, sexual orientation, disabilities, and body weight. You can assess whether you have a bias toward any of these groups.

After you complete your self-assessment, reflect on your results by responding to the following questions:

a. Did you think the assessment results were accurate or valid?

b. Did the results reveal any bias that you were unaware of?

c. What do you think best accounts for, or explains your results?

d. If your parents and best friend took the test, how do you think their results would compare

with yours?

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**Case Study of a Hate Crime: Racially Motivated Murder**

Jasper County, Texas, has a population of approximately 31,000 people, 80% of whom are white, 18% black, and 2% are of other races. The county’s poverty rate is considerably higher than the national average, and its average household income is significantly lower. In 1998, the mayor, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and two councilmen were black. From the outside, Jasper appeared to be a town with racial harmony, and its black and white leaders were quick to state there wasn’t racial tension there.

However, on June 7, 1998, James Byrd, Jr., a 49-year-old African-American male, was walking home along a road in the evening and was offered a ride by three white males. Rather than taking Mr. Byrd home, Lawrence Brewer (31), John King (23), and Shawn Berry (23), three individuals linked to white-supremacist groups, took Mr. Byrd to an isolated area and began beating him. They then dropped his pants to his ankles, painted his face black, chained Mr. Byrd to their truck and dragged him for approximately three miles. The truck was driven in a zigzag fashion in order to inflict maximum pain on the victim. Mr. Byrd was decapitated after his body collided with a culvert in a ditch alongside the road. His skin, arms, genitalia, and other body parts were strewn along the road, while his torso was found dumped in front of a black cemetery. Medical examiners testified that Mr. Byrd was alive for much of the dragging.

Brewer and King, whose bodies were covered with racist tattoos, had been on parole prior to the incident, and they had previously been cellmates. King had spent an extensive amount of time in prison where he began to associate with white males in an environment where each race was pitted against the other. Both men were found guilty of murder and sentenced to death for the murder of Mr. Byrd.

In the aftermath of the murder, Mr. Byrd’s family created the James Byrd Foundation for Racial Healing in 1998. On January 20, 1999, a wrought iron fence that separated black and white graves for more than 150 years in Jasper Cemetery was removed in a special unity service. Members of the Ku Klux Klan have since visited the gravesite of James Byrd several times, leaving racist stickers and other derogatory marks that have angered the Jasper community and Mr. Byrd’s family.

*Sources*: *San Antonio Express News*, September 17, 1999, *Louisiana Weekly*, February 3, 2003, *Houston Chronicle*, June 14, 1998, Two Towns of Jasper, PBS.

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. What social factors (if any) do you think led to the incident?

2. Could the incident have been prevented? If yes, how? If no, why not?

3. What long-term effects (if any) will this incident have on the town?

4. Do you think an incident such as this could occur in your hometown or near your college

campus? Why?

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**Case Study of a Hate Crime: Homophobic Murder**

October 7, 1998, Matthew Shepard—a 21-year-old University of Wyoming freshman— was fatally beaten a few hours after attending a planning meeting for Gay Awareness Week events on campus. Matthew was lured out of a bar where two individuals, Aaron James McKinney and Russell Henderson, pretended to be gay and targeted him for a robbery. According to interviews with McKinney conducted by police investigators, Shepard placed his hand on McKinney’s leg as they drove through Laramie. McKinney then stated, “Guess what, we’re not gay. You’re going to get jacked. It’s Gay Awareness Week!” McKinney and Henderson began beating Shepard inside the truck and drove him to an isolated place in the countryside. They tied him to a fence and pistol whipped him with a .357 magnum handgun. The assailants then stole Shepard’s wallet and shoes and left him tied to the fence.

Matthew Shepard died five days after the attack. He never regained consciousness during the time he was hospitalized. An autopsy revealed that Matthew had been hit in the head 18 times. He also sustained bruises on the back of his hands while trying to protect himself as well as bruises around the groin—indicating that he’d been kicked numerous times. When explaining his actions that night to his girlfriend McKinney said: “Well you know how I feel about gays.”

Russell Henderson pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison. McKinney was about to begin trial to determine whether he should be put to death, but Matthew Shepard’s parents persuaded the prosecution not to pursue the death penalty and allow him to be sentenced to life in prison instead. In a statement after the sentencing at the McKinney trial, Matthew’s father ended the proceedings with the following statement: “You robbed me of something very precious, and I will never forgive you for that. May you live a long life and may you thank Matthew every day for it.”

(*Source*: This information was obtained from *NY Times* articles published on the following dates: October 10, 1998, November 21, 1998, April 6, 1999, and November 5, 1999.

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Why or how do you think the attackers developed such an intense hatred of gay men?

2. What, if anything, could have been done to prevent the attackers’ hatred toward gays from developing in the first place?

3. Do you think the attackers could ever be successfully rehabilitated, educated, or treated for their homophobia?

4. Do you predict that hate crimes toward gay males are likely to decrease, remain the same, or increase in the future? Why?

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