

Your Culture Sketch

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Table 2-1. The ADDRESSING Framework.¹

| <u>Cultural Influences</u> | <u>Dominant Group</u> | <u>Nondominant/Minority Gp</u> |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| Age & 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 |
| Indigenous heritage | European Americans | American Indians, Inuit, Alaska Natives, Métis, Native Hawaiians, Chamorro people of Guam |
| National origin | U.S.-born Americans | immigrants, refugees, & international students |
| Gender | men | women & transgender people |

¹This Table and the following exercises are from: Hays, P.A. (2013). *Connecting Across Cultures: The Helper's Toolkit*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 15-16. Original version published in Hays, P.A. (2008). *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and therapy*. Washington DC: APA.

Step 1. Divide the class into pairs. Ask each participant to share with their partner everything they feel comfortable sharing about their own cultural identity and heritage in one minute.

Step 2. Return to the large group, and ask participants what cultural influences were mentioned in their descriptions. Explain that definitions of culture abound, and describe the ADDRESSING framework which focuses on nine key cultural influences that the APA, ACA, and NASW have stated need extra attention. Include a discussion of the six key points outlined in pp. 24-33 of *Connecting Across Cultures: The Helper's Toolkit* [1. We all have biases; 2. We're all biased, but we don't all belong to dominant cultural groups; 3. When bias is reinforced by powerful groups and social structures, the results are systems of privilege and oppression; 4. Nonprivileged (minority) members are socialized to be aware of the lines separating those who have privilege from those who do not; 5. Privileged members of these systems are socialized to ignore the lines and differences; 6. Privilege separates privileged and nonprivileged people from important information about one another.]

Step 3. Instructions to participants: 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.

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, women's movement, Stonewall, Americans with Disabilities Act, 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 has disability status -- either your own disability or that of someone else in your life -- affected your life and opportunities?

Religion & 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 & 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, for example, Native Hawaiian, First Nations, Alaska Native, or American Indian? Did you grow 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 U.S.? 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 as 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.

Your Constellation of Privileges

Step 4. Now return to your Culture Sketch and put a star next to the influences in which you are member of the *dominant* group. If you are a young or middle-aged adult, put a star next to Age and generational influences (because you are not a member of the minority groups of children or older adults). If you do *not* have any disability, put a star next to Developmental and other Disabilities (because you are member of the nondisabled dominant group). If you are grew up or currently identify as Christian or secular, put a star next to Religion and spirituality. If you are of Euroamerican heritage, put a star next to Race/ethnicity. If you grew up middle-class or currently

are middle-class, put a star next to Socioeconomic status. If you are heterosexual, put a star next to Sexual orientation. If you have no Indigenous (American Indian, Alaska Native, or other Native) heritage, put a star next to Indigenous heritage. If you were born in the US and are a citizen of the US, put a star next to National origin. If you are a man, put a star next to Gender.

You have just mapped out your personal *Constellation of Privileges*. Recognizing where you hold privilege is important because the areas in which you have privilege are those in which you are most likely to lack awareness and knowledge regarding members of the related minority groups that do not have such privileges. However, as you may have noted, identity is not always easy to categorize. For example, a biracial individual holds membership in both a dominant and minority racial/ethnic group. Similarly, a White gay man belongs to the dominant racial/ethnic group and minority sexual orientation group.

This exercise highlights how complex cultural influences are, and the importance of being especially aware of those areas in which you hold privilege. For more information, see the two books cited above.