



Definitions of Pluralism and Diversity

Diversity is the state of being different or diverse. When used to describe people or population groups, diversity encompasses multidimensional factors. Dimensions of diversity that might be found in any group include: race, ethnicity, cultural identity, experiences, education, religion, age, gender, ability, skills, lifestyle, income, and family.

Pluralism is a system that holds within it individuals or groups differing in basic background, experiences, and culture. It allows for the development of a common tradition, while preserving the right of each group to maintain its cultural heritage. Pluralism is a process involving mutually respectful relationships.

The Top Ten Questions to Examine Your Diversity Training/Facilitation Skills

What are your trust building skill strengths and weaknesses (Openness, Congruence, Supportive, Reliable)?

Which social groups, (e.g., gays/lesbians, African Americans, Asians, men, etc.) do you feel least comfortable working with? Keep in mind that everyone has a prejudice.

What are your strengths and weaknesses as a trainer/facilitator?

What two things do you need to do to overcome your weak areas?

What was your most difficult intercultural encounter as a trainer/facilitator?

Have you developed your ability to handle a range of difficult intercultural encounters?

What can you do to develop trust early in a workshop or diverse work group?

Do you feel comfortable leading a diversity workshop or work group alone?

What types of conflict management skills are needed to handle arguments between participants?

What do you need to do to take care of yourself as a result of engaging in this difficult work?

The Top Ten Caveats in Diversity Training

Heightened emotionality and tension.

Danger of polarization.

People with personal axes to grind.

People getting boxed into comers.

Wide range of reactions.

White male bashing.

Timing training to fit optimal periods.

Danger of lip service training.

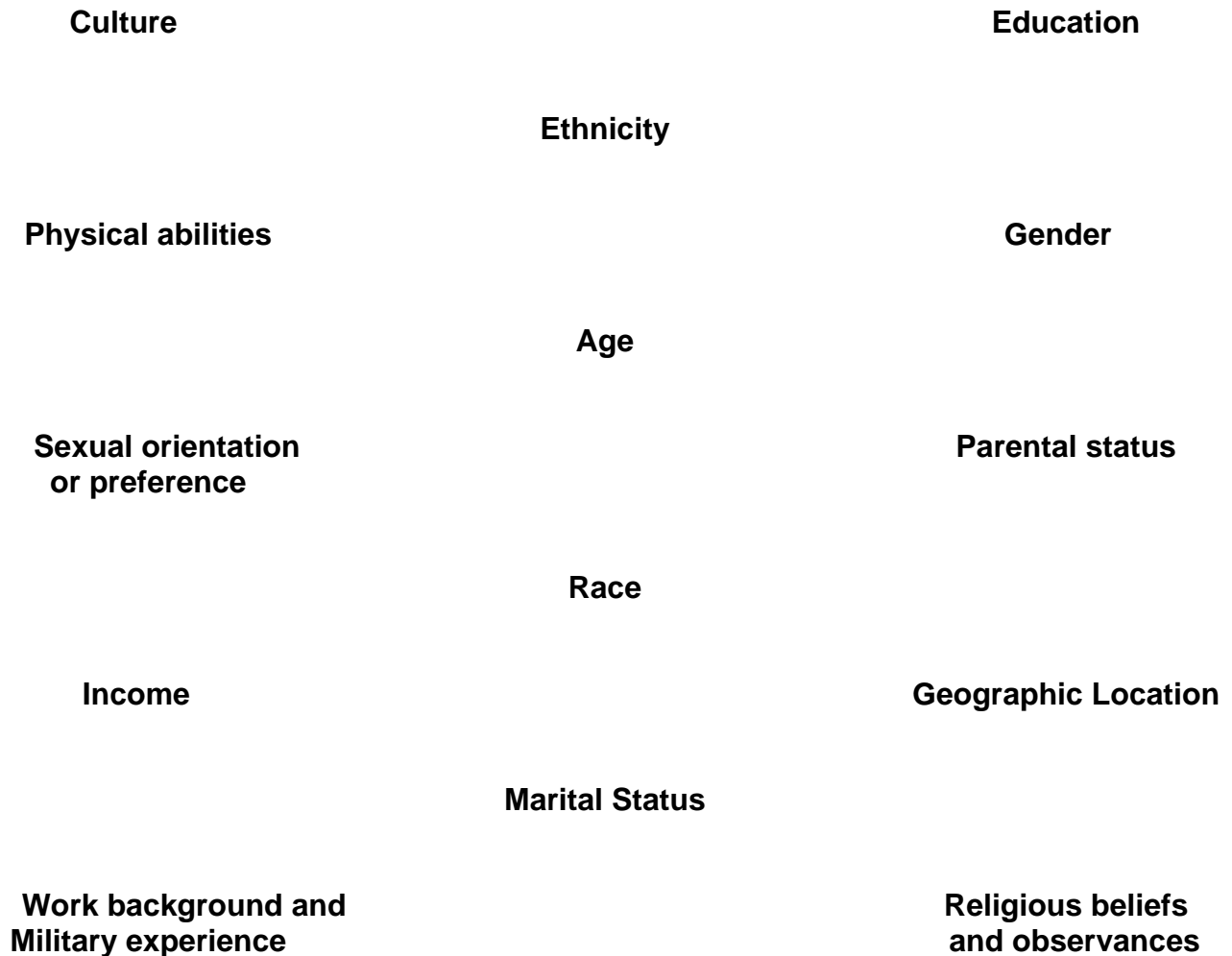
Danger of group splitting (e.g., racial, ethnic or gender).

Danger of lacking trust.

National Educational Services - March 2000

What is Pluralism and How Does it Fit In?

Pluralism as defined by GSUSA: “Pluralism is a system that holds within it individuals or groups differing in basic background, experiences, and culture. It allows for the development of a common tradition, while preserving the right of each group to maintain its cultural heritage. Pluralism is a process involving mutually respectful relationships.”



Guidelines for Incorporating Pluralism in Training

I. An Approach for Incorporating Pluralism in Training Programs

Step 1 – Analyze the training to determine the degree to which it includes pluralism.

Ask: a. Are there sections which offer opportunities for the inclusion of pluralism?
b. Are there sections which violate pluralism?

Step 2 – Brainstorm ways for including pluralism in the training.

Step 3 – Select one or more ideas.

Step 4 – Incorporate the idea(s) in the training and test them.

Step 5 – Get feedback from participants.

Step 6 – Modify the training accordingly.

II. How to Find Opportunities for increasing Pluralism in Training

Some Questions to Ask Yourself:

- What is the composition of the community vs. the composition of our trainee/leader groups?
- Where do we conduct training? Why? How close is the training site to the minorities we serve?
- Does our training schedule violate anyone's holidays or religious schedule?
- Do the references to minority groups in our training segments flatter or embarrass the minority group? Do they contain facts or fiction? Are the references stereotypical?
- How do I currently present pluralism in training sessions? Am I positive, neutral, negative?
- Were the examples in our training primarily majority oriented? Or do they include minorities?
- Should some of our material be translated for use by the leaders who serve minority groups?

III. How to Increase Pluralism in Training

A. Trainer Training - Conduct a cross cultural awareness training for trainers

B. Leader Training

- Conduct cultural awareness training sessions for entire organization – staff and volunteers
- Develop materials and implement training sessions to help leaders discuss pluralism topics such as cross cultural awareness and racism.
- Provide training in pluralism for leaders; have them brainstorm how they can incorporate pluralism in their activities with the girls, parents, and other volunteers.
- Include a cross cultural awareness session in every Basic Leadership Training given.

IV. Where to Incorporate Pluralism

Some Opportunity Areas:

- A cross cultural “sharing” day (other than ethnic food)
- Alternative Trainings
- Careers/Vocations – include role models from various minority groups
- Ceremonies
- Contemporary issues
- Cooking
- Games – from various cultures/countries
- Girl Scout participation in minority group/ethnic community activities
- Gold and Silver Award Projects
- Holiday activities – holidays of different cultures
- Parent and sibling participation in cross cultural understanding programs
- Poems
- Schedule meetings and training sessions (dates/days/times) that respect the culture of the participants
- Girl Scouts’ Own
- Sensitive or controversial topics – pluralism: leading a discussion on cross culture, racism
- Service Projects
- Songs
- Trainer/leader/Girl Scout awareness and understand of, and openness to pluralism
- Trainer/leader/Girl Scout cross cultural understanding
- Visiting community institutions (for example, nursing homes – Christian, Jewish, non-sectarian)

Adapted from GS of Sahuaro Council, 2004

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