

Appreciating Diversity

Avoiding Stereotypes and Overcoming Biases



Humans have a long history of displaying prejudice and discrimination toward other members of their own species. Although some of America's more flagrant forms of discrimination have been eliminated (e.g., slavery), a recent panel of national experts reported that the United States still remains a country deeply divided along the lines of culture, class, and religion; these divisions are becoming sharper and more significant due to the increase in the proportion of ethnic and racial minorities in the American population (Brookings Institute, 2008). America's public schools have become more segregated than they were in the late 1960s (Orfield, 1993).

This chapter identifies the common stereotypes, prejudices, and biases that have plagued our society; explores their underlying causes; and proposes a model for overcoming these barriers to effective multicultural education.

Stereotyping

The word "stereotype" derives from a combination of two roots: (a) "stereo," to look at in a fixed way, and (b) "type," to categorize or group together (as in the word "typical"); thus, stereotyping means to view individuals of the same type (group) in the same (fixed) way. In effect, stereotyping is rooted in assumptions about the "average characteristics of a group, which are imposed on all members from the group by ignoring or disregarding each member's individuality" (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009). Thus, all people, or virtually all people who are members of the same group (e.g., race or gender) are viewed as having the same personal characteristics—as in the expression: "You know what they're like; they're all the same."

Stereotypes involve *bias*, which literally means "slant." Bias can be positive or negative; positive bias results in a favorable stereotype (e.g., "Germans are great scientists and engineers"), and negative bias results in an unfavorable stereotype (e.g., "Germans are cold and calculating"). See Box 3.1 for examples of other group stereotypes.



PERSONAL INSIGHT

When I was six years old, I was told by another six-year-old from a different racial group that all people of my race could not swim. Because I could not swim at that time and she could, I began to think she was right. To be sure, I asked a boy of the same racial group as the little girl if her statement were true; he exclaimed: "Yes, it's true!"

Because I was raised in a geographical area where few other African Americans were around to counteract this belief about blacks, I bought into this stereotype for a long time until I finally took swimming lessons as an adult. I'm now a lousy swimmer after many lessons because I did not even attempt to swim until I was an adult. The moral of this story is that group stereotypes can limit the confidence and potential of individuals who are members of the stereotyped group.

Aaron Thompson

“Much knowledge about ethnic groups is stereotyped, distorted, and based on distant observations, scattered and superficial contacts, inadequate or imbalanced media treatment, and incomplete factual information.”

—National Council for the Social Studies



Box 3.1 Examples of Common Stereotypes

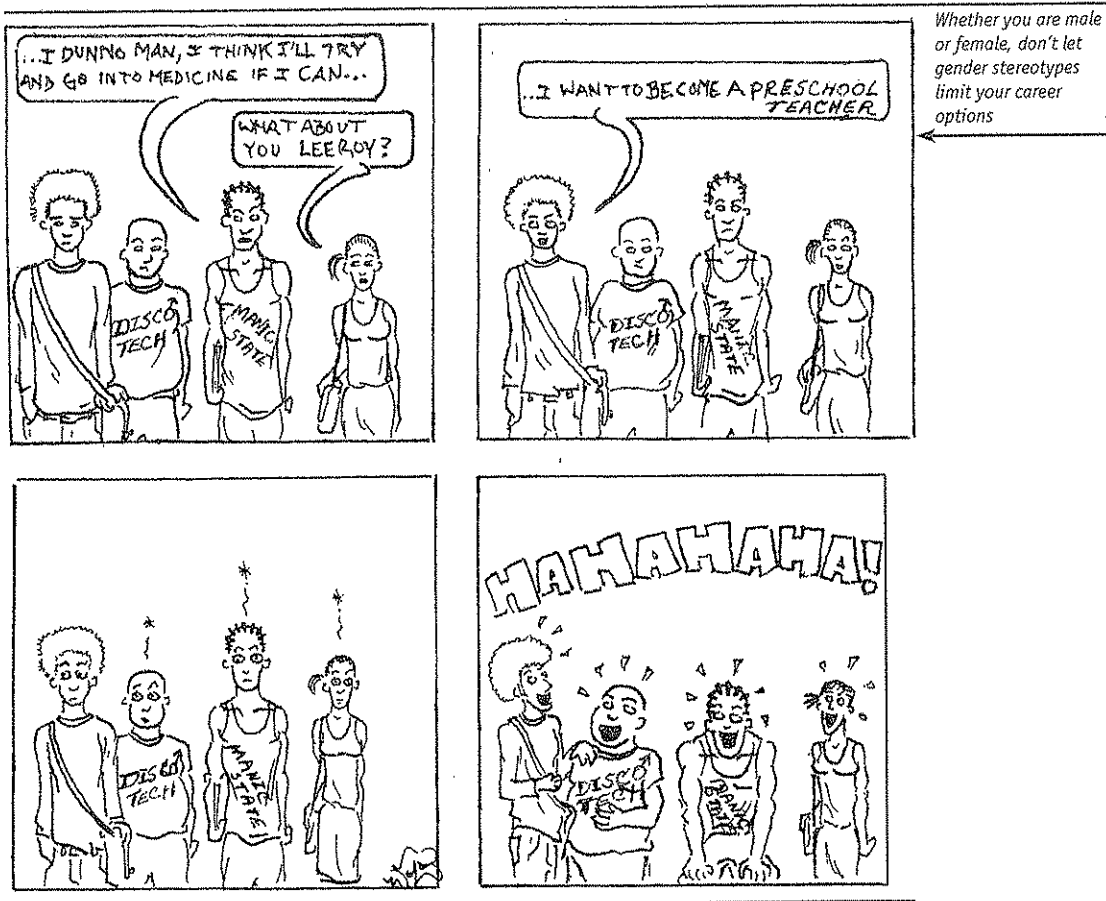
Muslims are terrorists.
Whites can't jump (or dance).
Blacks are lazy.
Asians are brilliant in math.
Irish drink too much.

Jews are cheap.
Hispanic men are abusive to women.
Men are strong; women are weak.
Gay men are feminine; lesbian women are masculine.

Reflection 3.1

1. Have you ever been stereotyped, based on your appearance or group membership?
If so,
 - (a) how did you feel?
 - (b) how did you react?

2. Have you ever unintentionally perceived or treated someone in terms of a group stereotype rather than as an individual? If yes,
 - (a) what assumptions did you make about that person?
 - (b) was that person aware of or affected by your stereotyping?



Prejudice

When all members of a stereotyped group are *judged or evaluated* in a negative way, the result is *prejudice*. (The word “prejudice” literally means to “pre-judge.”) Technically, prejudice may be either positive or negative; however, the term is most often associated with a negative prejudgment—also known as *stigmatizing*—which involves attributing inferior or unfavorable traits to people who belong to the same group. Thus, prejudice may be defined as a negative judgment, attitude, or belief about another person or group of people that is formed before the facts are known. In effect, it's presuming guilt before allowing an opportunity to prove innocence.

Stereotyping makes prejudice possible because if virtually all members of the group are perceived as being alike, and that perception is negative, the result is a negative prejudgment, or prejudice. Once prejudice is formed toward a group, individuals from that group are typically avoided. This enables the prejudice to continue unchallenged because it allows no chance for the prejudiced person to have

positive experiences with members of the stigmatized group that could contradict or disprove the prejudice. Thus, a vicious cycle is established in which the prejudiced person continues to avoid contact with individuals from the stigmatized group, which, in turn, serves to maintain and reinforce the prejudice.



PERSONAL INSIGHT

I was 15 years old when I first became aware that skin color really mattered to some people. I'm a rabid baseball fan and my team is the San Francisco Giants. I grew up in New York during the 1950s and became a fan of the New York Giants baseball team. When I was eight years old, the team left New York to become the San Francisco Giants. Even though the Giants left my hometown, I still considered them to be my

team. I got a lot of teasing from members of my extended Italian family about rooting for an out-of-town team and not being loyal to New York. During one teasing episode with my cousins and uncles, I defended my team by saying that they were in first place and that I expected them to win the double-header they were going to play later that day. My 19-year-old cousin, Jimmy, interrupted me to say that the Giants' double-header was going to be cancelled because Malcolm X (black civil rights leader) was holding a meeting! Several of my older cousins and my uncles began laughing, but I couldn't figure out what was so funny. Then I suddenly got the "joke." At that time, the Giants were the team that had more black and Latino players than any other team in baseball. They were the first major league team to have multiple players from the Dominican Republic, and they had players from Puerto Rico and Cuba. I began to realize that all the teasing I received about being a Giants fan had less to do with the fact I was rooting for an out-of-town team and had more to do with the fact that I was rooting for a "colored" team.

Up until the time I heard that joke about Malcolm X at my family get-together, I never thought of the Giants' players as being colored; I just thought they were colorful. They had unique names (Orlando, Willie, and Felipe) and unique playing styles. As a young boy, I saw these players as being refreshingly different and exciting. However, my cousin's wisecrack that day and the reaction it produced among some of my family members, instantly and permanently changed me from being color-blind to color-conscious. It also changed me from being a Giants fan to a Giants fanatic. I was not only rooting for a team; I was rooting for a cause. Later that year, the Giants added a pitcher by the name of Masanori Murakami—the first Asian player ever to play professional baseball in America. I was proud to be rooting for the most diverse team in history. I didn't know it at the time, but I was appreciating and advocating for diversity.

Joe Cuseo

Discrimination

Literally translated, the term discrimination means division or separation. Whereas prejudice involves a belief, attitude, or opinion, discrimination involves an *action* taken toward others. Technically, discrimination can be either negative or positive; for example, a discriminating eater may be careful about eating only healthy foods. However, the term is most often associated with a negative action taken by a prejudiced person that results in unfair treatment or mistreatment of another person, or group of people. Thus, it could be said that discrimination is prejudice put into action. "Hate crimes" exemplify extreme discrimination be-

cause they are acts motivated solely by prejudice against a group (e.g., damaging their property or physically assaulting them).

Other forms of discrimination are more subtle and may be practiced by society's institutional systems rather than particular individuals. These forms of *institutional racism* are less flagrant or visible, and they are rooted in societal policies and practices that discriminate against members of certain ethnic groups. For instance, the term "redlining"—a term coined in the late 1960s—refers to the practice of banks marking a red line on a map to indicate an area where they will not invest or lend money and many of those areas are neighborhoods in which African Americans live (Shapiro, 1993). Studies also show that compared to white patients, black patients of the same socioeconomic status are less likely to receive breast cancer screenings, eye exams if they have diabetes, and follow-up visits after hospitalization for mental illness (Schneider, Zaslavsky, & Epstein, 2002).

Thus, trying to be "race blind" and getting along with people of all colors with whom we interact on an *individual* basis is not all there is to eliminating discrimination. Racism is an issue that goes beyond individual interactions to larger institutional policies and societal systems. One goal of multicultural education is to empower students to eventually change these societal systems by "laying a foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice" (Gorski, 2010).

Segregation

Segregation may be defined as a group's decision to separate itself, either socially or physically, from another group. Racial segregation continues to exist in American society (Massey, 2003; Nagda, Gurin, & Johnson, 2005). Research on college campuses reveals that college students, particularly white students, come from highly segregated high schools and neighborhoods (Matlock, 1997). Even with the increasing diversity in our society and our schools, minority students are much more likely than white students to attend schools where minority students are the majority population of the school population. For example, 77 percent of Hispanic students and 73 percent of black students attend schools in which they represent the majority of students at their school; in contrast, just over half of Asian students and only 12 percent of white students attend such schools (Orfield & Lee, 2005). In a long-term study of over 2,500 first-year African American, Asian American, Latino, and white students at the University of Michigan, it was found that white students had the most segregated friendship patterns (Matlock, 1997).

“I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never as invisible systems. I was taught to think that racism could end if white individuals change their attitude. Individual acts can palliate but cannot end these problems.”

—Peggy McIntosh, author of *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*

Reflection 3.2 Rate the amount or variety of diversity you have experienced in the following settings.

1. The high school you attended	High	Moderate	Low
2. The college or university you now attend	High	Moderate	Low
3. The neighborhood in which you grew up	High	Moderate	Low
4. Places where you have worked or been employed	High	Moderate	Low

Which of these settings had the *most* and *least* diversity? What do you think accounts for this difference?

“Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Civil Rights activist and
clergyman

Although segregation itself may not be a blatant, malicious form of discrimination, it leads to reduced contact between the segregated groups. This reduced contact can cause a segregated group to be viewed as “unfamiliar” and this lack of familiarity, in turn, can trigger feelings of uncertainty and anxiety toward the segregated group (Zajonc, 2001). Because anxiety is an unpleasant emotion, if it’s repeatedly associated with members of a segregated group, it can lead to avoidance and further dislike of the avoided (segregated) group (Pettigrew, 1998).

Reflection 3.3 Prejudice and discrimination can be subtle and only begin to surface when the social or emotional distance between members of different groups grows closer. Rate your level of comfort (high, medium, low) with the following situations.

Someone from another racial group:

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

For any item you rated “low,” what do you think accounts for or explains the low rating?

Box 3.2 contains a summary of biased attitudes, prejudicial beliefs, and discriminatory behaviors that must be overcome if humankind is to experience the full benefits of diversity. As you read through the list, place a checkmark next to any form of prejudice that you, a family member, or friend has experienced.

Info Gap Game



Box 3.2 Blocks to Learning from Diversity:

Biased Attitudes, Prejudicial Beliefs, and Discriminatory Behaviors

- **Stereotyping:** viewing all (or virtually all) individuals of the same group in the same way—as having the same qualities or characteristics.
Example: If you're Italian, you must be in the Mafia, or have a family member who is.
- **Prejudice:** a negative prejudgment of another group of people.
Example: Women do not make good leaders because they're too emotional.
- **Discrimination:** unequal and unfair treatment of a person or group of people—prejudice put into action.
Example: People of color being paid less for performing the same job, even though they have the same level of education and job qualifications as whites performing the same job.
- **Segregation:** a conscious decision made by a group to separate itself (socially or physically) from another group.
Example: "White flight"—white people moving out of neighborhoods when people of color move in.
- **Racism:** a belief that one's racial group is superior to another group and expressing that belief in the form of an attitude (prejudice) or action (discrimination).
Example: Cecil Rhodes—Englishman and empire builder of British South Africa—once claimed: "We [the British] are the finest race in the world and the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race."
- **Institutional Racism:** racism rooted in organizational policies and practices that disadvantage certain racial groups.
Example: Race-based discrimination in mortgage lending, housing, and bank loans.
- **Slavery:** Forced labor in which people are considered to be the property of others, are held against their will, and are deprived of the right to leave, to refuse to work, or to demand wages.
Example: Enslavement of blacks was legal in the United States until 1865.
- **"Jim Crow" Laws:** Formal and informal laws created by whites after the abolition of slavery to segregate blacks. (The term "Jim Crow" likely derived from a song-and-dance character named "Jump Jim Crow" who was played by a white man in blackface.)
Example: Laws in the United States that once required blacks and whites to use separate bathrooms and be educated in separate schools.
- **Apartheid:** An institutionalized system of "legal racism" supported by a nation's government. (Apartheid derives from a word in the Afrikaan language, meaning "apartness.")
Example: The national system of racial segregation and discrimination that existed in South Africa from 1948 to 1994.

- **Hate Crimes:** Criminal action motivated solely by prejudice toward the crime victim.
Example: Acts of vandalism or assault aimed at members of a particular ethnic group or persons with a particular sexual orientation.
- **Hate Groups:** Organizations whose primary purpose is to stimulate prejudice, discrimination, or aggression toward certain groups of people based on their ethnicity, race, religion, etc.
Example: The Ku Klux Klan—an American terrorist group that perpetrates hatred toward all nonwhite races.
- **Genocide:** Mass murdering of a particular ethnic or racial group by another group.
Example: The Holocaust during World War II, during which millions of Jews were systematically murdered. Other examples include the murdering of Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge regime, the murdering of Bosnian Muslims in the former country of Yugoslavia, and the slaughter of the Tutsi minority by the Hutu majority in Rwanda.
- **Classism:** Prejudice or discrimination based on social class, particularly toward people of low socioeconomic status.
Example: Acknowledging the contributions made by politicians and wealthy industrialists to America, while ignoring the contributions of poor immigrants, farmers, slaves, and pioneer women.
- **Religious Bigotry:** Denying the fundamental human right of people to hold religious beliefs, or to hold religious beliefs that differ from one's own.
Example: An atheist who forces nonreligious (secular) beliefs on others, or a member of a religious group who believes that people who hold different religious beliefs are immoral "sinners."
- **Anti-Semitism:** Prejudice or discrimination toward Jews or people who practice the religion of Judaism.
Example: Hating Jews because they're the ones who "killed Christ."
- **Xenophobia:** Extreme fear or hatred of foreigners, outsiders, or strangers.
Example: Believing that immigrants should be banned from entering the country because they'll increase the crime rate or ruin our economy.
- **Regionalism:** Prejudice or discrimination based on the geographical region in which an individual has been born and raised.
Example: A northerner thinking that all southerners are racists.
- **Jingoism:** Excessive interest and belief in the superiority of one's own nation without acknowledging its mistakes or weaknesses; it's often accompanied by an aggressive foreign policy that neglects the needs of other nations, or the common needs of all nations.
Example: "Blind patriotism"—not seeing the shortcomings of one's own nation and viewing any questioning or criticism of their nation as disloyalty or being "unpatriotic." (As in the slogan, "America: right or wrong" or "America: love it or leave it!")
- **Terrorism:** Intentional acts of violence against civilians that are motivated by political or religious prejudice.
Example: The September 11th attacks on the United States.

“Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams—they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do—they all contain truths.”

—Muhammad Ali, three-time world heavyweight boxing champion, member of the International Boxing Hall of Fame, and recipient of the Spirit of America Award as the most recognized American in the world

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

“I would like to change the entire world, so that we wouldn't be segregated by continents and territories.”

College sophomore

- **Sexism:** Prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender.
Example: Believing that women should not pursue careers in fields traditionally filled only by men (e.g., engineering) because they lack the natural qualities or skills to do them.
- **Heterosexism:** Belief that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation.
Example: Using the phrase, “fag” or “queer” as an insult or put down; or believing that gays should not have the same legal rights and opportunities as heterosexuals.
- **Homophobia:** Extreme fear or hatred of homosexuals.
Example: People who engage in “gay bashing” (acts of violence toward gays), or who create and contribute to anti-gay websites.
- **Ageism:** Prejudice or discrimination based on age, particularly toward the elderly.
Example: Believing that all “old” people are bad drivers with bad memories who should not be allowed on the road.
- **Ableism:** Prejudice or discrimination toward people who are disabled or handicapped (physically, mentally, or emotionally).
Example: Avoiding social contact or interaction with people in wheelchairs.

 **STUDENT PERSPECTIVE**

“Most religions dictate that theirs is the only way, and without believing in it, you cannot enter the mighty kingdom of heaven. Who are we to judge? It makes more sense for God to be the only one mighty enough to make that decision. If other people could understand and see from this perspective, then many religious arguments could be avoided.”

First-year college student

Reflection 3.4 Have you, a family member, or friend experienced any of the form(s) of prejudice in the above list? Why do you think it occurred?

 **STUDENT PERSPECTIVE**

“I grew up in a very racist family. Even just a year ago, I could honestly say ‘I hate Asians’ with a straight face and mean it. My senior AP language teacher tried hard to teach me not to be judgmental. He got me to be open to others, so much so that my current boyfriend is half Chinese.”

First-year college student

Causes of Prejudice and Discrimination

It's clear that what all forms of prejudice have in common is that they lack deep thought and critical thinking. However, less clear is the answer to the question: What exactly causes people to develop prejudice in the first place? Although there is no single, definitive answer to this question, research has identified the following seven human tendencies as key factors involved in the development of prejudice:

1. Feeling comfortable with the familiar and uncomfortable with the unknown or unfamiliar
2. Using selective perception and selective memory
3. Mentally categorizing people into “in” and “out” groups
4. Perceiving members of other groups as more alike than members of one's own group
5. Majority group members' attitudes being more strongly influenced by negative behaviors committed by members of minority groups than by members of their own (majority) group
6. Rationalizing prejudice and discrimination as justifiable
7. Strengthening self-esteem through group membership and group identity

Feeling Comfortable with the Familiar and Uncomfortable with the Unknown or Unfamiliar

Studies show that when humans encounter something that is unfamiliar or uncommon, they tend to experience feelings of discomfort or anxiety. In contrast, what's familiar to us tends to become accepted and better liked (Zajonc, 2001). This automatic reaction is likely “wired into” the human body because it has played an important role in the survival and evolution of our species. In our primitive past, when we encountered strangers it was advantageous for ancestors to react with feelings of anxiety and a rush of adrenaline because those strangers may have been potential predators who could harm (or devour) us. Scholars refer to this reaction as the “fight or flight” response (see Figure 3.1).

The evolutionary, fight-or-flight response is the likely explanation why infants between about 8 and 18 months of life experience “stranger anxiety”—a stage of development during which they react to strangers by crying, an accelerating heart-beat, and breathing at a faster rate (Papalia & Olds, 1990).

The tendency to fear the unknown or the unfamiliar can contribute to prejudice by causing us to be on guard when encountering members of other groups who are unfamiliar (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005). Being aware of this biological tendency is an important first step toward preventing it from developing into prejudice. We may not be able to block this subconscious emotional reaction from kicking in; however, we can recognize it and make a conscious effort to prevent it

“See that man over there?
Yes.
Well, I hate him.
But you don't know him.
That's why I hate him.”

—Gordon Allport, social psychologist and author of *The Nature of Prejudice*

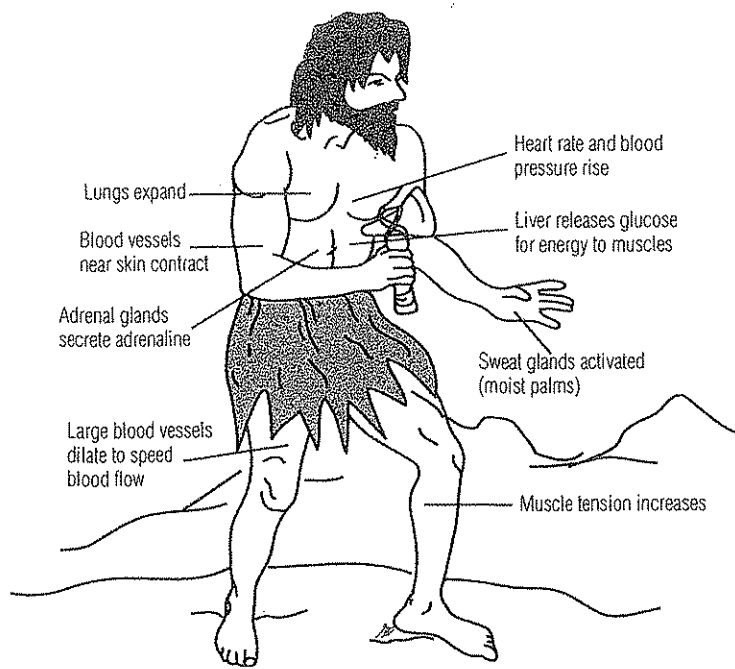


FIGURE 3.1

"Fight-or-flight" reaction.

When primitive humans encountered members of strange or unfamiliar groups, an automatic "fight or flight" survival response kicked in, providing a rush of anxiety and adrenaline to prepare them to fight or run away from these potential predators.

from influencing us conceptually (our opinions) or behaviorally (our actions) toward groups of people who are unfamiliar to us.

Psychological research also indicates that *familiarity* has a powerful effect on human judgment and decision making. This may explain why studies show that we tend to form judgments very quickly (within 40 milliseconds) of others whom are perceived to be emotionally threatening (Bar, Neta, & Linz, 2006; Gladwell, 2005). However, the more exposure humans have to somebody or something, the more familiar it becomes and the more likely that it will be perceived positively and judged favorably. The effect of familiarity is so common and influential that social psychologists refer to it as the "familiarity principle": what is familiar is perceived good (Zajonc, 1968; 1970). The strong influence of familiarity on human judgment may help explain why negative prejudgments (prejudice) can quickly develop toward members of a minority group who are less commonly seen or familiar to members of the majority group. A dominant majority group way of perceiving reality may be so powerful that its view comes to be accepted as common sense or the way things should be, and may even come to be believed by members of the minority group as well (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Using Selective Perception and Selective Memory

Once prejudice has been formed, it can often remain intact and resistant to change through the psychological process of *selective perception*—the tendency for the bi-

ased people to see what they *expect* to see and fail to see what contradicts their bias (Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003). Have you ever noticed how fans rooting for their favorite sports team tend to focus on and “see” the calls or decisions of referees that go against their own team; however, they don’t seem to notice or react to as many calls that go against the opposing team? This is a classic, everyday example of selective perception. It could be said that selective perception changes the process of “seeing is believing” into “believing is seeing.” This can lead prejudiced people to focus their attention on information that’s consistent with the prejudice, causing them to “see” information that supports or reinforces it, but failing to see or overlooking information that contradicts it. Furthermore, selective perception is often accompanied by *selective memory*—the tendency to remember information that’s consistent with the prejudice, beliefs, but forgetting information that’s inconsistent with it or contradicts it (Judd, Ryan, & Park, 1991).

The complementary mental processes of selective perception and selective memory often operate *unconsciously*; thus, prejudiced people may not be aware that they’re using these biased mental processes or how these processes are working to preserve their prejudice (Baron, Byrne, & Brauscombe, 2006).

Mentally Categorizing People into “In” and “Out” Groups

Humans have a long history of grouping other humans into mental categories, probably for the purpose of making their complex social world simpler (Jones, 1990). Although the tendency to categorize people into groups can help us make sense of, and keep track of, our social world, it can also lead to stereotyping members of human groups and blind us to the uniqueness of individuals who comprise those groups. Classifying people into groups can contribute to prejudice because it may result in the creation of *in-groups* (“us”) and *out-groups* (“them”). In-group versus out-group categorization can lead to *ethnocentrism*—viewing one’s own cultural group to be the central or “normal” in-group, while viewing other cultures as peripheral or marginal out-groups. Ethnocentrism can, in turn, lead to prejudice and discrimination toward other cultures they deviate from the norm—what’s customary and familiar—therefore, they’re seen as “abnormal” (deviant or deficient) (National Council for the Social Studies, 1991).

Consider This . . .

We must consciously remind ourselves and our students not to perceive what’s culturally *different* as culturally *deficient*.

Perceiving Members of Other Groups as More Alike than Members of One's Own Group

Research in the field of social psychology demonstrates that humans tend to perceive individuals from different (less familiar) groups as more alike in attitudes and behavior than members of their own (familiar) group (Baron, Byrne, & Brauscombe, 2006). For instance, studies show that members of younger age groups perceive individuals in older age groups to be more alike in their attitudes and beliefs than members of their own age group (Linville, Fischer, & Salovey, 1989).

This tendency may stem from the fact that we have more experience with members of our own group, thus we have more opportunities to observe and interact with a wide variety of individuals within our group. In contrast, we have fewer interactions with individuals from other groups, so we don't have as much contact and personal experience with as wide a variety of people in those groups—which may lead us to conclude that the range of individual differences among them is narrower and their group is more alike in attitudes and behavior than our group.

Lack of contact with individuals from a particular racial group can even lead to difficulties identifying individual members of the segregated group. Studies show that humans recognize members of their own race better than members of other racial groups—a phenomenon known as “own-race bias” (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2007). This bias can be so strong that it becomes more difficult for us to detect differences between the faces of individuals in groups from groups that are unfamiliar to us: “they all seem to look alike” (Levin, 2000). This isn't a genetic or inborn bias because it doesn't occur when members of different races have frequent contact with each other (Sangrigoli et al., 2005). However, when people see faces of individuals from unfamiliar racial groups with whom they have little contact, they fail to detect subtle differences in their personal features that distinguish one group member from another. Instead, these specific features aren't noticed because the viewer's attention tends to be drawn to the general physical features that characterize members of their race—Asian eyes or African lips—which can lead the view that “they all look alike” (Levin, 2000).

Such overgeneralization has resulted in false convictions and imprisonment of innocent members of racial minority groups whom eyewitnesses from majority groups “identified” as committing a crime, but later DNA tests proved the crime was actually committed by a different member of the same racial group (Ramsey & Frank, 2007). This is well illustrated by the case of Lenell Geter, an African American engineer who received a life sentence in prison for a crime he didn't commit. Four of five non-black witnesses misidentified him for another black man who actually committed the crime and was later apprehended.

Such dramatic miscarriages of justice like this make the news. Less newsworthy, but a more common negative consequence of limited contact between members of different racial (and ethnic) groups, is the tendency to view members of unfamiliar groups as more alike in their attitudes and behaviors than they actually

are, which can lead to group stereotyping. Even if an individual member of the unfamiliar group doesn't fit the group stereotype, research shows that individual exceptions are likely to be dismissed as an "exception to the rule," or as an exception that "proves" the general rule (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005).

The Tendency for Majority Group Members to Be More Strongly Influenced by Negative Behaviors Committed by Members of Minority Groups than by Members of Their Own (Majority) Group

Studies show that if negative or unacceptable behavior occurs at the same rate among members of both a majority and minority group (e.g., the rate of criminal behavior in both groups is 10 percent), members of the majority group are more likely to develop negative attitudes (prejudice) toward the minority group than their own group (Baron, Byrne, & Brauscombe, 2006). For example, it's been found that whites in the United States tend to underestimate the crime rate of white men and overestimate the crime rates of African American men (Hamilton & Sherman, 1989). One possible explanation for this estimation error is that minorities are less common and, therefore, more distinctive. Thus, the behavior associated with them is more likely to (a) stand out in the minds of majority group members, (b) be more vividly remembered, and (c) influence their attitudes toward minority groups (McArthur & Friedman, 1980).

Prejudices held by majority groups toward minority groups have led to the most extreme forms of discrimination and domination (Baron, Byrne, & Brauscombe, 2006); however, any group can become a target for prejudice. Members of a minority group can also be prejudiced toward the majority group, as illustrated by the following comment made by the following experience reported by a student of color: "My friend [a student of color] said that he 'hates white people because they try to dominate people of color.' I, on the other hand, feel differently. One should not blame all white people for the mistakes and prejudiced acts that white people have made" (Nagda, Gurin, & Johnson, 2005, p. 102).

Rationalizing Prejudice and Discrimination as Justifiable

Rationalization may be described as a psychological tool that humans use to explain or justify personal behavior that's clearly irrational or unethical. A relevant example of rationalization involves slavery in the United States, a democratic nation built on the principle that all men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. At the time that this principle was enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, slavery was legal and an established feature of the colonial economy. Our nation's first president, George Washington, "owned" more than 300 slaves at the time of his death (Fritz, 1997). Naturally,

this practice was a clear contradiction to the democratic ideals upon which this country was being built. To reconcile this contradiction, the concept of different human “races” was introduced: humans of a darker color (race) were not equal to humans of the “white race,” therefore they could be enslaved. Thus, the United States continued with its slave-based economy and became the first nation in the world to use a system of slavery that was based entirely on peoples’ color. The same rationalization was used to justify extermination of American Indians, forced takeover of Mexican land, and exclusion of Asian immigrants (California Newsreel, 2003).

Strengthening Self-Esteem through Group Membership and Group Identity

Our personal identity is strongly influenced by the group(s) to which we belong and so is our self-esteem—how we feel about ourselves. If people believe that a group they belong to is better or superior, it strengthens their self-image (Tajfel, 1982). The reasoning goes something like this: “My group is superior, and since I’m a member, I’m superior.” Self-image building through group identification is even more likely to occur when an individual’s self-esteem is threatened by personal frustration or failure. The person whose self-esteem has been lowered by frustration or failure can boost it, stigmatizing members of another group (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004) or using them as a “scapegoat” for their own problems or failure (Gemmil, 1989). Studies show that prejudice and discrimination tends to escalate when times are tough—for example, when the economy is down, unemployment is up, and people are feeling a greater sense of personal threat, frustration, or loss (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005). The most extreme example of scapegoating in human history took place in Nazi Germany, where Jews were blamed for the country’s economic problems and became targets of the Holocaust.



PERSONAL INSIGHT

One of the best attended events that ever took place at my college was a presentation made by a guest speaker named Floyd Cochran—a former member and recruiter for the Aryan Nation (a white supremacist hate group) who left the group and went on to become a nationally known Civil Rights activist and educator. He tours the country, speaking out against racist organizations and hate crimes at high schools and universities. After giving his talk on my campus, he asked the jam-packed room if they had any questions. No student raised a hand, probably because the audience was so large and the topic so sensitive. As a faculty member, I thought that maybe if I broke the ice and asked a question, then students would feel comfortable doing the same. I asked him the following question: “Based on your experience with veteran group members and new members you recruited, what would you say was the most common reason why people become members of hate groups in the first place?” Without even the slightest pause, he stated that most members of his hate group had a poor self-image and many came from dysfunctional families where their need for social acceptance was never met. Cochran’s answer is a perfect illustration of how extreme prejudice can stem from an attempt to strengthen one’s self-image and self-esteem by identification with a “superior” group.

Joe Cuseo



A Personal Development Model for Overcoming Bias and Appreciating Student Diversity

Both students and teachers bring their particular cultural backgrounds, experiences, and potential biases to the classroom. As Bowman (1995) notes, teachers who overlook this reality may “become victims of their own naïve and culture-bound conceptions.” Becoming more self-aware of the biases we hold and taking action steps to rid ourselves of these biases are essential preconditions or prerequisites for promoting the success of all students, particularly students from minority cultural backgrounds.

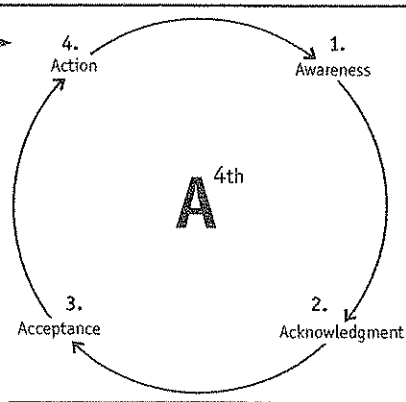
As previously mentioned, bias is a predisposition toward viewing something or someone in a certain way before the facts are known. Thus, bias is built on acceptance of a personal belief without being aware of why that belief is held, or the accuracy of the information on which the belief is based. Only a deep sense of self-awareness can combat the development of bias. We must continually and consciously ask ourselves not only what we believe about a subject, person, or group, but also *why* we hold the belief and what evidence we have to support it. Taking time to introspect and inspect our biases represents the critical first stage in the process of diversity education.

Overcoming bias and moving toward appreciation of diversity may be conceptually viewed as a systematic, sequential process that begins with *awareness* of human differences, followed by *acknowledgment* of any hidden biases we may have toward groups who differ from us, followed by our *acceptance* of group differences, which culminates in our engaging in some *action* or interaction that allows us to capitalize on the power of diversity (Thompson & Cuseo, 2009). Thus, the

diversity-appreciation process may be conceived of as a cycle comprised of the following four stages:

FIGURE 3.2

The cycle of diversity appreciation.



1. Awareness of our personal beliefs and attitudes toward diverse groups,
2. Acknowledgment of how our beliefs and attitudes may be affecting members of diverse groups,
3. Acceptance of (empathy for) members of diverse groups, and
4. Action taken to reach out and interact with people from diverse groups (see Figure 3.2).

This process is sequential and hierarchical—each stage builds on the that precedes it—and we cannot move to a higher next stage until the pre stage has been successfully completed. After the full cycle is completed, we sitioned not only to accept or tolerate diversity, but also to appreciate it an from it.

Stage 1. Awareness

From a very young age, our beliefs have been shaped through many years of ization from a variety of social agents (parents and other family members media, etc.), often to such a degree that we may no longer question or e them. In fact, to question or challenge long-held beliefs may make us feel as disregarding or disrespecting our upbringing and heritage. However, when we take the time to evaluate how our beliefs have been shaped by our past experiences, we gain greater awareness of both their strengths and limitations. Instead of blindly borrowing or following ideas that have been handed down to us, we should gain insight into them and control over them (Thompson & Cuseo, 2009).

If we're asked to examine our biases, it can easily put us on the defensive because we may feel that we're being wrongfully "accused" or about to be booked for a "guilt trip." Examining our biases is not to admit to being personally responsible for the cases of overt prejudice and blatant discrimination that plague our society, which are clearly unethical, illegal, and punishable. Instead, it is a process of becoming personally aware of more subtle biases, which can lead to less obvious forms of prejudice and discrimination that often take place without full conscious awareness or malicious intent (Butler, 1993). In one famous study, college instructors were totally surprised to discover that they treated students from different groups unequally when shown videotapes of their discussions, or when a colleague visited their class to observe their interactions with students (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). This may happen in part because instructors tend to rely on their own background experiences for examples to illustrate course content, which is more likely to invite participation and interaction from students whose cultural experiences are similar to those of the instructor.

The first requisite for culturally responsive teaching [is] a sincere sense of self-scrutiny, not to induce guilt but to deepen sensitivity to the range of ways educators are complicitous with inequitable treatment of others and to open ourselves to knowing the limitations of our own perspectives and our need for those of others. Mindfulness of who we are and what we believe culturally can help us examine the ways in which we may be unknowingly placing our good intentions within a dominant and unyielding framework—in spite of the appearance of openness and receptivity to enhancing motivation to learn among all students. One of the most useful places to begin the exploration of who we are culturally and the relevance of that identity is to ask what values we hold that are consistent with the dominant culture (Ginsberg & Wlodowski, 2009, pp. 13 & 330).

Consider This . . .

Engaging in the process of becoming more aware of our biases and prejudices is not a “guilt trip”—it’s a process for lifelong learning, personal development, and professional success.

“We must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness.”

—Lisa Delpit, *Harvard Educational Review*, “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children.”

Research indicates that prejudice and discrimination often occur unconsciously or unintentionally (Baron, Byrne, & Branscombe, 2006). Thus, the first stage in the process of appreciating diversity is developing self-awareness about our beliefs and attitudes toward differences, particularly awareness of any stereotypes or prejudices we may have that are biasing our perception of, or behavior toward, different groups of people. At the bare minimum, we want to behave in a way that demonstrates tolerance or acceptance of diversity and avoid conscious or unconscious prejudice that may prevent us from effectively reaching and teaching certain students. When teachers gain greater awareness of their own biases, they gain greater understanding of how preconceived beliefs or attitudes may be unconsciously affecting their relationships with students in their classroom. Becoming aware of subtle, subconscious biases promotes self-awareness and self-transformation, which are key goals of multicultural education (Gorski, 2010)

A procedure that may be used to take a first step toward increasing awareness of your feelings, beliefs, and biases about diverse groups consists of the following steps:

- ✦ Take a moment to list all of the things that come to your mind about a group of people that are different than you, or about a group with whom you’ve had very little interaction. (The diversity spectrum on p. 1 may be used to identify one such group.)
- Write down all feelings and thoughts you have about them, and write down what you truly believe, rather than what sounds right or seems socially acceptable.
- ✦ Be completely honest; don’t worry about whether your thoughts and feelings will be judged right or wrong because you will not be asked to share your thoughts with anyone else.
- ✦ Go very deep into the thought process to dig up any and all hidden notions you may have about the group you have chosen. Once you have explored your deepest thoughts and feelings, and have recorded them in writing, honestly answer the following questions, probing for reasons and sources of influence or evidence that underlie your answers.

Reflection 3.5 Would you say that any of the beliefs and feelings represents a stereotype, negative bias, or prejudice?

If yes, why do you hold it, and how do you think you acquired it in the first place?

Once you have answered the above questions honestly, you're now ready to move on to the next stage in the cycle of diversity appreciation: *Acknowledgment*.

A culturally sensitive teacher has an awareness of:

- the effect of communication style on learning
- the individual needs of students within their classroom (e.g., disabilities, learning styles, etc.)
- the cultural backgrounds of their students
- the effect institutional racism has had on society
- the influence of context and culture on behavior

Stage 2. Acknowledgment

To appreciate diversity, we first need to acknowledge the diversity around us and how it can benefit, rather than limit us. Acknowledging the diverse groups that make up our social environment and how their experiences differ from our own involves more than simply saying, “Live and let live” or, “We’re all human, so let’s come to terms with our differences and move on.” Such statements deny students’ group identity—which is an important component of their self-concept and self-esteem. Furthermore, they minimize or ignore the fact that different groups of people continue to face different life challenges because they have experienced different degrees of privilege (e.g., unearned access to resources and sources of influence simply because they belong to a certain social group). For example, individuals born into families with greater wealth and socioeconomic status have the privilege of being able to tap into a network of influential people who can help them gain access to employment, loans, educational services, and legal assistance.

Although it is the American ideal that all people are created equally and that socioeconomic prosperity is based entirely on merit, the belief that all Americans have an equal opportunity to rise from “rags to riches” is “rooted in cultural mythology that overlooks the social, political, and economic forces that favor certain groups over others. Thus, achievement has at least as much to do with privilege as to personal desire and effort” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009, p. 14). Said in another way, not all people start the race to success at the same starting line—some

“In my younger and more vulnerable years, my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since: ‘Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages you’ve had.’”

—F. Scott Fitzgerald, in *The Great Gatsby*, an American literary classic

are born with the advantage of a silver spoon in their mouth, some with a plastic spoon, and others with no spoon at all.

Acknowledgment also involves understanding how our thoughts and feelings may affect others who are different than us, and how they view themselves. George Cooley, famous sociologist, coined the term “looking glass self” to capture the idea that seeing how others act toward us and react to us is like looking in a mirror; their actions and reactions (positive or negative) reflect back on us and affect how we view ourselves (positively or negatively) (Cooley, 1922). Thus, even if children come to the school environment with academic ability and motivation, low teachers’ expectations can affect their academic self-image and self-confidence, which, in turn, can adversely affect their behavior and success in school (Bowman, 1995). For instance, the common stereotype that women cannot perform as well in math and science as men has been found to lower teachers’ expectations of women in these subject areas (Clewell, Anderson, & Thorpe, 1992; Tobias, 1978).

Not only may low expectations have an adverse effect on students’ academic achievement, it can also reduce their level of involvement in the learning process. For example, there is evidence that some white, male college professors tend to treat female students and students from ethnic or racial minority groups differently than they do males and nonminority students. In particular, females and minority students in classes taught by white, male instructors are more likely to:

- ▶ receive less eye contact from the instructor,
- ▶ be called on less frequently in class,
- ▶ be given less time to respond to questions asked by the instructor in class, and
- ▶ have less contact with the instructor outside of class (Hall & Sandler, 1982; 1984; Sedlacek, 1987; Wright, 1987).

In the vast majority of these cases, the discriminatory treatment received by these female and minority students received was subtle and not done consciously or deliberately by the instructors (Green, 1989). Nevertheless, these unintended actions are still discriminatory, and they may send a message to minority and female students that their ideas are not worth hearing, or that they are not as capable as other students (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Teachers can help guard against unconscious tendencies to interact differently with students of different gender or ethnicity by having their classroom teaching behavior videotaped, or by having a colleague visit class and provide objective “third party” feedback about whether they’re treating certain groups of students differently, albeit unknowingly.

“A lot of us never asked questions in class before—it just wasn’t done, especially by a woman or a girl, so we need to realize that and get into the habit of asking questions and challenging if we want to—regardless of the reactions of the profs and other students.”

—Adult female college student, quoted in Wilkie & Thompson (1993)

Reflection 3.6 Would you say that you have held biased or stereotyped beliefs (positive or negative) toward any group that may have either benefitted or disadvantaged them?

A culturally sensitive teacher *acknowledges* that:

- a teacher's attitudes and actions can affect the self-development of students
- learning is maximized in a classroom environment that is inclusive and personally validating
- the role of a teacher is a bridge builder between the culture of the student, the school, and the surrounding community
- the students' parents have a vested interest in the learning of their students
- the students' language and culture are interrelated
- cultural and linguistic diversity are essential elements of the learning experience
- cultural dialect is a valid expression of language that should not be devalued, but utilized to enhance a student's ability to learn, read, and communicate

After honestly acknowledging how our thoughts, feelings, and actions have affected others who differ from us (particularly if the impact has been negative), we're ready to move on the next stage in the cycle of diversity appreciation: *Acceptance*.

Stage 3. Acceptance

Acceptance involves sensitivity, empathy, and insight into the experiences of others who have been adversely affected by biases or prejudices. In this stage, we accept that although we may never be able to actually feel what others have felt who have been on the receiving end of prejudice, we can still sympathize with them. By so doing, we develop empathy—which is a critical component of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) and a potent predictor of career success (Goleman, 1995).

To increase your understanding and empathy for the experiences of members of another group, imagine yourself as a member of that group and attempt to visualize what the experience might be like. Better yet, see if you can place yourself in the position or situation of someone from that group (e.g., spending a day in a wheelchair to experience what it is like for someone who is physically disabled, or wearing blinders to experience what it's like to be visually impaired.)

“Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner; put yourself in his place so that you understand what he learns and the way he understands.”

—Soren Kierkegaard,
19th-century Danish
theologian and
philosopher



PERSONAL INSIGHT

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the best attended events that ever took place at my college was a presentation made by Floyd Cochran, a former member and recruiter for the Aryan Nation (a white supremacist hate group) who left the group and went on to become a nationally known Civil Rights activist and educator. During his talk, he mentioned that the major event in his life that caused him to change

his views was an edict issued by Aryan Nation leaders that Cochran's recently conceived son had to be aborted because ultrasound results indicated that the developing boy had cleft palate, which, in the minds of the supremacist group, meant that he was "defective" and couldn't be a member of their genetically superior group. This left Cochran with two choices: (a) abort his son and remain a member of his supremacist group, or (b) keep his son and be ostracized by the group whose beliefs he passionately endorsed. Cochran chose to quit the supremacist group, to renounce his racist beliefs, and to begin speaking out publicly against the hateful prejudices he once firmly believed and taught. He became a nationally known Civil Rights activist and educator who toured the country, speaking out against racist organizations and hate crimes at high school and universities.

After hearing Cochran's story, it struck me that the key event or turning point in his incredible transformation was really an exercise in role reversal. When his son was deemed "inferior," he was thrust into a reversed role—he became the recipient rather than the perpetrator of hateful discrimination. Cochran's radical reversal from hateful racist to Civil Rights activist is a dramatic example of the power of role reversal for promoting empathy and sensitivity to the rights of others.

Joe Cuseo

Acceptance involves not only realizing how our biases have affected others, but it also involves how bias affects us. Bias not only impedes members of other groups from reaching their full potential, it also impedes the development of the biased person (and our society as a whole).

A culturally sensitive teacher accepts that:

- motivation is key to learning
- students' self-esteem needs to be increased through classroom expression
- different learning styles will require differentiated instruction
- all students have the ability to learn and excel

Stage 4. Action

Once we (a) become aware of our biases, (b) acknowledge any effects that our biases may have had on members of other groups, and (c) accept the feelings of others who may have been adversely affected by our biases, we can take action with respect to appreciating and capitalizing on the power of diversity. This stage in the cycle of diversity appreciation involves moving beyond sensitivity to responding effectively to differences in such a way that it allows us to capitalize on diversity to promote our own personal and professional development, as well as the development of the students we teach. Thus, we reach the highest level of diversity appreciation: *cultural competence*. When we attain cultural competence, we move be-

“I have always felt that the true textbook for the pupil is his teacher.”

—Ghandi, political and spiritual leader of India during the Indian independence movement

yond mere acceptance or tolerance of diversity to a deeper, more authentic appreciation of diversity, and we model that appreciation for our students to emulate.

Research suggests that when diversity education focuses on differences alone, members of minority groups feel even more isolated. Authentic appreciation of diversity takes place when students from different groups interact, work together, and learn from one another (Smith, 1997). Someone who merely tolerates diversity, or simply coexists with diverse groups, might say things like: "Let's just get along," "live and let live," or "to each his own." Cultural competence moves us beyond diversity tolerance to a higher level of diversity *appreciation*, which involves learning about, with, and from diverse people. Cultural competence empowers teachers to be culturally sensitive and responsive educators who recognize, appreciate, and capitalize on student differences to facilitate the learning process and the achievement of learning outcomes that benefit all students (Etsy, Griffin, & Hirsch, 1995).

Culturally competent teachers acknowledge and accept the cultural identity of their students, and engage in continuous development of that identity through *action*, such as:

- ▼ Attending community meetings and activities to gain a deeper understanding of their students' cultural background
- ▼ Communicating high expectations for all students
- ▼ Employing instructional techniques that allow students to acquaint themselves with one another and learn about each other's backgrounds
- ▼ Encouraging students to work independently and interdependently to discover diverse people and perspectives
- ▼ Soliciting ideas from family and community members of students from diverse backgrounds for possible inclusion in curricular and instructional decisions
- ▼ Involving families in their students' education by offering a variety of ways in which families can participate
- ▼ Becoming an advocate for diverse students in the school and their community

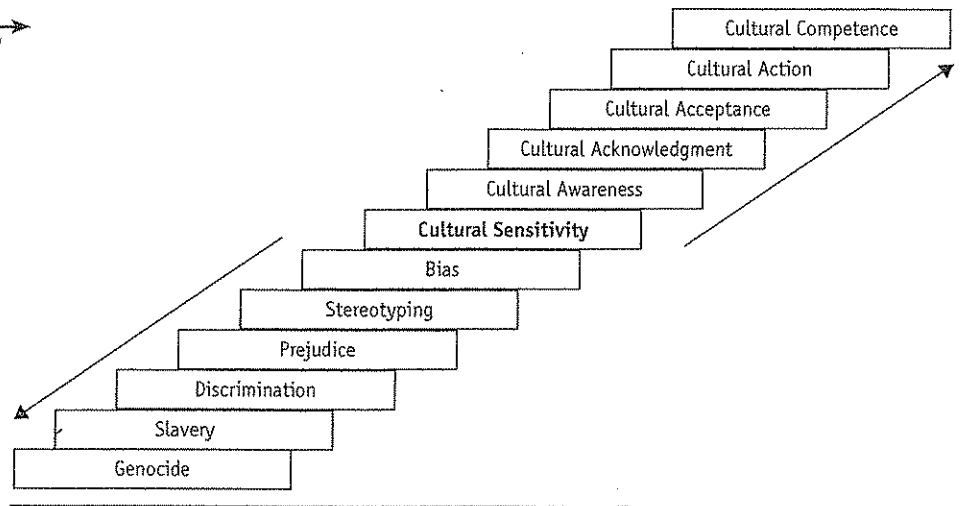
At a societal level, achieving cultural competence may be characterized as an ascending stairway of 12 steps that begins at the lowest and most extreme forms of resistance to diversity and escalates to the pinnacle of cultural competence (see Figure 3.3).

“Children are educated by what the grown-up is and not by his talk.”

—Carl Jung, influential Swiss psychiatrist who pioneered understanding of the human mind through dreams, art, mythology, and religion

FIGURE 3.3

Staircase to Cultural Competence



Box 3.3 Five Progressively Higher Levels of Cultural Sensitivity

- *Cultural Awareness*: awareness of one's own biases and the effects they've had on ourselves and others.
- *Cultural Acknowledgment*: acknowledging the differences that exist between individuals, races, and cultures, and viewing those existing differences as assets rather than liabilities.
- *Cultural Acceptance*: valuing human differences and commonalities, and seeing how they can serve as a valuable educational resource for learning and personal development. This is a positive force that benefits all people.
- *Cultural Action*: the process of not only recognizing and valuing differences, but actually seeking them out and experiencing their benefits.
- *Cultural Competence*: the capability to appreciate and capitalize on human differences by interacting effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Thus, the first step in becoming a culturally competent teacher is to become aware of your own beliefs and recognizing that they are founded in your own cultural identity and history. Teachers should also become aware of any beliefs that may differentiate the expectations of one student from another. Teacher awareness of the key cultural elements of individual students is a critical first step toward developing a meaningful educational experience for diverse students.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter identifies the major stereotypes, prejudices, and biases that have plagued our society; explores their underlying causes; and proposes a model for overcoming these barriers to effective multicultural education.

Stereotyping involves viewing individuals of the same type (group) in the same (fixed) way. In effect, stereotyping ignores or disregards a person's individuality; instead, all people, or virtually all people, who are members of the same group (e.g., race or gender) are viewed as having the same individual characteristics. When all members of a stereotyped group are judged or evaluated in a negative way, the result is *prejudice*. Stereotyping makes prejudice possible because if virtually all members of a group are perceived to be alike, and that perception is negative, the result is a negative prejudgment, or prejudice.

Whereas prejudice involves a belief, attitude, or opinion, *discrimination* involves action. "Hate crimes" exemplify extreme discrimination because they are acts motivated solely by prejudice against members of a certain group. Other forms of discrimination are more subtle and may be practiced by society's institutional systems rather than particular individuals. These forms of *institutional* discrimination are less flagrant or visible—they are rooted in societal policies and practices that discriminate against members of certain ethnic groups.

Segregation may be defined as a group's decision to separate itself, either socially or physically, from another group. Although segregation itself may not be a blatant, malicious form of discrimination, it leads to reduced contact between the segregated groups. This reduced contact can cause a segregated group to be viewed as "unfamiliar" or "strange"; this lack of familiarity, in turn, can trigger feelings of uncertainty and anxiety toward that group.

Although the causes of prejudice and discrimination are still not completely understood, we can help guard ourselves and our students against prejudice by remaining aware of the five tendencies that can contribute to its development, namely the human tendency to:

1. favor familiarity and fear the unknown or unfamiliar.
2. use selective perception and selective memory.
3. mentally categorize people into "in" and "out" groups.
4. perceive members of other groups as more alike than members of their own group.
5. be more strongly influenced by negative behaviors of minority groups than by negative behaviors exhibited by their own (majority) group.
6. rationalize prejudice and discrimination as justifiable.
7. strengthen their self-image through group membership and group identity.

Overcoming bias and moving toward appreciation of diversity may be viewed as a systematic, sequential process that begins with *awareness* of human differ-

ences, followed by *acknowledgment* of any hidden biases toward groups who differ from our own, which leads to *acceptance* of group differences, and culminates in our taking *action* to capitalize on the diversity that surrounds us. Thus, the diversity-appreciation process may be conceived of as a cycle comprised of the following four stages:

1. *Awareness* of our personal beliefs and attitudes toward diverse groups;
2. *Acknowledgment* of how our beliefs and attitudes may be affecting members of diverse groups;
3. *Acceptance* of (empathy for) members of diverse groups; and
4. *Action* taken to reach out and interact with people from diverse groups.