

## *Definition of Terms*

*Adapted from <http://dept.sfcollege.edu/ruralalliance/docs/Cultural%20Awareness%20Learning%20Module%20One.pdf>*

**Acculturation:** A mechanism of cultural change that occurs when a person, or groups of people adapt the cultural patterns of another group

**Assimilation:** Merging of groups and their traditions within a society that endorses a single common culture

**Behavior:** Any observable response given by a person

**Bias:** The tendency to move towards what is similar to oneself and away from what is different. Looking for what confirms one's belief and ignoring the importance of what contradicts one's beliefs

**Bi-cultural-** Having working knowledge and experience working from two cultures

**Communication:** The transmission of common understanding through the use of symbols. The term communication is derived from a Latin word that means "common". In other words, unless a common understanding results from the transmission of the symbol (verbal or nonverbal) there is no communication.

**Culture:** A way of life—traditions and customs—transmitted through learning, which play a vital role in molding the beliefs and behaviors of the people exposed to them

**Cultural Ally:** A person who shares diversity-supporting values and actions with others, whether they are present or not. Being a cultural ally is an ongoing strategic process in which we look at our personal and social resources, evaluate the environment we have helped to create, and decide what needs to be done

**Cultural Generalities:** The similarities that occur in many but not all cultures

**Cultural Group:** People who identify or associate with one another on the basis of some common purpose, need, or similarity of background

**Cultural Relativism:** The view that behavior in one culture should not be judged by the standards of another. The belief that all cultures are equal, have intrinsic value, are equally entitled to respect, and should be appreciated for their differences

**Culture Shock:** Disturbed feeling that often arises when one has contact with an unfamiliar culture

**Cultural trait:** An individual item in a culture, such as a particular belief, tool, or practice

**Discrimination:** Refers to policies and practices that harm a group and its members

**Diversity:** The condition of being or having differences

**Dominant Culture:** Values and customs of a group that strive to set the standards for cultural correctness

**Enculturation:** The social process by which culture is learned and transmitted across the generations

**Ethnic Group:** Group distinguished by cultural similarities such as beliefs, values, habits, customs, language, religion, history, geography, kinship, or race. Members share a consciousness, psychological history, and interdependence of fate with others in the group.

**Ethnicity:** A group of people within a larger society having real or accepted common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements, which help to define them as people

**Ethnocentrism:** The tendency to use one's own cultural standards and values to judge the behavior and beliefs of people with different cultures

**Gender:** Refers to whether a person is male or female. It is preferable to the term “sex”, which can have other meanings

**Minority:** Those having inferior power and less secure access to resources than do majority groups, which are dominant or controlling

**Monocultural-** Having working knowledge and experience in one culture

**Multicultural-** Having working knowledge and experience in more than one culture

**Myth:** A story or saying whose function is to bind together the thoughts of a group

Some myths are based on powerful truths; some on hurtful lies that have the purpose of manipulating others

**Pluralism-** Equal treatment and respect for more than one culture or ethnicity. The diversity courses and a multicultural emphasis is based on this. There is both structural pluralism and cultural pluralism. The extremes of pluralism are a complete melting pot versus complete pluralism.

**Pop Culture:** Culture that embraces the way we entertain ourselves, the products we consume, contemporary behaviors and beliefs

**Prejudice:** Devaluing or looking down on a group because of its assumed behaviors, values, capabilities, or attributes

**Queer-** previously a derogatory term that was used to refer to gays and lesbians. Now reclaimed by some people to refer to anyone who is not exclusively heterosexual.

**Race:** Term commonly used to refer to major subdivisions of the human family, distinguished by form of hair, color of skin and eyes, stature, bodily proportions, etc. This social category differs by time, regionally, and contextually. There is no biological meaning, and no real clear-cut racial differences.

**Racism:** A belief that some groups are inherently inferior to others, and therefore should be dominated by others; presumably inherently superior; groups. Racism can be individual; institutional; or cultural. Forms of racism can be old-fashioned or modern.

**Sexual Orientation:** The patterned way in which a person views and expresses the sexual component of his or her personality; a person’s habitual sexual attraction to, and activities with, persons of the opposite sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality, or both sexes (bisexuality))

**Socioeconomic status:** Position or rank in society that is based on social and economic factors

**Status:** A broad term that speaks to where someone fits in society. People always occupy multiple statuses. *Ascribed status* is one that people have little or no choice about, such as age, race and ethnicity. *Achieved status* is one that isn’t automatic but come through traits, talents, actions, efforts, activities, and accomplishment

**Stereotype:** Fixed ideas, often unfavorable, about what members of a group are like

**Subcultures:** Diverse cultural patterns and traditions associated with subgroups in the same nation

**Transgender or gender queer-** a general umbrella term for anyone who does not fall into a binary category of male and female. Transgender is sometimes used to refer to people who feel like their psychological gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. “Transsexual is NOT a good term to use as many people now consider it derogatory.

**White Privilege:** Unearned assets or advantages that are given to white people merely because they are white and part of the dominate culture