

Carnegie Scholar Project: Transforming a General Education Course
Elizabeth F. Barkley

Transformation Theme: Content
Qualitative Data
Student Investigator Comments on Culture Self-Identification

The following comments were gathered prior to these students being selected through a random process as Student Investigators. My goal was to begin gathering data to supplement the quantitative data on race and ethnicity.

Students had been reading or discussing “culture” using my definition of “the totality of behavior patterns, beliefs, and products of human work and thought such as art, language, and religion that are characteristic of a community or population. They were then introduced to the role of ethnicity and race in shaping culture in the United States. Following this, they were asked to respond in writing to the question:

“Culture is a way of life that organizes social experience and shapes the identifies of individuals and groups. Identify three subcultures within the United States of which you feel you are a member.”

These are their unedited responses.

Student 1: The three cultures in America that I believe I’m a member of is African Americans because of where I have grown up and what I have experienced and been apart of in my 20 years of life, Polish American because that is where my grandparents on my fathers side are from and we occasionally eat polish food, and European American because I am white and I fallow most European traditions.

Student 2: The first sub-culture I believe I am a member of is the Filipino ethnic culture. My mother was born and raised in the Philippines and instilled there culture in me. Although my father is not Filipino I identify myself more with the Filipino community. I believe it does not have to be about the biology but rather the beliefs and upbringing one has in determining your ethnic culture. The next sub-culture I belong to is the catholic religion. Again I was brought up to believe in the catholic religion and stand by it today. Although I may not agree with some of its practice and beliefs, I still have the faith.

The final sub-culture I belong to is the western regional culture. I have lived in San Francisco all off my 23 years. I have developed the western slang in the way I talk and believe to more liberal and open to anything. I have no problems with homosexuals

and proud to have them in my community. I strongly believe that is because I grew up in San Francisco where the sexuality is more out in the open than anywhere else. I am not racist and also believe it has much to do with where I was brought up. San Francisco is so multicultural and it makes me proud to live in a place where everyone is really "different".

Student 3: A) German B) English C) Scottish-Irish

Student 4: They are Russian subculture, Ukrainian and Polish.

Student 5: I fit into the three following sub-cultures:

- a. Italian American
- b. Teen/Single Parent
- c. White Collar

Student 6: I feel I am a member of the Silicon Valley/Bay Area subculture, my generation, and my educational subculture. I am also a member of the Polynesian subculture, African-American subculture, and Caucasian American subculture.

Student 7: I would relate myself to Russian, Turkish, and Arabic cultures in the United States. Because I feel related to Central and West Asia by genes, and Russia by culture.

Student 8: I am a member of the groups "International Students" we can all identify each other in the same situation, whether we come from Japan or Sweden.

I also identify myself in the Swedish Society group that is here in the US. All Swedish people in the bay area identify themselves in each other's situation whether you work or study. (This group can also be expanded to first generation immigrants group.)

The third group I identify myself with is to be woman. I must say that I have never been reminded more than now that I belong to a gender and constantly the referring to the differences between man and women than since I came to the US. I guess the Swedish societies do not stress the gender difference's that much, they stress more the similarities.

Student 9: Middle Aged, European-American, Hetero

Student 10: Chinese Culture, Japanese Culture, Korean Culture. They are all Asian culture. I believe I belong to Chinese culture.

1. What kinds of music do my students listen to?

Student 11: (Did not answer this question, but he is a Japanese International Student)

Student 12: Misunderstood the question and answered it as follows:

Since I came to America, my diet has changed. Food that I can buy at supermarket in America is slightly different from in Japan. I can buy Japanese food in America but because of its high prices, I tend to buy American foods and cook them. My attitude has changed as well. In my country, people do not strongly insist their own opinions but become passive so that they can possibly avoid any kind of argument or conflict. According to our Japanese culture, being passive and listening to others are the important methods. However, since I started my education in America, I have faced a need of arguing with people and ask questions to the teachers. As a result, I became more aggressive and succeeded to. Education system is also a huge impact on me and helps me become more independent. In a process of educating myself in America, I became more Americanized and absorbed good parts of American culture.

Student 13: I am a member of the Californian culture, the college culture and the teenage culture

Student 14: I am an Asian as I was born in Hong Kong. Besides, Hong Kong belongs to China, so I am Chinese. I believed I am partly British since the British had ruled Hong Kong for years.

Student 15: I think I belong to a race and ethnic group.