

Heritage College
Heritage Core – Humanities 305

Exploring Our Culture: Internal and External Layers

In your pre-class writing, you were asked to describe your culture, some of its norms and values. Next you read an article by Eric Law (1993) in which he explored some of his experiences in expanding his self-identity and his “culture.” In addition, you read Andrea Jones (2007) “Identity’s Edge,” and short works by Elizabeth Woody (2008) that addressed the meanings of identity.. In this assignment, you will explore the various elements that can make up your sense of your culture--who *you* are. There will be three steps to this assignment:

1. Make notes on each of the internal, external, and historical elements below. Remember a specific experience or write what the element means to you.
2. Select at least three internal elements and three external elements, plus an historical moment or era to discuss in class.
3. Make a collage or draw an image to illustrate your chosen elements to help you explain how your culture impacts your relationships to others. Some people think of their “cultural house” with all the rooms to make them whole (Ross, 2001). Others think of layers of a cake or concentric circles of self. See attached image on page two.

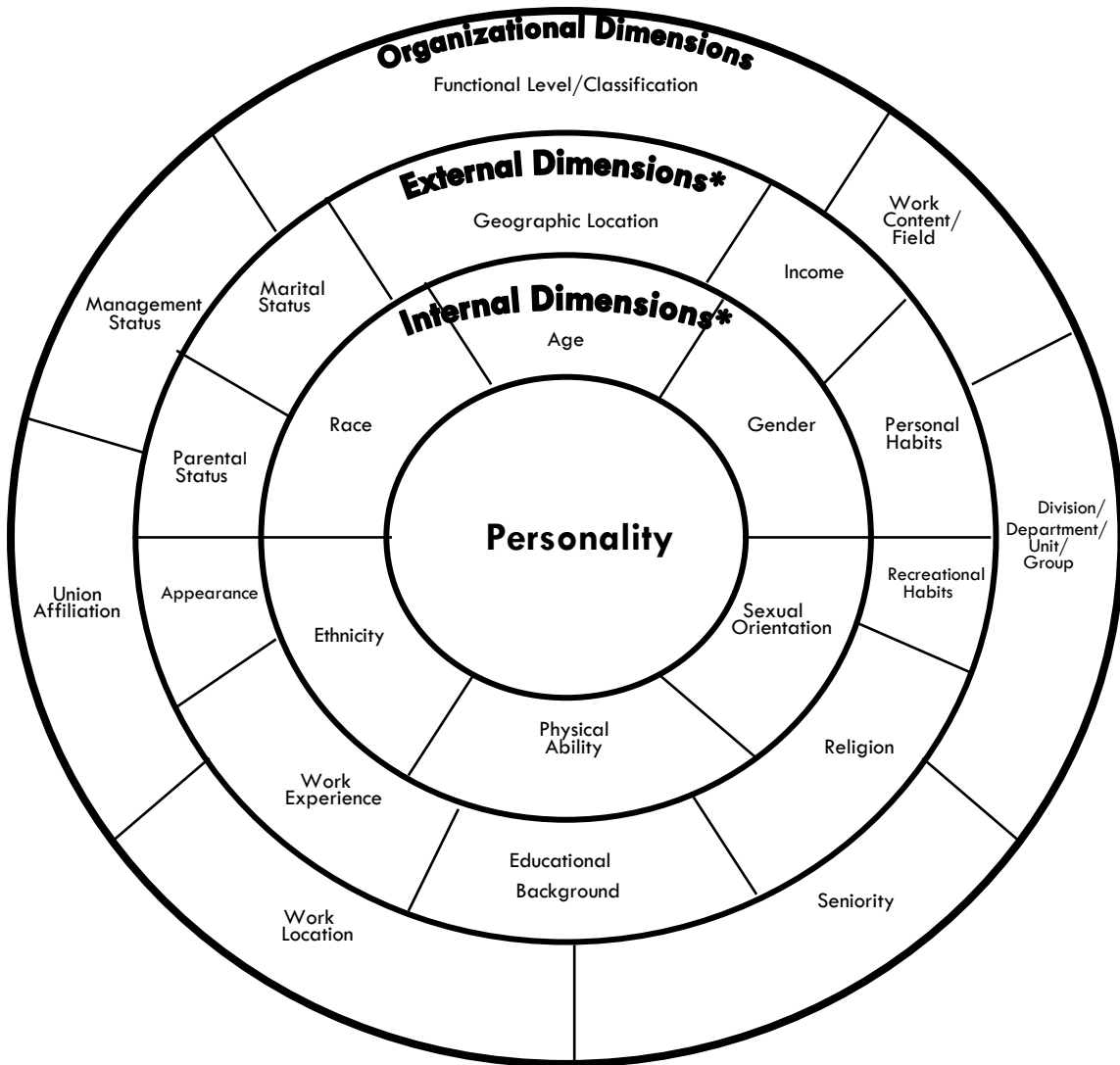
Internal Elements	External Elements	Historical Elements
1. Age	1. Educational Background	1. Historical Moments
2. Culture	2. Geographic Location	2. Eras
3. Ethnicity	3. Marital Status/Family	
4. Gender	4. Religion	
5. Language	5. Work Experience	
6. Physical Disability	6. Citizenship Status	
7. Race	7. Military Experience	
8. Sexual Orientation	8. Hobbies and Recreational Interests	
9. Social Class		

Part 1: Reflection on Internal and External Elements of Self-Identity: Make notes on all the terms above. Write down what first comes to mind. **See examples below:**

Gender: I think that my gender is the major influence on how my life has been. I remember my childhood friend Sandy, a boy, telling me he couldn’t play with me anymore because I was a girl. Later, my father wouldn’t let me study to be an engineer because I was a girl. It took me a long time to quit feeling angry over the opportunities I lost.

Religion: I am a Methodist by baptism and went to Sunday school and church regularly until I was 18 years old. I memorized many parts of the Bible and internalized the values of the Ten Commandments. I find that I think a great deal about the conflict between religions and the violence done in the name of religion.

Era: I was born in 1944. My parents were from farming families, and lived through the depression, and World War II. Making money and being secure was most important to them. We learned to work hard, be respectful of everyone else, and depend on family. In my era, the father was still the head of the household and everyone did as he said.



Layers of Diversity
From *Diverse Teams at Work*
Gardenswartz & Rowe (Irvin, 1995)