

Handout 3, Cummings Identity Map and Worksheet

Some of our values, beliefs, and behaviors are conscious. We hold others without awareness. The Identity Map is a tool for developing self-awareness related to the cultural influences that have shaped and informed the values, beliefs, and behaviors we use to engage the world. The Identity Map was created by Rev. Dr. Monica L. Cummings, influenced by the work of Pamela A. Hays.

The Identity Map consists of:

- *Year Born/Age—significant cultural influences.* For example, for Baby Boomers (born between 1947 and 1961 in the U.S.), a significant cultural influence may have been the Vietnam War. A significant cultural influence for Generation X (born 1961-1972) is computer generated games and text messaging. For an immigrant to the U.S., a significant cultural influence could be living through a civil war or the assassination of a President.
- *Geographic Areas Lived, childhood and adult.* A sample answer for this element is a person who was raised on a Reservation and now lives in a major urban area.
- *National Identity.* American, El Salvadorian, Puerto Rican, South Korean, etc. *Ethnicity/Race, first language, language spoken at home* requires the person to answer the question “What do I want to be called?” for example, Native American or American Indian; Latino/a or Hispanic; Black, or African American, or Caribbean, or Cape Verdean; etc.
- *Religious/Spiritual Orientation, childhood and adult.* A sample answer for this would be a person who grew up Protestant and now identifies as Unitarian Universalist.
- *Socioeconomic Status, childhood and adult.* For instance, a person who grew up lower middle class and now is middle to upper middle class, or someone who grew up in the upper class and now identifies as a member of the working class.
- *Disabilities* includes mental, physical, and acquired disabilities.
- *Sexual Orientation* includes Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people.
- *Gender* includes female, male, and transgendered people.

For more about this type of analysis of cultural influences, see the ADDRESSING Framework adapted from P.A. Hays, “Addressing the Complexities of Culture and Gender in Counseling,” *Journal of Counseling and Development* 74 (March/April 1996), 332-38 © American Counseling Association.

Cummings Identity Map Example

<p><u>Year Born/Age—significant cultural events:</u></p> <p>15 years old; Facebook; war protests; text messaging. (1)</p>
<p><u>Geographic areas lived, childhood/adult:</u></p> <p>Live in a suburb outside Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (6)</p>
<p><u>National Identity:</u></p> <p>American (9)</p>
<p><u>Ethnicity/Race, first language, language spoken at home:</u></p> <p>White; English is my only language. (2)</p>
<p><u>Religious/spiritual orientation, childhood/adult:</u></p> <p>Believes in something more powerful than humans. (4)</p>
<p><u>Socioeconomic status, childhood/adult:</u></p> <p>Parents are both college graduates. (5)</p>
<p><u>Disabilities:</u></p> <p>None (8)</p>
<p><u>Sexual Orientation:</u></p> <p>Heterosexual. (7)</p>
<p><u>Gender:</u></p> <p>Female (3)</p>

Cummings Identity Map Worksheet

<u>Year Born/Age—significant cultural events:</u>
<u>Geographic Areas Lived, childhood/adult:</u>
<u>National Identity:</u>
<u>Ethnicity/Race, first language, language spoken at home:</u>
<u>Religious/Spiritual Orientation, childhood/adult:</u>
<u>Socioeconomic Status, childhood/adult:</u>
<u>Disabilities:</u>
<u>Sexual Orientation:</u>
<u>Gender:</u>