

EEd 320 Winter 04
Personal Perspectives:
Investigating Cultural Characteristics of Your Own Identity

Part I: Working by yourself and jotting down notes to prompt and record your thoughts, use the questions¹ below to think about the characteristics of your own home and family culture. You don't need to "answer" every question; rather, scan over them to see what seems to open up a vein of ideas or recollections and pursue that where it leads you in relation to the questions in Part II.

- What is the structure of your family? Who are members of your family and what roles do they play?
- How is leisure time spent?
- What role does religion play in your family?
- What do you and others in your family read, listen to as music, enjoy as art?
- Who works hard at what? Are there particular occupations common in generations of your family?
- Where did your family originate and how did you come to live in the Northwest? Are there any common experiences that tie you, your family, and others in a larger group together?
- What languages are spoken
- What does your diet consist of? What are the times and routines of your meals?
- Are there any visual symbols of your family or larger group membership (i.e., clothing, jewelry, etc.)?
- Are there any organizations or rituals that are important in your family life?

Part II: Who are you in the context of your culture? What is your "standpoint"²?

How did these concrete attributes of your family culture lead or nurture you in constructing particular meanings in growing up? How did they shape such things as your attitudes, values, norms of behavior, learning styles, and perspective on social roles?

Consider your viewpoint toward such things as the following:

-- appropriate behavior for elementary-aged children -- discipline -- appropriate activities for girls & boys -- work ethic , study habits

¹ Questions adapted from Sleeter, C, 2001.

² See Fabiano, P. (2001) "Baseball and Roots: Two Perspectives on Standpoint.

-- relationship with books / literature
-- participation in activities, sports, group efforts
-- relationship with writing
-- relationship with math, science, history, other subjects

-- expectations of parents
-- your sense of what it means to be a man or woman in this society or what a "good" life would entail
-- your relationship/experience with money, wealth, class

Jot down notes for yourself about the elements listed in each box above.

Part III: Working in Groups to Make Sense of Your Findings

Pick at least one element from each box above in Part II. Reflect on how your viewpoint about each was influenced by your home/family culture. Share these in your group. Consider what implications they may have, both positively and negatively for your perspective on teaching. If you have time, also consider how other "socializing agents" besides your family (education, media, friends, church, etc.) have combined or competed with the influence of your family in shaping your perspective on the things listed in Part II.

Part IV: Writing About Your Standpoint

After completing Parts I-III, write an essay (3-4 pages) that traces characteristics of your home family culture which you considered in Part I and explores their influence on your own standpoint regarding at least one element from each box in Part II. Conclude your essay by considering what implications these characteristics, as well as other socializing agents (education, media, friends) have had, both positively and negatively, on your perspective about teaching.

Format:

Introduction: Indicate which elements from the boxes you will address

Exploring Your Standpoint in Relation to Elements: Develop each element in relation to how the cultural characteristics of your family culture shaped your standpoint. Also include comments, if they are relevant, about how other socializing agents influenced your standpoint.

Linking Your Standpoint to Your Perspective on Teaching: Examine how your standpoint as developed in the previous section may influence how you perceive or interpret aspects of teaching, classroom life, or relations with children's families. Identify both strengths and vulnerabilities which accompany your standpoint and propose goals for your further professional learning in relation to your findings.

Evaluation

This essay is worth 10 points (10%) of your overall grade for EI Ed 320. The components of your essay will be evaluated according to the following guidelines:

Introduction (2 points) : Identifies at least three elements from different boxes in Part II which you will focus on.

Exploring Your Standpoint (4 points): Your essay should draw clear connections with specific description / examples to examine how your family culture influenced your standpoint in relation to at least three elements.

Linking Your Standpoint to Your Perspective on Teaching (4 points): Your essay should examine each element of your standpoint developed in Part II and consider how your perspective contributes to / potentially obscures key dimensions of teaching, You need to identify both areas of strength and potential vulnerability related to your standpoint and how it shapes your perspective on teaching.