CULTURAL PROFILE ASSIGNMENT

Directions:

Read the entire document before you begin writing. Respond to each group of questions in at

least one paragraph. (The questions in parentheses are meant to facilitate thinking. You do not

have to answer them directly.) In each response remember to discuss 1) your current identity, 2)

how that identity was formed and 3) its long-term impact. You must consider how your

experiences will shape your work as a teacher. Do not include any information that is private and

that you do not wish to share. This is a critical reflection. If, at the end of this assignment, it

appears that you are unaware of your biases, assume you have none, or conclude that your

current biases will not have an impact on anyone, you have not completed the assignment

correctly.

Family background:

What are the core values of your family and how are they similar or different from the core

values of ‘mainstream’ US culture and ‘mainstream’ US schools? How were these family values

taught? Explain the impact of these values on your world view, especially in the context of

diversity, and why you will/not teach them to the next generation. Would you consider yourself

to have grown up with values that would be considered “multicultural” by the authors of your

class readings?

(To facilitate reflection on family background think about what family norms just could not be violated. What issues

might have caused a family feud? Examine common values of parents and grandparents. If you had to give teachers

advice on “how to deal with parents” such as yours, or home situations such as yours, what advice would you

give?)

Gender:

What did you learn about gender roles by living with your family? How have you internalized/

modified your gender role expectations over the years? How will your gender role expectations

affect your relationships with friends, family, romantic partners, colleagues and/or students?

How will your gender role identity impact how you would teach or advise future students or

children?

(Essentially this section addresses the question, “What does it mean to be a man/ woman in your perspective?”

Think about the toys you played with, the games / recreational activities you engaged in, the household chores that

you and your siblings undertook. Is there anything that “a man or woman ought not to do” solely because of their

gender? What privileges have you enjoyed or been denied because of your gender?)

Sexual orientation:

What explicit and implicit messages were you given about who are of a different sexual

orientation than yourself? What attitudes about ‘straight’ vs. gay/lesbian persons have you

internalized over the years, and how were those attitudes formed? How are you likely to respond

to friends, colleagues, and especially students who are gay/ lesbian vs. those who are not? To

what extent does knowing people of diverse sexual orientations impact your attitudes and biases?

(Think about what your parents said (or did not say) about gays/lesbians vs. ‘straights’. Were family friends

representative of multiple sexual orientations? What images from the media about sexual orientation have you

internalized? How do (would) you respond when (if) those around you engage in gay-bashing?)

Socio-economic background: Think about how you might classify your family (as you grew up) in economic terms (e.g. Upper middle class etc.) and what does that classification mean? To what extent would you consider your childhood “privileged” and how would you explain your answer? Is there a link between your current values and your socio-economic background? How well will you relate to students in an impoverished school community? (What were the “bare necessities” of your family vs. what it was that you could take for granted materially? What pressures to “fit in” economically did you experience and how were you able to address those pressures? How do your experiences prepare you to address inequities in school funding? Is it likely that you would teach in an impoverished community, and why?) Language background: How important is your native language to you and how is that importance manifested? Did your family encourage you to speak/ learn multiple languages and how might this response reflect your family attitudes about language? How did your family view non-Native speakers of English? How will your linguistic skills (monolingual, bi-lingual, multilingual) and values have an impact on how you view non-Native speakers of English? (Were you ever encouraged to forget your native language or told that it was not important? Did you grow up hearing/ using only one or more than one languages? What were your family’s attitudes towards “foreigners”? If you are an immigrant, how have your experiences shaped your attitude towards multilingual competence and towards non-Native speakers of English?) Disability status: Consider the messages from your family, the media and society that you have internalized about people with disabilities and discuss how they have shaped your current perspectives. To what extent does knowing someone with a disability, or having one yourself, mediate one’s perspectives? Discuss explicitly how you have acted (or not) to make society a place where people with disabilities feel like they belong equally with you. Consider how these experiences will impact your role as an educator who is likely to work with students who have disabilities. (Do you know anyone, esp. a family member with a disability? How have you felt about society’s attitude towards that person? Do you believe that people with disabilities are / should be treated as ‘equal’ members of society? If so, what would this look like? What changes do you wish you could make? How have you modeled the changes you wish to see in the world?) Ethnic identity: What is your ethnic identity? Label it as accurately as you can. (Remember to include blended ethnic groups, where applicable.) How did you first know you were a member of this particular ethnic group? How is your ethnic group different from other ethnic groups in your country? Identify key values of your ethnic culture and explain their significance, and how they can be observed among people of your ethnic group. In what ways can persons of your ethnic background, values and traditions contribute positively to your local community? (Include aspects of ethnicity with which you identify. Ethnic identity is more than genealogy. If applicable, please include aspects of religious identity and regional identity. Think about how your parents tried to instill aspects of your ethnic culture within your family.) Racial identity: Please note that race is a social / political construct. This means that society has created this category for its own (often exploitative) purposes. Nevertheless, as a society, we interact withand define one another in terms of perceived racial categories and this often shapes one’s self concept. What lessons did you learn about color as you grew up? What did it mean to be black, white, brown etc? Was race linked solely with color? Were you conscious of/ worried about race? Were you ever judged based on your race? How were you taught to think about persons from another racial group? Did your family discuss issues of racism? If yes, what were the values imparted in these discussions? If no, why not? How well do you think you are prepared to understand the experiences and concerns of your future students who would be of a different race? (Do not respond “I don’t see color”; instead think about what skin color actually means to you and your family. Is it taboo to marry someone of a different race? Did you have friends, family members from different racial groups when you were growing up? Was racial diversity seen as a positive or viewed with suspicion or hatred? Have you ever been a victim of racism? Have you ever been a perpetrator of racism? Did racial segregation (in housing, schooling) work to your benefit or to your detriment?) National identity: What is your national identity and what does that identity mean to you? What do you hold in common with others of your nationality and how are you different? What values of your ‘national culture’ do you exemplify, and how? Consider how you distinguish between your national identity and your ethnic/ racial identity? (For those of you who are immigrants, what national culture(s) do you belong to? Is there a difference between citizenship and national identity? For those born in the USA, what does it mean to be “US American”?) Global identity: We are all members of a broader global community. How aware are you of your membership and responsibilities within this global community? What does it mean to you to be a global citizen? To what extent has travel, reading, school curriculum and/or the media shaped your relationship with and knowledge of the world? How well prepared are you to facilitate global awareness/ citizenship among your students? (Do you think that living in South Florida, or the USA makes it more easy/ difficult to be aware of the global community? Explain. Do you think it is important to be conscious of a global identity? How aware are you of global problems/ concerns, and how much do you care about them?)

Remember: • The purpose of this cultural profile is to reflect on your life experiences, not to apologize for or eulogize them! • Try to be honest and think critically about your responses. • Do not repeat yourself. • Label each response with the appropriate sub-title. • Your responses should be typed and double spaced. Proper mechanics of the English language should be followed (i.e. free of spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes). Points will be deducted for grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes. • Your grade will be determined by how adequately, critically, thoughtfully, and thoroughly you respond to all 10 sections (in at least one paragraph each)