

GE Foundation Workplace Skills Program

Module Ten Learning to Value Diversity

Participant Booklet

Table of Contents

1. Introduction to Module Ten – Learning to Value Diversity
2. Embracing Diversity in the Workplace
3. Assumptions About Diversity
4. Two Stories About Diversity
5. Understanding Privilege and Power
6. Privilege in the Group
7. Privilege Reflection
8. Diversity Quotes
9. The Danger of the Single Story
10. I Am / I Come From Poem
11. Cultural Capital
12. Statistics to Think About
13. The Power of Stigma
14. Know Your Biases
15. Workplaces That Promote Diversity
16. Challenges in a Diverse Workplace
17. Diversity Questions
18. Strategies for Creating a Workplace That Values Diversity
19. Diversity Awareness Assessment
20. Graffiti Wall on Diversity
21. My Three Cents Worth

Introduction to Module Ten Learning to Value Diversity

Diversity is a complex topic. Many North Americans are relatively unskilled at having frank conversations about diversities such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or age. Being able to acknowledge and purposefully behave in ways that honor and embrace diversity is important for social, political, and economic reasons. Valuing diversity is even more critical, given the global nature of today's work force, and the movement in various countries to introduce and legalize many diverse lifestyles. By its nature, diversity challenges us to consider world views that differ from our own, and to consider new perspectives when working together in today's workplace. Learning to value diversity helps us understand that tapping into our differences has the potential to make us stronger rather than weaker.

Fundamental concepts necessary to understand diversity are introduced in this module including:

- examining how personal identities are shaped
- understanding how power and privilege play out in society
- comprehending the role that social construction plays in identity formation
- appreciating how privilege and cultural capital influence our life chances
- understanding the power of stigma and knowing our biases
- looking at systemic factors that shape individuals and groups in society
- increasing our understanding about the diversities that exist in the workplace
- discussing strategies for embracing and valuing diversity in the workplace

You will be exposed to the key concepts of diversity through experiential activities, videos, personal reflection, small group discussions, and by completing a self-assessment.

Valuing Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity means more than ethnicity, race, and gender. It also includes differences related to religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, as well as mental and physical abilities.

Valuing diversity is about understanding and appreciating those human qualities and experiences that are different from our own, qualities and experiences that are outside the groups we belong to, but exist in other groups and individuals. It is about increasing people's comfort with our differences, and promoting inclusion and collaboration in the workplace.

There are many benefits from creating a diverse workplace. It can improve morale, build a workplace culture of mutual understanding and respect, promote authentic teamwork, and present multiple perspectives about problems that can lead to flexible and creative thinking and solutions. In addition, a diverse workforce leads to increased adaptability, as employees with different backgrounds bring a range of talents and experiences to a team's efforts to innovate. This allows companies to draw on a larger pool of ideas to meet the needs of global customers. Organizations can also gain cultural knowledge, from diverse employees that will help them to understand the range of customers in the community. A workplace that has a diverse workforce also attracts the best talent, across many different groups, and this is vital at a time when the labor force in North American is shrinking. Valuing diversity can ultimately increase productivity and profitability

The cost of ignoring diversity in the workplace has a number of negative effects, including:

- group tensions will continue
- productivity will drop
- complaints and legal challenges will increase
- a loss of promising and high performing employees
- an inability to attract great talent
- the company's reputation will suffer

Assumptions About Diversity

Our assumptions often drive our behaviors, and these assumptions are typically connected to our beliefs. Therefore, in order to value diversity and create promising changes in the workplace, people must hold positive mindsets. People need to:

- believe that we are more alike than different
- acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, ableism, and ageism exist
- recognize that all people need acknowledgement
- understand that misinformation, oppressive behavior, and oppressive attitudes are learned, and therefore can be unlearned
- believe that misinformation and mistreatment isolate and divide people
- acknowledge we have much to learn from people who are different from us
- believe people can and do change

What are some negative assumptions that are driving our beliefs and behaviors around diversity?

Two Stories About Diversity

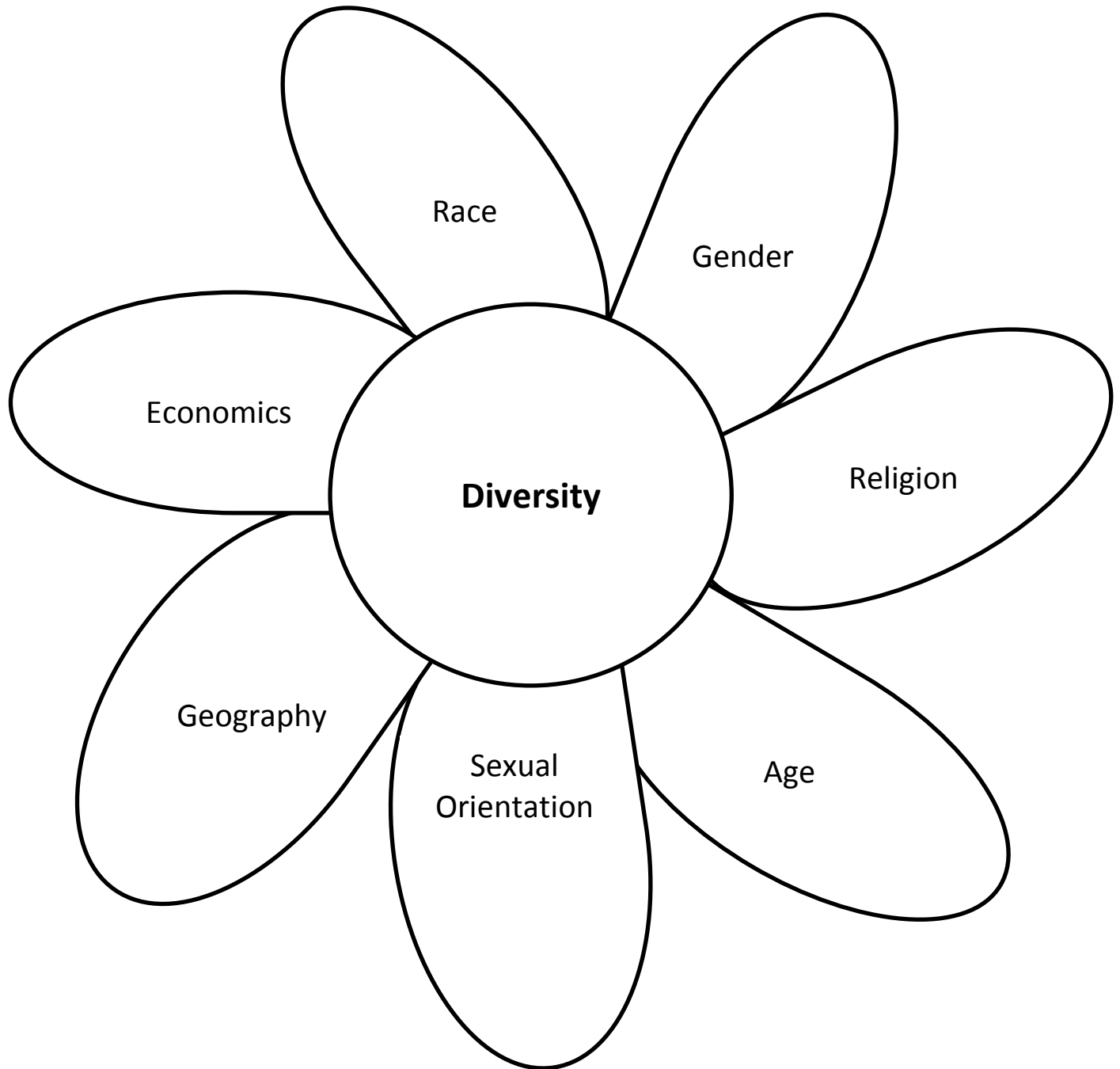
Share a story about a positive experience where diversity was celebrated.

Share a story about an experience where diversity was disrespected.

Understanding Privilege and Power

- Privilege is a right or a benefit that is granted to us because of our race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, or physical ability. This privilege gives people greater access to power and resources.
- Privilege is hard to see by people who were born with access to power and resources. On the other hand, it is very visible to people who do not have access to privilege, power, or resources.
- Power is the ability to control or to coerce. Power also includes access to social, political, and economic resources.
- Social institutions (family, education, religion, media, government) reproduce a hierarchy that ensures the continuation of power in the hands of members of the dominant culture.
- Privilege is also the ability to make decisions for the whole group, without taking others into account. It means, I have the power and there is no need to consider your input or to collaborate with you.
- People of privilege often silence the dialogue about racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination, because it makes them uncomfortable. Privilege gives us the power to remove ourselves from needing to understand.
- Privilege allows us to disconnect with others and their experiences. We believe the stories and the history we have been taught are accurate, and we fail to question whether or not these stories are the truth.
- Privilege allows us to fool ourselves into thinking that people of all colors, who come to the table, have the same advantages as us.
- Privilege gives us the power to decide who is included and who gets excluded.

Privilege in the Group



Privilege Reflection

- What don't you have to think about ... if you're heterosexual
- What don't you have to think about ... if you're middle class or rich
- What don't you have to think about ... if you're Christian
- What don't you have to think about ... if you're male
- What don't you have to think about ... if you're able bodied
- What don't you have to think about ... if you're a native English speaker
- What don't you have to think about ... if you're white
- What don't you have to think about ... if you're born in the United States
- What don't you have to think about ... if you have good physical and mental health

Diversity Quotes

“We’ve pretty much come to the end of a time when you can have a space that is ‘yours only’— just for the people you want to be there ... To a large extent it’s because we have just finished with that kind of isolating. There is no hiding place. There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like you. It’s over. Give it up.”

Bernice Johnson Reagon

“By 2045, the majority of Americans will be people of color. The sad fact is that many people in the old majority fear that fact. The renewal this nation needs will not come from people who are afraid of otherness in race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Our main hope for renewal is diversity, welcomed, and embraced.”

Dr. Parker Palmer

What struck you and what is the key message in each of these quotes?

The Danger of the Single Story

1. What saved her from the single story?

2. Where does she fall into the trap of the single story?

3. What role does the media play in creating the single story?

4. What is the most significant power in the single story?

I Am / I Come From

People are multi-faceted with many different identities. They are shaped by where they come from, and influenced by various experiences they have had over a lifetime.

I am _____

I come from _____

I am _____

I come from _____

I am _____

I come from _____

I am _____

I come from _____

I am _____

I come from _____

I am _____

I come from _____

Cultural Capital

How did you feel in the beginning of the activity?

How did you feel at the end of the activity?

Statistics To Think About

When we look at the 'big picture' or at large numbers of people, we begin to see patterns to how certain groups of people become marginalized. Consider these statistics that give an example of how race, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation can influence life experiences.

Women in Canada and the United States earn, on average, 65-80% of their male counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2010; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

In the United States in 2006, the median family incomes were as follows (Gradin, 2008):

- Black family - \$35,629
- Latino family - \$38,600
- White family - \$60,000

In the United States, incarceration rates for men are as follows (West, 2010):

- White men – 708 per 100,000
- Hispanic men – 1,822 per 100,000
- Black men – 4,749 per 100,000

The poverty rate in the United States differed by population (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.)

- Whites – 8.6%
- Asians – 11.8%
- Hispanics – 23.2%
- Blacks – 24.7%

In Canada, 35% of immigrants aged 25-34 have a university degree, compared to the Canadians average of 26% who have a university degree. However, working-age immigrants still face barriers when seeking adequate employment (Jackson, 2001).

75% of Lesbian Gay Bisexual students and 95% of Transgendered student DID NOT feel safe, at school compared to 20% of heterosexual students (EGALE,, 2010).

The Power of Stigma

Some communities and neighborhoods suffer greatly because they lack full and equal access to political, social, cultural, economic, and educational institutions and resources that are critical to their long-term wellbeing. Such communities are often described as “vulnerable” or “marginalized,” and unfortunately, they are often heavily stigmatized. This means that they are blamed and made to feel responsible for their situation or disadvantage. The story becomes about “individuals failing,” instead of systems that fail individuals in our communities.

Stigma happens when a group, neighborhood, or community becomes labeled with characteristics considered to be a problem or socially unacceptable. These descriptions, or stigma may include characteristics such as violent, criminal, unmotivated, dishonest, unpredictable, and uncaring. Individuals within the community, group, or neighborhood now carry this stigma, or negative description with them, as they venture out into other worlds. Stigma eventually has a serious and hurtful impact on the individual’s social status, how they see themselves, as well as on their mental and physical health.

Stigma also creates powerful stories or narratives around expectations for particular populations. Members of stigmatized groups, particularly youth, often talk about a feeling of “scriptedness” around how they see themselves and their futures. They also describe feeling “the pull of this story” around their own identity. They often feel torn between how they are imagined by others, and their own understanding of who they think they are.

How individuals respond to stigma varies. Some will embrace and perform to the stigmatized story; others will reject it and overcompensate to prove the stigma wrong. Many will simply rise above the negative story and appear untouched by it, while others will actively resist the stigma by creating a new narrative about who they are. What doesn’t vary is that regardless of how individuals respond, they are all actually negotiating with an identity that might be quite

disconnected from how they see themselves.

Finally, the real danger of stigma is its ability to limit ideas of possibility and capability for individuals. They begin to question, “Is this really possible for me?” and begin to doubt whether they have the ability to achieve what they hope for in their lives. When one sees herself or himself through a stigmatized lens their power to imagine and re-imagine possibilities is severely impacted, and the expectations they have for themselves may be lowered. This becomes the core of stigma. It has the ability to convince people they are less than who they are, and that the possibilities out there are very limited for them.

When we are helping people learn about valuing diversity in the workplace, it is critically important that we challenge stigmatized and stereotypical stories, or hurtful narratives that people carry about themselves.

Know Your Biases

Bias is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared to another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

What biases do you have of people from different groups, in terms of how they may perform on the job?

Group	Describe Them on the Job

Workplaces That Promote Diversity

There are many employers who realize the potential of what a diverse workplace culture can offer. They have managed to create an environment where diversity is considered a strength to build upon, rather than a place where people are fearful about their differences. These employers have managed to create a workplace where:

- Employees from different backgrounds have good relationships with one another.
- There is no tolerance for disrespectful behavior towards others.
- Supervisors quickly step in and correct injustices and discrimination when it's identified.
- Supervisors accept constructive feedback from all employees.
- Promotion opportunities are provided to all employees based on merit, not privilege.
- Employees are recognized for the varied contributions they make, and for the valuable differences they bring to the workplace.
- There are varied ways to approach work and to solve problems.

Notes:

Challenges in a Diverse Workplace

While there are many benefits to embracing a diverse workplace, there are three significant challenges that include:

1. Communication – Different cultures and languages can create barriers that result in confusion, a lack of teamwork, and low morale.
2. Resistance to change – Some employees can block new ideas and silence people, if they have a “we’ve always done it this way” mentality.
3. Implementing and managing diversity policy and strategy – Training alone is not enough. Companies have to have a systemic strategy to ensure diversity permeates all departments and functions.

Notes:

Diversity Questions

What can you do in a workplace to make power and hidden privilege arrangements visible, to ensure they are not disadvantaging people based on race/ethnicity, gender, social class, or other forms of difference?

What are the risks involved in uncovering hidden privilege in the workplace?

Strategies For Creating a Workplace That Values Diversity

- Find out as much as you can about other groups – their history, their religious practices, their values, their art, their music, and their literature.
- Become an expert on the critical issues of other groups.
- Reach out and make friends with people who are different.
- Listen to the unique perspective of each person.
- Never demean, devalue, or in any way “put-down” people for their experiences.
- Acknowledge the ways in which you are contributing to oppression.
- Notice your own embarrassment, awkwardness, and fears related to diversity.
- Interrupt disrespectful behavior, such as jokes, name-calling, stereotyping, and discrimination, by expressing your disapproval of the behavior.
- Support the proactive responses of others who are trying to address diversity issues.
- Listen and seek to understand the perceptions and feelings of people with differences.
- Be careful about certain words and gestures, they have different meanings in different cultures.
- Set goals to continue working toward social justice.
- Attend workshops and awareness building meetings to learn more about diversity and social justice.
- Read books and articles that address diversity issues.
- Remain curious, receptive, and open to learning about different cultures.
- Be supportive of new employees, from different cultures, by being encouraging and empathizing with their situation.
- Help people from different groups understand the transition process they are experiencing.
- Celebrate diversity.

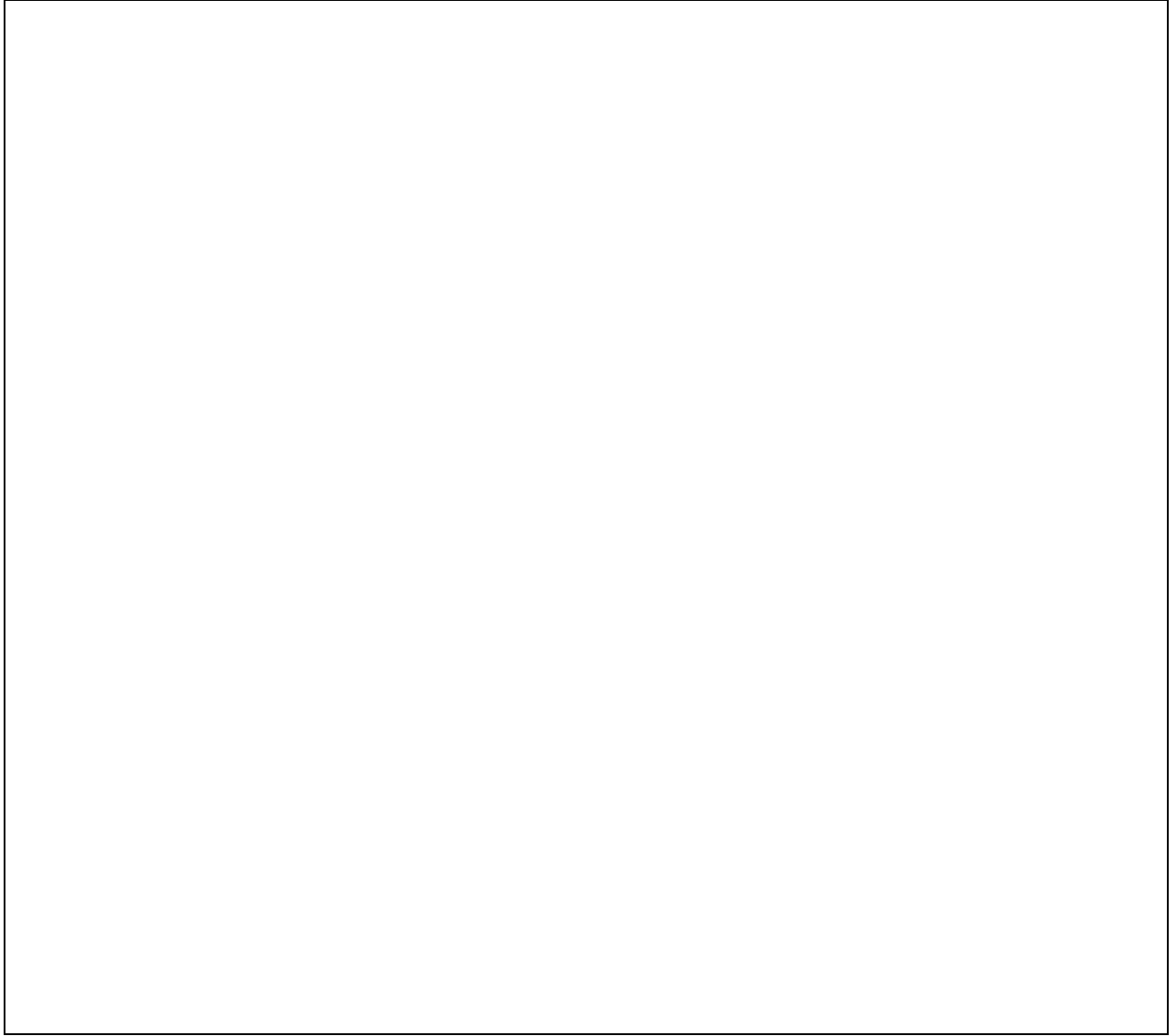
Diversity Awareness Assessment

How often do I ...

Scale 1 = almost always 2 = usually 3 = seldom 4 = almost never

1.	Speak up when someone is being humiliated or put-down by another person.	1 2 3 4
2.	Get to know people from different cultures.	1 2 3 4
3.	Challenge others on racial/ethnic/sexually derogatory comments.	1 2 3 4
4.	Refuse to participate in jokes that are offensive to another culture, or sexual orientation.	1 2 3 4
5.	Recognize and challenge barriers that affect my thinking.	1 2 3 4
6.	Refrain from repeating statements, or rumors, that reinforce bias or prejudices.	1 2 3 4
7.	Learn about and appreciate the richness of diversity.	1 2 3 4
8.	Respect other cultures and their holidays and events.	1 2 3 4
9.	Encourage all members of a group to speak out on their issues and concerns, and treat those issues as valid.	1 2 3 4
10.	Refuse to join groups that allow or reinforce values, or practices, that are racist, sexist, classist, or ageist based on prejudice.	1 2 3 4
11.	Confront organizational or company policies and procedures that lead to exclusion.	1 2 3 4
12.	Listen to and value the contributions of all group members in meetings.	1 2 3 4

Graffiti Wall on Diversity



My Three Cents Worth

1. What surprised me in the module is ...

2. One of my biggest learnings is ...

3. What I am going to do differently to help me truly value diversity ...