

"The chief object of education is not to learn things but to unlearn things."

GILBERT CHESTERTON

As a member of the entering class of Stony Brook University, you are likely to be among the majority of people today who believe that all people should be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their skin color, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, etc.



What is Diversity?



Diversity can be defined in different ways. It refers to, at its most basic level, the myriad of differences that exist among peoples and groups in our society and in the world.

Beyond that, when we discuss the concept of diversity at Stony Brook University we are referring to the positive value of both exploring our differences and discovering our common humanity. To do so, we commit to creating an educational working atmosphere that honors and respects all individuals regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic

status, religious beliefs, national origin, culture, or age. We acknowledge that because of our history, exploring diversity requires openness, awareness, and willingness to learn about various groups' experiences, struggles and achievements. We seek to participate in society as fully valued members of the community.

Why Does Diversity Matter?

At the beginning of this chapter, the quote by Gilbert Chesterton suggests that education's purpose is primarily to "unlearn things" as opposed to "learning things." Though you might think this is an extreme position, if you consider what we've discussed so far in this chapter, in some ways, education must play a significant role in giving all of the members of society an opportunity to evaluate what's been handed down as assumptions; to determine the truth, and consider the nature of the world that we now want to live in. As you continue your higher education, you will have the chance to stop and become aware of the many preconceptions that we've incorporated into our personal viewpoints without even our awareness. College gives us the opportunity to explore and discover the broader and richer reality of the world.

As you begin your higher education, you will have the chance to become aware of the many preconceptions that we've incorporated into personal viewpoints without our awareness. Your college experience provides the opportunity to explore and discover the broader and richer realities of the world. Regardless of which field(s) you go into after graduating, you are likely to find yourself working and interacting with people from various countries, cultures and backgrounds.

- In a study conducted by Kochan et al (2003), it was found that "racial diversity had a positive impact on business portfolio growth in financial services".

Kochan, T., Bezrukova, K., Ely, R., Jackson, S., Joshi, A., Jehn, K., Leonard, J., Levine, D., & Thomas, D. (2003). The effects of diversity on business performance: Report of the diversity research network. *Human Resource Management*, 42, 3-21.

- "Far from being just another feel-good initiative, diversity in the workforce has become a competitive advantage for manufacturers."

Selko, A. (2008) The Business Case for Diversity. *Industry Week*.

Why is Diversity Important at Stony Brook University?

Since its founding, Stony Brook University has been a leader in bringing together a wonderfully diverse group of students. Recognizing the critical role that students play in enriching the learning experiences of their peers, the University seeks to ensure that the campus provides a realistic learning environment which reflects the "real world" that graduates will experience in their careers.

Students, staff, faculty, and administration strive to fulfill the University's Mission:

- to provide comprehensive undergraduate, graduate, and professional education of the highest quality;
- to carry out research and intellectual endeavors of the highest international standards that advance knowledge and have immediate or long-range practical significance;
- to provide leadership for economic growth, technology, and culture for neighboring communities and the wider geographic region;
- to provide state-of-the-art innovative health care while serving as a resource both to a regional health care network and to the traditionally underserved;
- to fulfill these objectives while celebrating diversity and positioning the University in the global community.

College Prowler rates Stony Brook University as an "A" in the area of diversity. This rating reflects "the presence and acceptance of students of different ethnicities, native countries, economic backgrounds, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation. Grades are based on student ratings of the diversity of the student body as well as their personal circle of friends in the following areas: economic status, ethnic heritage, national origin, political affiliation, religious background, and sexual orientation. Student reviews of the acceptance of the campus community to different groups of

minorities are also factored in. Statistics that represent how diverse the student body is in regards to race, national origin, and state of residency are also a contributing factor.”

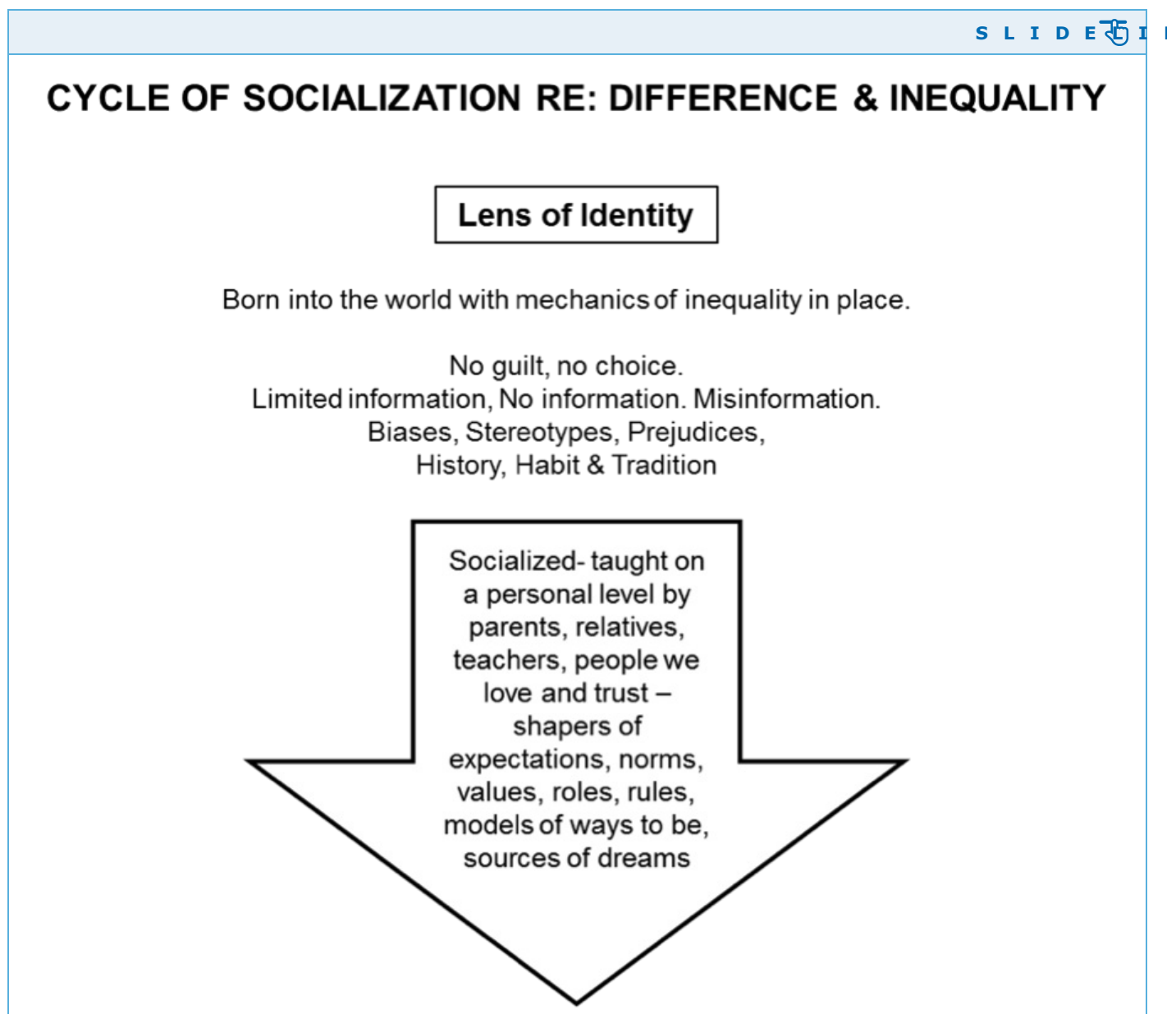
What Role Can You Play?

Get to know your peers! As a first year college student in a new environment, you have an opportunity to get to know more about the lives and stories of your fellow students who may have very different backgrounds from you. These interactions will not only help you form lasting friendships, but can help you understand more about how members who identify as part of different groups experience the world. This can serve as the first step in “unlearning” assumptions about people of different races, religions, sexual orientations, ability levels, and other characteristics. It can also help you recognize privileges you may never realized you have. Conversations with your roommates and classmates after class, late at night, at programs, and in the dining halls can be remarkably constructive as long as you challenge yourself to get to know people from different backgrounds. Consider joining clubs that will give you even broader experiences in areas you are interested in. **This is your education.** Share your experiences and background, and take this opportunity to learn, increase your awareness, ask questions, and seek to expand your horizons.

The Cycle of Socialization

Research has shown that we all have been socialized into a world of inequality. The world that you and others around you were born into was already constructed. As you know from your studies, society is a result of a long, complicated, and often traumatic history of people belonging to different groups seeking to find their ways in the world. But often, they did so through efforts to dominate other groups. For example, the Romans sought to dominate the known world in Europe and the Middle East. The Catholics sought to dominate the Muslims through the Crusades. The Incas dominated a huge area of what is now South America, while Muslims, Manchus, and Russians, among countless others, dominated certain groups different from theirs.

The Cycle of Socialization Re: Difference & Inequality details the ways that we first inherit this socially constructed inequality, the impact that it has on us, and once we are made aware of this, the choices we have of whether to continue or challenge this underlying inequality. Think critically about this theory and its possible supporting evidence of past societies.



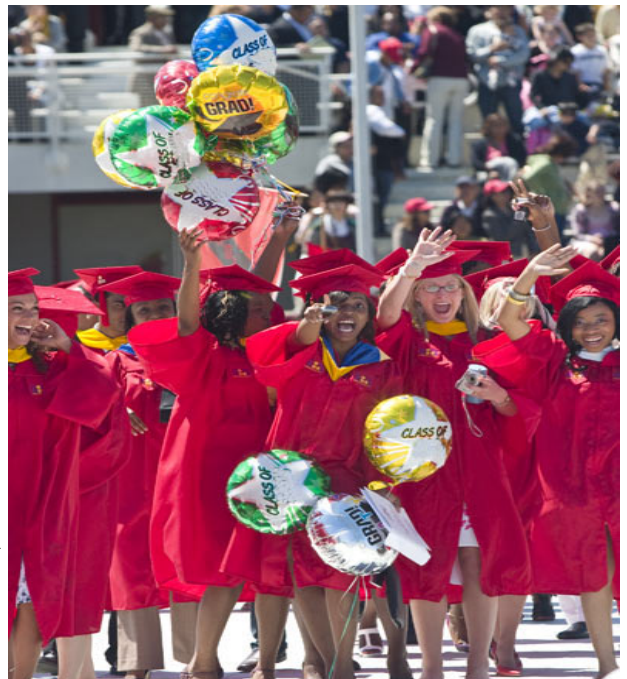
How have you been impacted and what choices do you currently make to either continue or challenge this model?

Your Diversity Education

As part of this current generation of supportive and accepting community members, you are likely to be open to learning more about diversity and further exploring its benefits to your undergraduate college career and future professional working environment. Here are some of the many ways you can educate yourself on this important topic:

Take Advantage of Learning Opportunities on Campus

Learning about other groups and cultures is built into the Stony Brook Curriculum (SBC). Achieving these outcomes can increase your understanding of those different from you by exposing you to people, cultures and ideas different from those you've experienced before. There are courses in many different categories that will help you begin your exploration and challenge you to see the world from new perspectives. Some of these courses are listed below.



Stony Brook Curriculum (SBC) Courses

AFS 101, 102 - Themes in the Black Experience I and II (CER)(SBS)(USA)
AAS 211 - Asian and Asian American Studies Topics in the Social Sciences (GLO)
AAS 212 - Asian and Asian American Studies Topics in the Humanities (HUM)
ANT 102 - Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (SBS)
AMR 102 - Making American Identities (USA)(SBS)
DAN 102 - Introduction to World Dance Cultures (ARTS)
MUS 105 - Music Cultures of the World (HUM)
RLS 102 - Eastern Religions (GLO)(HUM)
WST 102 - Introduction to Women's Studies in the Social Sciences (SBS)
WST 103 - Women, Culture, and Difference (HUM)
WST 112 - Introduction to Queer Studies in the Social Sciences (SBS)

All students are required to satisfy learning outcomes in (GLO) "Engage Global Issues" and (USA) "Understand the Political, Social, and Cultural History of the United States." Challenge yourself to select courses that will help you learn more about people and cultures different from your own.

Courses certified to satisfy **(GLO)** outcomes provide the opportunity to increase your understanding of a nation, region, or culture that is significantly different from the United States and Europe.

Possible courses to consider:

AAS 280 - Islam
ANT 203 - Native Peoples of North America*
CLT 394 - Asian Comparative Literature*
LAC 200 - Introduction to Latin American and Caribbean Studies*
POL 338 - Contemporary India: History, Politics, and Diplomacy**
AFS 239 - Introduction to the Caribbean Experience

Courses certified to satisfy **(USA)** outcomes enable you to build upon your knowledge of diverse traditions in order to examine in detail the role of these traditions in forming American society. Some (USA) courses explore our nation's diversity of ethnic, religious, gender, and intellectual traditions through a multicultural perspective. Others explore the relationship of a specific ethnic, religious, or gender group to American society as a whole.

Possible courses to consider:

AFS 277 - The Modern Color Line*
AMR 102- Making American Identities
HIS 104 - United States Since 1877
HIS 268 - Recent U.S. History, 1919 - Present
LIN 200 - Language in the United States*
POL 102 - Introduction to American Government
WST 237 - Images of Italian-American Women*

*Courses listed with * may have prerequisites but may be taken by those with U1 and or U2 standing. Courses listed with ** require extensive prerequisites and or U3 or U4 standing.*

A complete listing of all of the courses available for your consideration can be found in the [Undergraduate Bulletin](#) .

Attend Student Club & Organization Meetings

Stony Brook University has nearly 350 recognized clubs and organizations providing scholastic, recreational, intellectual, and cultural enrichment. Some clubs and organizations of interest for students looking to expand their cultural awareness may include the Hindu Students Council, the Afghan Student Community, the African Students Union, the Asian Student Alliance, Brothers and Sisters in Christ (BASIC), and the LGBTQ, among many others. A directory of all campus clubs and organizations and their meeting times can be found on the SB Life page of the Student Activities website. Challenge yourself to go to a club meeting that you've never been to before. For example, you do not need to be Asian to become a member of the Asian Student Alliance, nor do you need to be Afghan to be part of Afghan Student Community.

Seek out Programs, Events, Lectures, and Training Sessions

- **Wang Center Events** The Wang Center hosts films, art shows, musical and theater performances by Asian and Asian American artists and that provide insight into Asian and Asian American culture. Performances and films are often free of charge. Recent programs have included avant-garde Japanese dancing, a film screening about hate crimes against Asian Americans, and the comedian Aziz Ansari.

- **Festival of Lights** The annual Festival of Lights in December celebrates the rich traditions of people of different cultural backgrounds, faiths, and religious beliefs during the holiday season in December. This intercultural program highlights the most widely observed holidays such as Christmas, Hanukah, Ramadan/Eid-ul Fitr/Eid-Adha, Diwali, and Kwanzaa through performances, crafts, music, and traditional holiday foods.

- **Black History Month** For national Black History Month in February, Stony Brook organizes a series of events that highlight African American political, cultural and social events. In 2011, the event series featured programs such as the Stony Brook Gospel Choir, a regional conference on race (ERASE Racism), a prayer service for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, and a banquet celebrating Bob Marley.

- **Diversity Day** During Strawberry Fest (late April/early May), many different groups from across campus get together to celebrate different cultures through music and dance performances, creative arts, and cultural trivia. Diversity Day is a festival to celebrate culture, religion, age, sexual orientation, nationality, and lifestyle every Spring semester. Through performances, poetry, arts, music, and educational booths, students learn about diversity and its



Sheetal Gandhi in Bahu-Beti-Biwi
One of many dance performances at Wang (March 2013)

positive impact here at Stony Brook University.

- **Journey Around the World: Multicultural Show and Food Tasting**



This event is an evening of performances and food presented by more than 20 cultural student groups.

- **Department-sponsored Lectures** The Women's and Gender Studies Department, Hispanic Languages Department, Africana Studies Department, and the Humanities Institute sponsor lectures that tackle issues of race, religion, gender, disability, and sexual orientation. Watch for posters around campus, in the corresponding departments, and on departmental webpages.

- **Safe Space Foundations Training**



is an introductory workshop open to all who would like to learn more about the LGBTQ community and resources on and off campus for LGBTQ and allies.

- **UNITI Cultural Center**



is a multicultural community center that provides a home for the many cultural clubs and organizations on the Stony Brook campus. The UNITI Cultural Center Student Organization offers numerous cultural programs that reflect the rich ethnic and social diversity represented at Stony Brook. The UCC continues to grow as the campus community evolves.



Study Abroad

Another way to increase your awareness and knowledge of others is to immerse yourself in a place where you can converse and come to understand the unique experiences and cultures of those different from yourself. The **Office of International Academic Programs (IAP)**



at Stony Brook provides a variety of exciting opportunities for students seeking to enhance their undergraduate experience. These programs are not just for juniors and seniors. Many freshmen choose to go on short-term summer or winter programs to complete SBC requirements while learning about other cultures, and some sophomores may opt to participate in a semester-long study abroad program.

Participate in National Student Exchange

Think of the adventure, the diversity of people, culture, and the geography afforded to you as you chose one of nearly 200 U.S. and Canadian colleges and universities. Consider the impact on your personal and academic growth, the implications for your future, and the satisfaction of achievement. This is the **National Student Exchange**.



Be an Ally

As discussed earlier, you are likely to be among the majority of people today who believe that others should be treated with respect and dignity regardless of the numerous dimensions of diversity that make up individuals. As a Stony Brook student, you have the unique opportunity to become an ally for members of our campus community who are not treated with respect.

An *ally* is broadly defined as a member of a dominant group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life as an advocate for the oppressed population. It is important to note that an ally to any oppressed group or individual aims to serve as an open-minded friend and listener. However, an ally is not a spokesperson for the entire oppressed group. An ally is not a counselor, nor are they trained to deal with crisis situations. Rather, they connect individuals who are members of oppressed groups with support and help further their interests as they are able. An ally advocates with peers, leaders and even people in authority for fair and equitable treatment for all groups when faced with instances of injustice.

How to Become an Ally

There are four key things you can focus on to better prepare yourself to become an ally for any member of an oppressed group:

Awareness: It is important to become more aware of your identity and of the differences and similarities you share with members of the oppressed group.

Strategies to do this include:

1. Conversations with members of the oppressed community
2. Attending awareness building workshops
3. Reading about the history, lives, and cultures of the oppressed group
4. Self-examination and exploration

Knowledge/Education: You must begin to acquire knowledge about the oppressed group, such as what their individual experience is in our society/community and on campus.