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Culture Survey Critical Reflection

Within the theme of “what is my culture”, I chose to observe the questions regarding how different aspects of one’s life and identity contribute towards their own perception of culture. The first question I focused on was the role that language plays in culture, in which about 80% of the students who took the survey agreed that it was significant to them. I thought this percentage was understandable because language, slang, and style of speaking is essential in how we connect and communicate with others. Language is also constantly evolving, making the way we speak to one another vary between person to person and affects the social interactions we create. The second question asked about if one’s life experiences outside of family and community greatly influenced their values and practices, and approximately 86% of the class agreed and 14% disagreed, with 45.7% strongly agreeing with this statement. Lastly, I also chose to look at if the food individuals eat are a reflection of their cultural background, and again, a large percentage of students agreed at about 84% with 62.3% of these students showing strong agreement. A pattern I noticed about the class responses was that there was a noticeable majority of students in this class that agreed that language, food, and individualistic experiences are all factors that shape their values, behaviors, and general understanding of society. Overall, I thought this similarity demonstrates the overlapping aspects and agreements of cultural expression between the diverse group of students in this class and allows us to reflect on how these patterns may relate to ourselves.

In comparing the general class perspectives about culture to my own, I found that my responses aligned with the class because I strongly believed my language and the foods I usually eat are representations of my culture, while my individual life experiences apart from my

family and surroundings also contribute to my cultural identity, though not as strongly. The fact that this survey targets how people individually identify themselves through culture relates to Nieto's idea that every individual's cultural identity is different and personal to them. For instance, she uses the example that a "Mexican-American lesbian may identify herself first and foremost ethnically, another...lesbian, ...a third as both [etc.]" to demonstrate that how one aspect of their cultural identity does not necessarily or fully reflect their personal values (Nieto, 2008, p.132). This is especially apparent when observing the answers of students that disagree or strongly disagree with these questions because it emphasizes that individuals should not be generalized to their culture. Though one belongs to a certain group or community, they still have the choice to follow or reject aspects of their culture that they may either disagree with, as a form of self-expression, or for other reasons. To further expand on this point in a way relevant to students that took this survey is that considering the context of students living on or off campus will reflect the types of food that are easily accessible to them, which relates to how one's surrounding environment may or may not reflect their own representation of culture. The content from week 3 Wednesday's lecture further expands on this idea as the text by Ladson-Billings emphasizes how culture is often misdefined to be simply based on race or economic background, which leads to the generalizations and stereotypes that place lower expectations and discriminate against people of color and of the lower class. Nieto explains that culture is personalized and complex, not limited to their identity, so this brings up the question of why culture would cause people to assume an individual's abilities. Ladson-Billings refers to the term "poverty of culture" and "culture of poverty" to express how in education, teachers may falsely assume cultural identity as reasoning for poor performance in these students, failing to acknowledge and place rightful blame on the institutions and structural factors that have created this dominant perspective. In other words, every person's understanding of culture may be similar or different due to considering individualistic choices, familial and community influences, and the social, political, and economic systems.