

## DIVERSITY WORKSHOPS

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### **DNA Trait Tree**

Traits are observable characteristics (e.g. eye and hair color). Every person is made up of a different combination of traits that makes them unique. People from the same "race" are typically considered to have a similar set of genetically-determined traits. The form of a trait a person possesses is determined by one or more specific sections of their DNA. These sections are called genes. Since everyone gets a copy of DNA from their mother and father, they have two copies of each gene (sex-linked traits – or traits on the X or Y chromosomes – are an exception). Traits can have dominant and recessive forms.

Generally speaking, if you have even one copy of the dominant form of the gene, you will express the dominant form of the trait. If you have two copies of a recessive form of the gene, you will express a different version of the trait. Below is a list of traits. Work with a partner to determine what version of each trait (and genes) each of you possesses. Once you complete your personal trait inventory, make a leaf with your name on it and stick it to the DNA Trait Tree on the appropriate branch. Have fun!

### **Tongue Rolling**

The ability to roll your tongue upwards to form a closed tube (dominant trait). The sides of your tongue will meet at the top of the tube if you can roll your tongue.

### **Hand Clasping**

Without thinking, clasp your hands together and look at which thumb is on top.

### **Short hallux**

Is the toe next to your big toe longer (dominant trait) or shorter (recessive trait) than your big toe?

### **Freckles**

The presence of freckles is dominant, the absence of freckles is recessive.

### **Widow's Peak**

If you have Widow's Peak (dominant) your forehead hairline will have a downward dip in it, as in a heart. Lift up the hair of your forehead to score this trait. People without widow's peak have a smooth hairline with no dip. Men starting to go bald (or already bald) may be unable to score this trait.

### **Thumbs**

Straight thumb (dominant trait) vs. Curved thumb (recessive trait) When viewed from the side, curved thumbs can be seen as part of a circle.

### **Dimples**

Indentations in the cheeks (dominant), especially noticeable when smiling. Score as "yes" only if a dimple on each side is present. Score those with a dimple on only one side as "no."

### **Earlobe attachment**

Earlobes are attached if the bottom lobe is attached directly to the head. (detached=dominant)

### **Pinky Alignment**

Hold your hands in front of you, palms up. Put your pinkies together. Score whether they are straight (touch each other all the way to the top; recessive trait) or bent (curve outward at the top; dominant trait).

### **PTC Tasting**

The ability to taste the chemical PTC, which is harmless when ingested in small amounts. To a non-taster, the PTC has no taste.

## ASSUMPTIONS & STEREOTYPES: FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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### Objectives:

- Participants will learn the differences between assumptions and stereotypes;
- Participants will gain an understanding of how stereotypes are formed;
- Participants will identify personal assumptions they hold;
- Participants will appreciate the harm and hurt assumptions and stereotypes can generate.

### The Assumption Game

#### Materials:

- 1 "The Assumption Game" worksheet per student
- "The Assumption Game: Facilitator's Guide"
- Pens/pencils

#### Procedures:

1. Place participants into small groups;
2. Give each person a copy of The Assumption Game participant's sheet;
3. Ask for a volunteer to read the directions at the top of the participant's sheet aloud as the rest of the group follows along;
4. Tell students that their group will be given 15-20 minutes to choose 3 characters to with them on their spaceship;
5. Remind students that they must come up with reasons to support their choices;
6. When time is up, have students choose a representative from their group to report *one* character they will take on their spaceship and the reason for taking them;
7. Read the character description from the facilitator's guide as each character is reported;
8. On the facilitator's guide, keep track of all the characters who were chosen to go on the spaceship;
9. After all groups have reported out, go down the character list and, one by one, ask students if anyone chose the un-chosen characters to go or stay and ask for the reasons why.

#### Discussion

- Ask students what they thought the activity was about;
- Ask students how the activity made them feel.

## **Understanding Stereotypes**

Materials:

- Flip chart paper (5 pieces)
- Markers (1/student)

Procedures:

1. Begin by discussing with students how people often use labels or categories to describe others and how these labels can be based on such characteristics as clothing, looks, the way a person talks, or the groups to which he or she belongs.
2. Explain that categorizing things or people is a natural human inclination; however, people often make assumptions about groups of people they don't even know.
3. Ask the class to brainstorm categories that are used at school to group people. Categories could include labels such as "jocks" or "brains."
4. Write each category the class generates onto the board and then have students narrow that list down to five major categories.
5. Write these major categories onto five separate pieces of flip chart paper and post these around the room.
6. Give the class 10-15 minutes to travel to each posted sheet and write down adjectives related to the category headings. Remind students that they should only add new descriptions to the list.
7. When they are finished, ask students to take a moment and look at the adjectives that the class has generated under each group heading. Use the following questions to lead a discussion about what they recorded:
  - *Do assumptions apply to everyone in a group?*
  - *Do most people hold the same assumptions about a group?*
    - *Why or why not?*
  - *Do assumptions tell us anything definite about a categorized individual?*
  - *How do assumptions affect your behavior toward others?*
8. Now ask students to help define the word "stereotype." Explain that when we make assumptions about an entire group of people, those assumptions are referred to as stereotypes. When assumptions and stereotypes influence our attitudes, we may find that making a fair judgement about someone or something is difficult. This influence on judgement is called a "bias."
9. Take another look at the adjectives recorded and hold a class discussion around the following questions:
  - *Do these adjectives describe stereotypes?*
  - *How can they be unfair or hurtful?*

## **Racial Stereotypes**

### Materials:

- Flip chart paper (5 pieces)
- Markers (1/student)

### Procedures:

1. Begin with a discussion on the concepts of race and ethnicity. Write each word on the board and ask students to list the attributes that define the terms "race" and "ethnicity." Record their ideas.
  - i. Race: Human groups that are unique based on distinct physical characteristics (e.g. Arab, Asian, Black, Chinese, Colored, Filipino, Hindu, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Mulatto, Negro, White).
  - ii. Ethnicity: The "original" socially and linguistically-coherent group of people one is descended from (e.g. Native American, Latino, Chinese, European American).
  - iii. Culture: Customs, arts, social institutions & achievements of a nation or group of people that are passed down from generation to generation (e.g. Jews, Muslims, African, Hindu, Chinese, Irish).
2. Next, ask students for the names of five different racial or ethnic groups.
3. Prepare five large sheets of paper (flip chart paper). At the top of each sheet, write the name of one of the groups that the students named.
4. Divide the class into five groups and supply each student in the class with a marker.
5. Give each group one of the five sheets of paper. Ask them to list as many stereotypes that are commonly used to describe the category of people written at the top of paper.
6. Give students three minutes to complete the exercise. Emphasize that students should list stereotypes that they have heard, *not* ones that they believe to be true.
7. When finished, rotate the sheets of paper between groups so that each group works on a new sheet. Have them add any unlisted stereotype adjectives.
8. Rotate every three minutes until every group has worked on every sheet.
9. Post the sheets in class where everyone can see them and give students five minutes to read the sheets.
10. Conclude the lesson with a discussion on the exercise, asking students the following:
  - *How do the stereotypes recorded by the class make you feel?*
  - *What do you notice about the stereotypes listed? Be aware that the students may have listed good and bad adjectives, many stereotypes for different groups, or the same stereotypes for different groups.*
  - *Where have you seen these stereotypes portrayed? Television programs, movies, magazines, books?*
  - *How do you think a stereotype might cause someone to act unfairly toward another person?*

# The Assumption Game Character Descriptions: Facilitators Guide

Imagine that the world as we know it is coming to an end today. Your small group has been lucky enough to have access to a spaceship, and will be among very few survivors. Three of the following ten people will also be able to join your group and together you will start a whole new civilization. Your group must work together to decide who will join you in this new world and who will not. Talk about why you believe each person should or should not be included.

## **Maria, 34 years old, Puerto Rican**

She is seen leaving a large city office building, a diaper bag on her shoulder and a shopping bag in the other and a folder with applications for Medicaid.

- *A social worker and ESL teacher who is bringing food and baby supplies to a homeless family.*

## **Joseph, 19 years old, Jewish**

He is wearing jeans and a leather jacket and is holding a small plastic bag with something in it. He is hanging out on a stoop with several young kids. He keeps looking down the street.

- *Joseph has diabetes and the bag contains his blood sugar testing device. He is sitting with his siblings as he waits for a ride to the doctor for a check-up.*

## **Rodney, 17 years old, African-American**

He is wearing a sweat suit and Nike sneakers and is seen walking across a school playground with a basketball in one arm and a boom box in the other.

- *A talented musician who will be going to college to study piano. He coaches little kids in basketball during his spare time.*

## **Lisa, 21 years old, White (Italian-American)**

She is wearing a plain skirt and a sweater and is walking into a church building with a book bag over one shoulder.

- *On her way to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. After stopping her drinking and getting her GED, she is beginning college.*

## **Grace, 60 years old, White (Irish-American)**

She is wearing pearls, a pink dress, and high heels, and is seen walking past several art galleries on Madison Avenue, dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief.

- *Recently released from a psychiatric hospital. She attempted suicide after her husband died of cancer.*

## **Jorge, 28 years old, Dominican**

He is wearing camouflage pants, a T-shirt and Timberland boots, and is seen leaving a gym, holding the hand of his lover.

- *Unemployed construction worker who was recently fired for the third time because of fights with his coworkers.*

## **Shaniqua, 32 years old, African-American**

She is wearing a mini skirt, ripped black tights, and a denim jacket and is seen riding the subway, nodding off to sleep with several large bags of clothes at her feet.

- *Actress/dancer who is on her way home after a long rehearsal for an upcoming production. She is bringing home her costumes to wash.*

## **Wilson, 15 years old, Chinese-American**

He is wearing khaki pants and Reebok sneakers, and is seen leaving a newsstand with his arms full of books and a calculator in his pocket.

- *Member of a notorious Chinatown gang, facing juvenile charges for extorting money from small businesses in the neighborhood.*

## **Asim, 40 years old, Saudi Arabian**

Hi is wearing traditional Middle Eastern clothes and is walking hurriedly into a dark alley with an old leather briefcase in his hand.

- *Physician who recently moved to the U.S. and is hurrying to help a patient with little money who lives in a rough part of the city.*

## **Janice, 25 years old, White**

She is wearing tight clothing, lots of makeup, stiletto heels, and is standing on a street corner waving at passing cars.

- *Undercover police officer who had received a number of awards for her work in attempting to stop prostitution in the neighborhood.*

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