Cultural Background Summary

Cultural background can refer to many different attributes in a person’s life. My cultural background is first made up of my ethnic background. My primary ethnic heritage is American, however my race is African American. Many people do not understand the distinguishable difference here. Americans are born in America, however that does not mean their ethnicity and cultures are American in nature. My ethnicity and cultures come from my African American heritage and the traditions that have been passed down through my family lineage. Generations past, my relatives originated from Africa and brought with them a wealth of customs and traditions that have been shared over the decades with each new generation. I pride and define myself by these customs and hold them close as valuable ties to my long standing family lineage. My mother and grandmother always made it a point to share family stories to help us understand about our family’s customs and traditions.

My cultural background has also been greatly influenced by my religion and my family’s involvement with religion and God. Worship is a very important part of my family’s culture and it has always been stressed, in my home and the home of my relatives and close friends, that valuing God above all else will make us blessed and keep us safe. Worship is not something that I view as a chore, but rather a defining factor in my family’s life that brings us together and helps keep us close in our faith and love. Our religious affiliation goes back as far as our family line can be traced and the traditions that come with our faith related holidays and events are very special to me.

Music has been another defining factor in my life in regard to my cultural background. Many of my friends and relatives listen to artists that they feel they have something in common with, whether it is rap or gospel, it touches us all because the artists are coming from the same place that we are. Music also defines my cultural background because it is very “present” in my life at all times. I can’t remember a family gathering that didn’t involve some type of music and of course at any worship service there is an abundance of singing and musical celebration.

Food helps to define my cultural background as well. There are traditional dishes in my family that have been passed down from generation to generation and it would be unthinkable to celebrate a holiday without that particular meal or dish. I believe this is true for every family, regardless of race, that many customs involve meals because food brings us all together. Mealtime also provides another opportunity to give thanks and to tie God into the custom.

My cultural background is also defined by the people that I associate with. I find that the majority of my friends are also African Americans, perhaps because our customs match so closely that we find it easier to relate to one another. People group themselves with “like” people based on their comfort level and this is certainly true for me as well.

Cultural assimilation has affected me through school and the different forms of employment that I have had over the years. Similar to America as a nation, these situations are virtual melting pots of different cultures and ethnicities and it is only natural that I would begin to accept and relate to many of those cultures and their behaviors. In my experience, fellow students and co-workers have also assimilated into some of my habits and customs as a result of a two way transfer.

I have experienced the highest degree of acculturation since becoming a wife and mother. Different generations of people bring slight variations of customs into the mix and it is easiest to begin accepting and acting on these customs when your children are actively participating in them. My children have come home from school with many different ideas on how to celebrate holidays, different dishes to cook and great information about other cultures that I never thought about. Most of the ideas are wonderful and have opened my eyes to different possibilities, which have allowed me to exist in a pluralistic setting, or co-existing with divergent beliefs.