

Narrative Prompts

1. What culture, ethnicity, and/or race do you identify with?
2. How do your culture, ethnicity, and/or race impact your day-to-day life?
3. Have you ever had a moment when you were “jammed” by someone’s presumption of your cultural/ethnic/racial background? If so, can you describe what happened and how it made you feel?
4. How do you think your cultural/ethnic/racial identity will or will not impact your teaching?

Carol

30, White, Female

I have never really thought of myself as having a strong cultural identity. I am a white female from rural Pennsylvania. I have never lived in a big city. My parents always told me I was ½ German, ½ Irish. This never really meant anything to me because we didn’t have any culturally specific foods, music, dances, or traditions. I’m not sure how my culture or ethnicity impacts my daily life because I don’t know how my life would be if I was of another culture or ethnicity. I assume that life is easier in America for a straight white woman than it is for women of minorities or in other countries. It isn’t often, if ever, that I am confronted with negative stereotypes about my race. I was raised Catholic however, I wouldn’t really consider myself a practicing Catholic in good standing with “The Church.” I have mixed emotions about my experiences being raised as a Catholic. There are some traditions which I love, like singing hymns at midnight mass on Christmas Eve, and the warm feeling I get when I leave church on a sunny

spring morning. At the same time, I cannot ignore all of the negative experiences that I had growing up as a Catholic. My mother forced my sisters and I to attend Catechism classes every Sunday morning. The adults who taught these classes focused on everything that they believe is wrong in the world. They told us over and over again that we would go to hell if we did not follow the Ten Commandments. We were told over and over again that people who commit these sins are damned unless they repent. Many people are brainwashed by such repetition, year after year, week after week. I feel lucky to have “escaped” this mentality. There is not one incident in particular which caused me to realize that this type of judgment is wrong. I guess I always had some sort of self-awareness that a faith which focuses on condemning others is not one that I would like to identify with. I do believe that my religious identity (or ex-identity) will impact my teaching in the future because it impacts my beliefs in general. I may be a white (½ German, ½ Irish?), (traditionally) married, (ex?) Catholic woman with 2.5 kids who still lives in rural Pennsylvania but my exposure to my family’s traditional faith has made me more, rather than less, accepting of the diverse cultural backgrounds that my future students may be coming from.