

# Roadmap to Effective Distance Education Instructional Design

## Learning Differences in Gender and Culture

### Gender and Culture and Learning Styles

Demographics in the United States are changing. For example, one in four Americans is nonwhite, and women are playing a more predominant role in public policy. Unfortunately, much of adult education theory and practice are based on middle-class, white male culture.

The challenge for the adult educator is to create an environment that facilitates the learning of diverse students. Two ways to meet this challenge are by taking gender and culture into consideration.

### What is Gender?

- Involves socially defined roles attributed to certain sexes.
- Varies greatly by culture and class.
- Affects the division of labor, available resources, opportunities and benefits.
- Related to gender:
  - **Sexism** refers to behavior, policy, language, or action that expresses the view that women are inferior

### What is Culture?

- Shared values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and language within a social group.
- Affects how we experience and interpret life; it is our “cultural lens” or how we see things.
- In addition:
  - An individual has many intersecting cultures depending upon beliefs, upbringing, experiences, geographic location, and multiple external factors.
  - Individuals within a culture are **heterogeneous** with many differences in values, beliefs and styles. This requires that educators not fall into applying stereotypes and generalizations of thinking that one size fits all.
  - **Ethnocentrism** occurs when a person considers his/her own culture or nationality superior to others. A person who exhibits these beliefs and attitudes looks down on others, and this is reflected in how a person instructs and relates to learners.
  - **Racism** is conscious or unconscious actions and attitudes that discriminate among people based on skin color.

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