

# MATERIAL WORLD ACTIVITY

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## Purpose:

This activity engages in perspective-taking and allows participants to explore the world from others' perspectives. This activity also touches on issues of inequality, global realities, sustainability, and social justice issues.

## Target Audience:

This activity is for groups of any size - and could be used with children as well as college students and adults.

## Time:

Allow at least 15-20 minutes but additional time would be helpful, depending on the activities.

## Materials Needed:

*Material World: A Global Family Portrait* by Peter Menzel. Copyright 1994 by Sierra Club Books, San Francisco.

Other similar books that can be used:

*Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*, by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio, Material World Books and Ten Speed Press, 2005.

*Children Just Like Me* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley, DK Publishing, Inc., 1995;

*Children Just Like Me: Celebrations!* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley, DK Publishing, Inc, 1997; and *A Life Like Mine: How Children Live Around the World*, DK Publishing, Inc, 2002.

## Procedure:

Provide photos from *Material World* (some are available online). In small groups or pairs, have participants explore the following through discussion or role play/dialogue:

- 1) What are your initial thoughts and impressions in looking at this photo?
- 2) What do you think it would be like to be a member of this family?
- 3) What would be your most prized possession?
- 4) What would your life be like? What activities would you do? What would your priorities be? What would your challenges be?
- 5) What would be your wishes for the future?

**Adaptations:** If time permits, you could have participants write reflections on the above questions or write from the perspective of one of the family members. Other activities could include role playing interactions *between* "two families" who are quite different from each other or interactions between one of the families and a visitor from the US.

## Debrief:

This activity explores culture from other perspectives beyond our own. As part of the debrief, you can ask for pairs/groups to role play to the rest of the group. You can use the above questions for debriefing. The answers to some of these questions can also be found in the *Material World* book so you can reveal the way in which each particular family responded to the questions (most prized possession,

wishes for future). Discuss the importance of understanding others' perspectives (as part of intercultural competence development) and brainstorm with the participants how we begin to gain deeper insights into others' realities. This activity can also be used to illustrate some underlying cultural values such as materialism.