



## **DIVERSITY AND INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS**

**Notes**

When you look around, you will be able to see how different people are from each other. Every individual, be it human or non-human (such as animals) is a unique entity. Just as the fingerprints of no two individuals are the same, similarly there are numerous physical, physiological, psychological, social and economic differences among humans. These differences make our world full of diversity. A world where people not only look different but also think differently based on the differences in their psychological traits such as personality and intelligence. Thus, our lives unfold within social contexts that are populated by people who are different- from us and each other. In this chapter we will study the basic nature and causes of such differences. We will also learn to value the diversity that is created by these differences and to utilize such variations and differences in making the world a better place.



### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

After studying this lesson, learner :

- understands the meaning of diversity;
- illustrates the importance of diversity among people;
- describes various traits of diversity;
- explains factors causing diversity; and
- describes and evaluate the special needs arising out of diversity.

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16.1 UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY



Diversity refers to a range of people who differ from each other in a variety of ways. Even though in psychology, we strive to generalize theories and research findings in relation to many people, but at the same time psychology emphasizes a lot on individual differences. We all are same in some ways but different in many other ways. For instance, we all have same physical structure; however, the capacities of our sense organs differ. Similarly, we all have brain but the way we think differs. Some of us enjoy being around others such as in social gatherings, on the other hand, many of us might value more being alone and reading a book. Even though born to the same parents, siblings also differ from each other, sometimes to the extent that it is hard to believe that our sibling is actually our blood relative.

People may differ in many ways, such as their ethnic identity, sex/gender, cultural background, language usage, economic status, political affiliation, or religious belief. These specific dimensions of difference do not matter nearly as much as the fact that we think, feel, and behave differently from each other. Have you ever been amazed that you perceived a situation, such as giving a test, much differently than a friend? Perhaps you approached the test with optimism and confidence, regarding it as a potentially positive step in your career goals. Your friend, however, may have viewed the same scenario as threatening. We tend to project our own attitudes, feelings, expectations, and fears onto the situations we encounter and thus evaluate the situations differently resulting in differing behavior patterns.

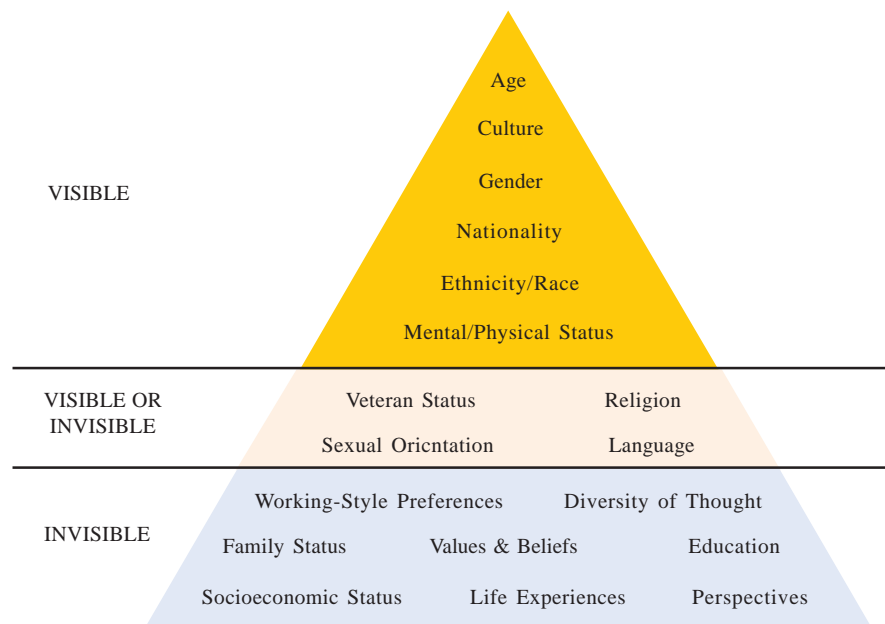


Fig. 16.1 : Classification of Diversity Traits

### 16.1.1 Classification of Diversity Traits

Broadly, diversity traits i.e. the ways in which people differ from each other can be classified under three heads (see Fig. 16.1):

1. **Visible diversity traits** – are traits which can be overtly observed and often impact the first impression of an individual. For example: Physical characteristics
2. **Visible or invisible diversity traits** -These are neither completely overt nor completely covert. At times these traits are immediately observable, on other times these might only come to surface after interacting with the individual. For example: Sexual orientation.
3. **Invisible diversity traits** – These are the differences which are covert in nature and thus come to knowledge only after keen observation over a period of time. For example: Religious beliefs or political beliefs.



#### INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.1

State which of the following statements are ‘true’ and which are ‘false’?

- 1) Diversity is solely man made.
- 2) People of the same family can also be diverse.
- 3) Life experiences can lead to diversity.
- 4) Gender is an invisible diversity trait.
- 5) Diversity can be based on psychological differences.



#### ACTIVITY

For each of the following statements, write two names of people you know, first name should be of someone who falls in that category and second name of someone who doesn’t fall in that category:

1. Is from same religion as yours.
2. Is short tempered.
3. Enjoys being around people.



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4. Is good in mathematics.
5. Is thin.
6. Knows a language that you don't know.
7. Eats non vegetarian food

This exercise will help you understand that people are different from each other. They can differ in various ways. We live in a world full of diversity.

**16.2 FACTORS CAUSING DIVERSITY**

In above activity, while listing the names, you came across differences based on varied factors such as physical characteristics, religion, education, preferences towards varied food/hobbies, interests, choices etc.

Thus, it is important to understand that there are multiple factors leading to diversity. These factors can be classified as follows:

1. Physical
2. Physiological
3. Psychological
4. Social and Economic
5. Cultural

**16.2.1 Physical Factors**

Physical diversity is prevalent all round the world. It refers to diversity based on physical characteristics such as height, weight, color of the skin, gender etc. No two individuals except for identical twins have same physical features. Children might resemble their parents, however, only to some extent.

Physical differences are easily observable and thus fall under the visible spectrum of diversity. Due to genetic and environmental factors, people belonging to same region of origin, religion and family might display similar physical characteristics. Due to these intra-group similarities, humans often attach stereotypes with the entire community leading to prejudices and biases, we will discuss this later in the chapter.

Physical differences among people belonging to various regions of India can be attributed to the ancient migration of large number of races mostly from the Western and the Eastern directions across the Himalayas. Their dispersal into sub-continent has resulted in the consequent regional concentration of a variety of ethnic elements. India is an ethnological museum. The population of India can be divided in six main ethnic groups, namely (1) the Negrito (2) the Proto-Australoids, (3) the Mongoloids (4) the Mediterranean or Dravidian (5) the Western Brachycephals and (6) the Nordic. According to him, people belonging to these different racial stocks have major differences in physical appearances. For instance, the Negrito are characterized by dark skin color, short stature, and frizzly hair. The best representatives of this type are the Kadaras, the Irulas, the Puniyans, etc. of South India. On the other hand, the Proto-Australoids are distinguished by scanty growth of hair on face and body. The eyes are obliquely set and show the presence of epicanthic fold. The face is flat with prominent cheekbones and hair is straight. They are the inhabitants of the sub-Himalayan region; the concentration is most remarkable in Assam and Burma Frontier.



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### 16.2.2 Physiological Factors

Physiological diversity can be understood in two ways:

1. Co existence of a variety of species of flora and fauna on Earth.
2. Physiological differences among humans of varied ecological origins.

Between two populations occupying contrasting habitats, for example, differences in physiological performance may be derived from genetic differences, or from adaptation, or from onto genetic effects induced by growth and development in differing environments.

Some genetic disorders are more likely to occur among people who trace their ancestry to a particular geographic area. People in an ethnic group often share certain versions of their genes, which have been passed down from common ancestors. If one of these shared genes contains a disease-causing mutation, a particular genetic disorder may be more frequently seen in the group.

According to research, asians are more prone to tuberculosis, hepatitis B, intestinal parasites, Lactose intolerance and cancers such as lungs, breast, colon, stomach, and pancreas as compared to the rest of the world. African Americans are highly prone to hypertension, sickle cell anemia and diabetes. The combined overweight and obesity rates for African-Americans are higher than for European-Americans: 65% of African-

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American men and 56.5% of African-American women are overweight or obese. Eastern European men commonly have diseases of the digestive system and women have higher rates of musculoskeletal complaints than the rest of the world. Native Americans/American Indians/Native Alaskans are almost three times as likely to have diabetes as non-Hispanic European-Americans of similar age. Native Alaskan men and women suffer disproportionately higher rates of cancer of the colon and rectum compared with European-Americans.

Thus, physiological differences arising from genetic factors, ancestral history, lifestyle and geographical conditions also make the world diverse. People living in various parts of the world have varying proneness to diseases.

### 16.2.3 Psychological Factors

Psychological differences among people are less visible, they can be only known after repeated and keen observation. Psychological diversity refers to the differences in human constructs such as cognitive ability, skills, attitudes, personality and so on.

In Psychology these differences can be scientifically measured through standardized psychological tests. These tests are reliable i.e. consistent in their results; valid, i.e. particular about what they measure and have established norms so as to compare one's score obtained on the psychological attribute with the others of similar age group.

The two most common psychological attributes studied in psychology to understand psychological diversity are:

1. Personality
2. Intelligence

Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. People differ from each other in personality dimensions such as Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism (OCEAN) :

**Openness to experience** - It concerns people's willingness to try new things.

**Conscientiousness** - It is the tendency to control impulses and act in socially acceptable ways.

**Extroversion** - It concerns where an individual draws his/her energy from and how he/she interacts with others.

**Agreeableness** - It concerns with how well an individual gets along with others.

**Neuroticism** - It encompasses one's emotional stability and general temper.

Many personality theories have given psychological classification of different types of individuals. One example of personality types is Type A and Type B personality theory. According to this theory, impatient, achievement-oriented people are classified as Type A, whereas easy-going, relaxed individuals are designated as Type B. You will study personality theories in detail in the next chapter.

Intelligence refers to the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. It involves some different mental abilities including logic, reasoning, problem-solving, and planning. Individual differences in intelligence can be assessed using the concept of IQ – Intelligence quotient. IQ is the score most widely used to assess intelligence, and typically measures a variety of skills from verbal to spatial. Any person from any walk of life can be highly intelligent, and scoring high on one aspect of intelligence tends to correlate with high scores in other aspects.

Theories on intelligence have been divided into – uni factor theories, two factor theories and multi factor theories. As the names suggest, uni factor theories view intelligence as one overall measure comprising a wide variety of skills. While the two factor and multi factor theories state that there are *multiple* kinds of intelligence that humans possess in varying quantities, such as, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical, and interpersonal intelligence. Someone high in interpersonal intelligence would likely to excel at cooperating within a group, while someone with high levels of logical-mathematical intelligence would have a heightened capacity to understand numbers, patterns, and logical reasoning.

Thus, according to uni factor theories people differ from each other in terms of overall intelligence, on the other hand as per the two factor and multi factor theories people differ in various types of intelligence. Theories of intelligence will be discussed in detail in the chapter on intelligence.

#### 16.2.4 Social and Economic Factors

Social traits are the most visible factors of diversity. They comprise of all the features attached by the society to the individual, such as, one's caste, class, race, religion and occupational pattern. People vary drastically from each other based on their social background and thus can be easily allotted to a particular category merely by quick observation. For instance, people of different regions use different types of dresses,



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their eating habits and customs differ.

India is one of the best examples of social diversity. Salman Rushdie once wrote, “The country has taken the modern view of the self and enlarged it to encompass almost 1 billion souls. The self-hood of India is so capricious, so elastic, that it accommodates 1 billion kinds of difference. It agrees with its billion selves to call all of them “Indian.”

As per the Census, conducted by the government of India in 2011, Hinduism is the most common religion in India, accounting for about 80% of the population. Islam is the second-largest religion at 13% of the population. Other major religious groups in India are Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%) and Jains (0.4%). People who claimed no religion are officially recorded under ‘other’ by the census. In 2011, 0.9% of Indians selected the ‘No Religion’ category.

While the number of Indians living in urban areas has increased over the last two decades, about 67% of people still live in rural areas. In 2011, India had a literacy rate of 74%: 82% for men and 65% for women. The literacy rate varies wildly by state.

Data on ethnicity is not collected by the Indian census, although the CIA world Fact book estimates the population is 72% Indo-Aryan, 25% Dravidian, and 3% Mongoloid and other.

The diversity hence caused by social and economic factors is immense. These factors often contribute to stereotypes and prejudices. A stereotype is an over-generalized belief about a particular category of people. By stereotyping we infer that a person has a whole range of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of that group have. Stereotypes lead to social categorization, which is one of the reasons for prejudice attitudes (i.e. “us” and “them” mentality) which lead to formation of in-groups and out-groups. Prejudice is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. We as educated Indians should free ourselves from such harmful stereotypes and prejudices.

#### 16.2.4 Cultural Factors

Culture is defined as people’s way of life. It entails how they dress, how they speak, the type of food they eat, the type of festivals they celebrate, the manner in which they worship and their art among many other things.

Indian culture is one of the oldest cultures in the world. India is a land of unity in diversity where people of different sects, caste and religion live together. There are also innumerable languages prevailing in India.





### INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.2

Match the following:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| i. Openness          | 1. This trait features characteristics such as imagination and insight.  |
| ii. Agreeableness    | 2. It is characterized by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness. |
| iii. Extroversion    | 3. Standard features of this dimension include high levels of thoughtfulness, good impulse control, and goal-directed behaviors. |
| iv. Neuroticism      | 4. It is a trait characterized by sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability.   |
| v. Conscientiousness | 5. This personality dimension includes attributes such as trust, altruism, kindness, affection, and other prosocial behavior.    |



### ACTIVITY

We enjoy with them because they are somehow similar to us such as we both might enjoy playing cricket or we both might enjoy watching movies together, or simply we might enjoy being in each other's company. By now the image of your best friend is definitely there in your mind.

Begin by listing on a paper at least 5 ways in which you are similar to and also at least five ways in which you are different from your best friend. Now analyse each similarity and difference in terms of which factor of diversity it falls in. For example, if you both enjoy mathematics, then this similarity falls under psychological factor.

By the end of this activity you will be able to understand the meaning of diversity and the factor leading to it. Despite the difference between the two of you, you like each other, thus differences are not bad, and they often attract us to each other.

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**16.3 SPECIAL NEEDS ARISING FROM DIVERSITY****Notes**

Diversity brings with it a lot of challenges. Differences of lifestyles, opinions, backgrounds, attitudes can make it challenging to coexist. Difficulty is faced more by the minority group as compared to the majority group.

Minority is any small group in society that is different from the rest because of their caste, religion, political beliefs or cognitive ability or a person who belongs to such a group.

As stated earlier, diversity often encourages stereotypes and prejudices. And the targets of these prejudices are often the minority group.

Thus, there arises a special need to help build an environment of inclusion in which everyone feels appreciated for their unique characteristics and are therefore comfortable sharing their ideas and other aspects of their true and authentic selves.

Following are five techniques for reducing stereotypical thinking:

- Learning to recognize one's stereotypical responses to other people, and to generate non-stereotypical alternatives to explain that person's behavior.
- Remembering or imagining people from stereotyped groups who do not fit the stereotype.
- Paying attention to other things about someone besides the stereotypes of their group—personal things that can help you see them as an individual, not just a group member.
- Imagining what the world looks like through the eyes of a stereotyped person.
- Deliberately seeking opportunities to get to know people from stereotyped groups.
- Special needs in diversity also arises due to cognitive disability and physical disability faced by a segment of the population. As per Census 2011, in India, out of the 121 Cr population, about 2.68 Cr persons are 'disabled' which is 2.21% of the total population (Refer to table 16.2)

Population, India 2011			Disabled persons, India 2011		
Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
121.08 Cr	62.32 Cr	58.76Cr	2.68 Cr	1.5 Cr	1.18 Cr

Table 16.2 Disabled Populations in India – Census 2011

The Census 2011 revealed that, In India, 20% of the disabled persons are having disability in movement, 19% are with disability in seeing, and another 19 % are with disability in hearing. 8% has multiple disabilities (Refer to figure 16.2)

In an era where ‘inclusive development’ is being emphasized as the right path towards sustainable development, focused initiatives for the welfare of disabled persons are essential.

Countries differ in conceptualization of disability, identification procedures, educational practices, comprehensiveness of provision, and policy priorities.

In India, Rehabilitation Council of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and NHFDC (National Handicapped Finance and development Corporation), aim to economically empower the disabled while discouraging charity.

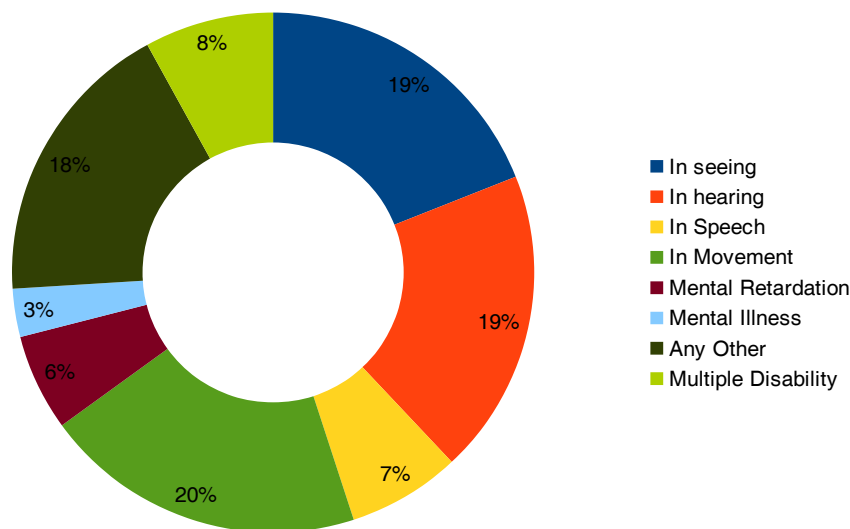


Figure 16.2 Disabled Population by type of disability in India – Census 2011

At personal level as well we should respect diversity created by disability. We should not think of differently challenged people as less competent than us in any way. We often attach stereotypes with them based on misconceptions, past experiences, and the absence of fact. For example, common stereotypes attached mental illnesses are



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that they're dangerous, unstable, and face periods of hospitalization.

Ways in which we can respect the differently-abled people and cater to the special needs arising from such diversity are:

- Pity is not the same as compassion. Whenever you see a person with disability, you should presume they are just as competent as you are in the job they've been assigned. Never assume they aren't capable, or that you need to step in and help.
- Using the correct terminology - Just one word that you use can degrade someone, hurt their feelings, insult them, or even imply that you are discriminating against them. Earlier the label 'Disabled' was used for referring to people with disability, however, now the term 'differently -abled' is used universally. The term disabled takes away their individual identities. Just like we would not want to be called by a characteristic of ours which we are not proud of (such as long nose, short height), similarly people with disabilities do not want their disability to be their name tag.
- See the person – the individual – instead of seeing them as their disability. Maybe they have a great sense of humor. Maybe they're a hard worker. See them for the things they are. They are not defined by their impairment any more than you are defined by the color of your hair.
- Treat differently abled people as you would treat anyone else.
- If you think someone needs assistance, you can offer it. The person may accept it or not. Either way is okay. Don't give your assistance without their permission. That is assuming they can't do something on their own.
- Sometimes people may have impairments that affect the way they speak. If you're having problems understanding what someone says, ask them to repeat what they said. Be honest. Be polite.
- If someone is in a wheelchair, you want to make sure you converse with them at eye level. This may mean pulling up a chair. Don't bend over, kneel, or lean to talk to them. Also, don't lean on the wheelchair as support. If you can't sit down, it's okay to stand. Just look them in the eye.

- If someone has a visual disability, identify yourself and anyone else who is with you. If talking to someone else other than the blind person in a group, make it clear who you are speaking to by addressing them by name.
- Never pat people in wheelchairs on the head or on the shoulders. That is how you would treat kids or pets. Always treat adults as adults.
- To get the attention of a person who has a hearing disability, tap them on the shoulder. Speak slowly and clearly so the person can read your lips. Don't block the view of your mouth. Speak in normal tones. Don't shout.



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**ACTIVITY**

Read the COLOR the word is highlighted in, not the word itself:

**Yellow Blue Orange Black Red Green Purple Yellow Red Orange Green**  
**Black Blue Red Purple Green Blue Orange**

Did you notice that though you can make yourself do it correctly, you have to read much slower than normal. Brain wants to read the actual word.

This is an example of how difficult it is for students with learning disabilities to get through the day. Their brain understands what needs to be done, but they have to struggle to make it come out right.



**ACTIVITY**

Now let us try the following tasks to understand the plight of differently abled people:

1. Using a blindfold, cover your eyes. Find your way through your house or any familiar surroundings.
2. Without using your preferred hand, tie your shoelace with only one hand.
3. Using a wheelchair or a stick walk through the public. Observe the reactions and stares the general public gives.



**DO YOU KNOW**

When a person has an intellectual disability, it means that they learn slower. Because they learn more slowly, they don't learn as much as other people might. There are over

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200 known causes for intellectual disability. About one-third of the time, no one knows what caused it. Not everyone with an intellectual disability is alike. One person can have mild problems while another may have severe problems. A person with an intellectual disability may:

- Have difficulty understanding what other people say or mean;
- Have difficulty saying what they mean or how they feel;
- Understanding social cues (for example, if you turn away they may not know this means you don't want to talk to them);
- have difficulty learning and concentrating;
- Have to do things many more times than average before they learn it;
- Act younger than their age;
- Not understand when someone is making fun of them;
- May find it hard to read or write;
- May not understand when someone tells them to do something wrong.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.3**

State which of the following statements are 'true' and which are 'false'

1. One should treat people with disabilities with pity.
2. Mental Retardation is the most common type of disability in India.
3. A more appropriate term to refer to people with disability is 'Differently abled' as compared to 'Disabled'.
4. Stereotypes often lead to discrimination.
5. If someone is in a wheelchair, you should converse with them at eye level.



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

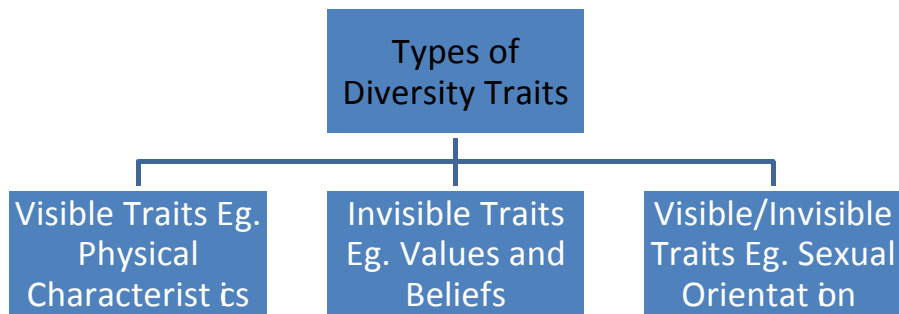


Fig 1. Classification of Diversity Traits

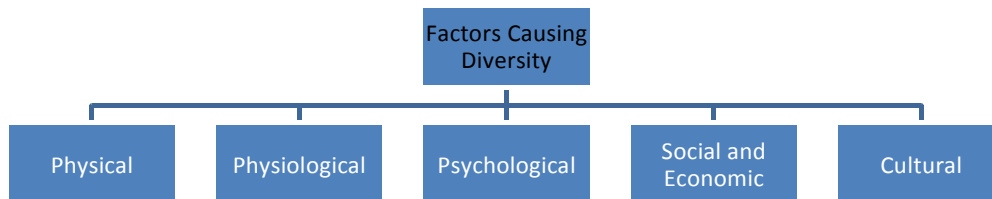


Figure 2. Factors that cause diversity

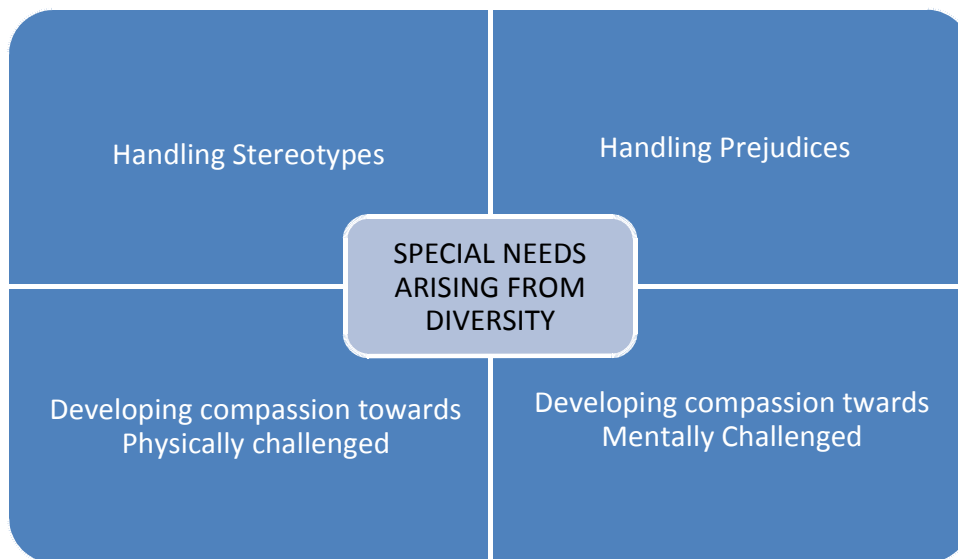


Figure 3. Special needs arising from diversity.

Minority is any small group in society that is different from the rest because of their caste, religion, political beliefs or physical and cognitive abilities. These groups are often targeted.



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**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

**16.1**

- 1) False      2) True      2) True      2) False      2) True

**16.2**

- (i) 1      (ii) 5      (iii) 2      (iv) 4      (v) 3

**16.3**

- 1) False      2) False      2) True      2) True      2) True



**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

- 1) What is Diversity? With the use of examples, explain the classification of diversity trait
- 2) Explain the psychological factors causing diversity.
- 3) What are the social and economic factors causing diversity in India?
- 4) How does diversity create special needs?
- 5) What are stereotypes?
- 6) What do you understand by the term OCEAN that describes different types of personalities of individual
- 7) Explain the physical and physiological factors causing diversity.
- 8) What are the different ways of reducing stereotypical thinking?
- 9) Outline different types of diversity traits in which people differ from each other can be classified.
- 10) How does the social and economic factor impacts the society?