

What do you know? How do you know it? What do you believe? Why do you believe it?

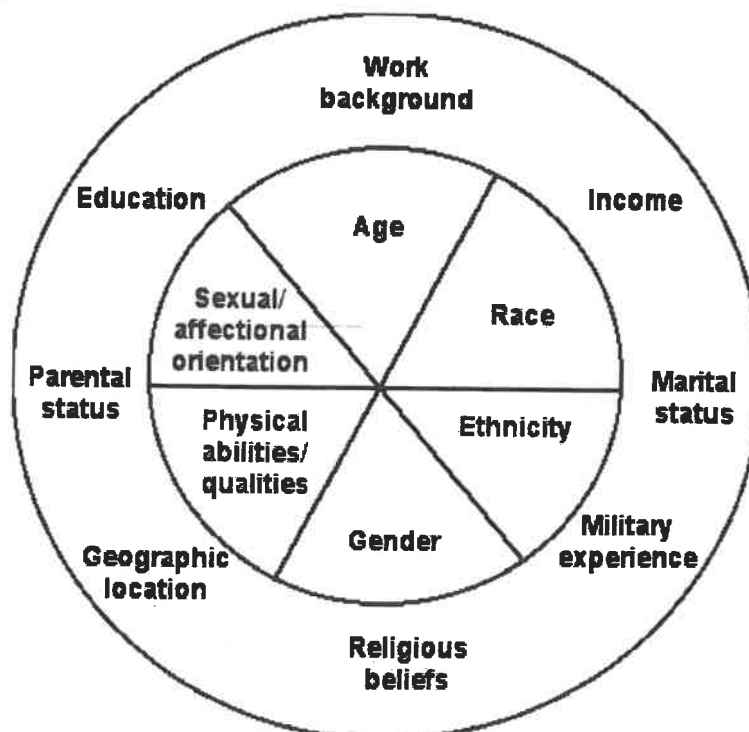
Some controversial issues are rife with strong emotions, which can cloud our judgment. How do we keep our head and sort out what arguments are the most solid and reasoned? For one thing, we can recognize rhetorical strategies such as *pathos*, *logos*, and *ethos*, for a deeper understanding of how the various positions are constructed. Does the speaker or author establish a creditable *ethos*? Does she base her position on verifiable facts, expert testimony, and data? Does his appeal to *pathos* indicate sensitivity or manipulation? Or perhaps it reveals a weak grasp of the complexity of the issue?

Another way to approach argument is to recognize our own biases. Our opinions, values, and apprehension of the world are affected by countless influences: family, community, religion, friends, media, and profession, to name a few. What are the various lenses through which you perceive the world?

Here's an example of how we might take a closer look at those lenses:

I know that the world is round. How? What are our reasons and evidence?

- a. *Authorities*. I learned this in school.
- b. *References*: I read about it in geography and science books.
- c. *Factual evidence*: I've seen photos taken from outer space that show the earth as a globe.
- d. *Personal experience*: When I flew across the country I could see the horizon line changing.



This Diversity Wheel¹ identifies of the many influences that make us who we are. It's certainly not definitive; for example, you might say that "Geographic location" could be further broken down into state, city, even neighborhood.

We've been discussing some of the we encounter when we try to make sense of the news. Our own beliefs, values, experiences, and assumptions certainly play a role as well.

ASSIGNMENT

1. For Wednesday's class, **make a list of 5-10 issues** that concern college students

Note: I realize that the following involves some personal reflection. I won't read this part closely—just skim to see that you've completed it.

2. Write a brief description (a few sentences) of who you are based on the Wheel.
3. Write a **list of five** things you believe or value. Write them as statements: e.g., I believe people should be kind to each other. I value honesty.
4. Take **two** of those statements and examine them in more depth by writing in response to these evaluate them statements in the following terms.
 - *Authorities*: Who are the authorities in this area? Are they reliable? Do other authorities disagree? On what basis?
 - *References*: Are these books, newspapers, websites reliable? How would you know?
 - *Factual evidence*: What are the source and foundation of the evidence? Can the evidence be interpreted differently? What other factors might be involved?
 - *Personal experiences*: What experiences have you and/or others had to support your beliefs? Can you imagine a different point of view, and why someone might hold it? Has your own personal experience changed? Which of the elements of the Diversity Wheel would influence your perspectives?

¹ The Diversity Wheel is a model created by Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener.