

## **Breakout Session #1: The Multiple Dimensions of Identity**

(Adapted from Diversity Activities Guide, University of Houston)

This activity will require 30 minutes.

### Objectives

The purpose of this breakout session is to provide you with an example of the type of activity that can be conducted with study abroad students prior to their departure. You will be reflecting on the many facets that go into your own identity and gaining an understanding into the importance of self-defining one's own identity. It will also push to reflect on stereotypes.

### Relevance of this Activity

Our identity is shaped through the primary socialization process which is to say by the behaviors we see and messages we receive from the media, our social institutions, our family and friends and the values and beliefs of our in-groups. Our image of who we are affects who how we see those around us and how we see others when we sojourn overseas. This socialization process can differ greatly among different cultures as different peoples stress different values. Identity is complex and we all have many identities: social, cultural, sexual, gender, age, personal, ethnic, racial, social class, language, regional, national, etc. Understanding the elements that make up one's identity and having a sense of self-awareness is an essential process for students to undertake in order that they acquire the ability to manage their reactions (remain comfortable) when elements of their culture or identity are challenged. Identity is an essential element of cultural interaction and intercultural competence.

### How this Activity Meets Guidelines in World Readiness Standards

In 1996, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), published the report of its National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. In this publication, eleven standards with five primary goal areas outlined a roadmap for best practices in language learning. The five primary areas, known as the 5Cs, include Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. Specifically, for the area of Culture, the key objective cited is to “Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures, ([www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)).

The two standards specific to Culture are as follows:

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied;

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

In 2011, the original National Standards were revised and ACTFL published the World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, which further defined the central role of languages in the learning career of all students. The revised standards also emphasized the importance of a student’s ability to interact with cultural competence. It is significant that these revisions as well as the new NCSSFL-ACTFL Can Do Statements changed the cultural component of the standards from “Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures” to “Interact with cultural competence and understanding. This change places a deeper emphasis on reflection and proposes that is a necessary step to move students from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative worldview ([www.aglobalclassroom](http://www.aglobalclassroom)). That is, identify, increased self-awareness and comfort around diversity are an extricable element of language learning.

### Instructions

Participants should come to the front to get a handout and then pair up with somebody they do not know very well. In pairs, find a place to sit together and then follow the steps.

1) Each person should have a handout with the circles of identity. Tell participants to write their names in the center circle. Then fill in each satellite circle with a dimension of their identity they consider to be among the most important in defining themselves. Here are some examples: female, athlete, Jewish, brother, sister, father, educator, Asian American, middle class, democrat, immigrant, doctor, student, Christian, etc.

2) In their pairs, tell participants to share two stories with each other. First, share a story about when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the identifiers they selected. Next, share a story about a time it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identity dimensions they chose.

3) The third step will be to share a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately. Ask them to complete the sentence at the bottom of the handout by filling in the blanks: "I am (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ but I am NOT (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_." Provide your own example, such as "I am a Christian, but I am NOT a radical right Republican."

Instructions for steps 1, 2, and 3 should be given at once. Allow 8-10 minutes for participants to complete all three steps, but remind them with 2 minutes remaining that they must fill in the stereotype sentence.

4) Probe the group for reactions to each other's stories. Ask whether anyone heard a story she or he would like to share with the group. (Make sure the person who originally told the story has granted permission to share it with the entire group.)

5) Advise participants that the next step will involve individuals standing up and reading their stereotype statement. You can either simply go around the room in some order or have people randomly stand up and read their statements. Make sure that participants are respectful and listening actively for this step, as individuals are making themselves vulnerable by participating. Start by reading your own statement. This part of the activity can be extremely powerful if you introduce it energetically. It may take a few moments to start the flow of sharing; so, allow for silent moments.

6) Several questions can be used to process this activity: 1. How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you? 2. Did anybody hear somebody challenge a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what? 3. How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge your stereotype? 4. (There is usually some laughter when somebody shares common stereotype such as "I may be Arab, but I am not a terrorist" or "I may be a teacher, but I do have a social life.") I heard several moments of laughter. What was that about? 5. Where do stereotypes come from? 6. How can we eliminate them?

### Facilitator Notes:

The key to this activity is the process of examining one's own identity and the stereotypes associated with that identity, then having one's own stereotypes challenged through others' stories and stereotype challenges. Encourage participants to think about the stereotypes they apply to people and to make a conscious effort to think more deeply about them, eventually eliminating them. As with most activities, it can be especially effective if you participate while you facilitate. If you are willing to share your own experiences, participants are more likely to feel open to share their own. It is crucial, especially for the final part of the activity when participants are sharing their stereotypes, to allow for silences. People will be hesitant to share initially, but once the ball starts rolling, the activity carries a lot of energy. Allow time at the end for participants to talk more about whatever stereotype they shared.

Depending on the group, sometimes some elements of identity are not always shared, such as ethnic, sexual, political etc. Wait to see elements like this are raised and if not, that will also make for a good group discussion about why they were not included. After everyone has shared their stereotype challenge, announce that anyone who would like to share another one can do so. Model by sharing another one about yourself.

### Suggest Further Activities

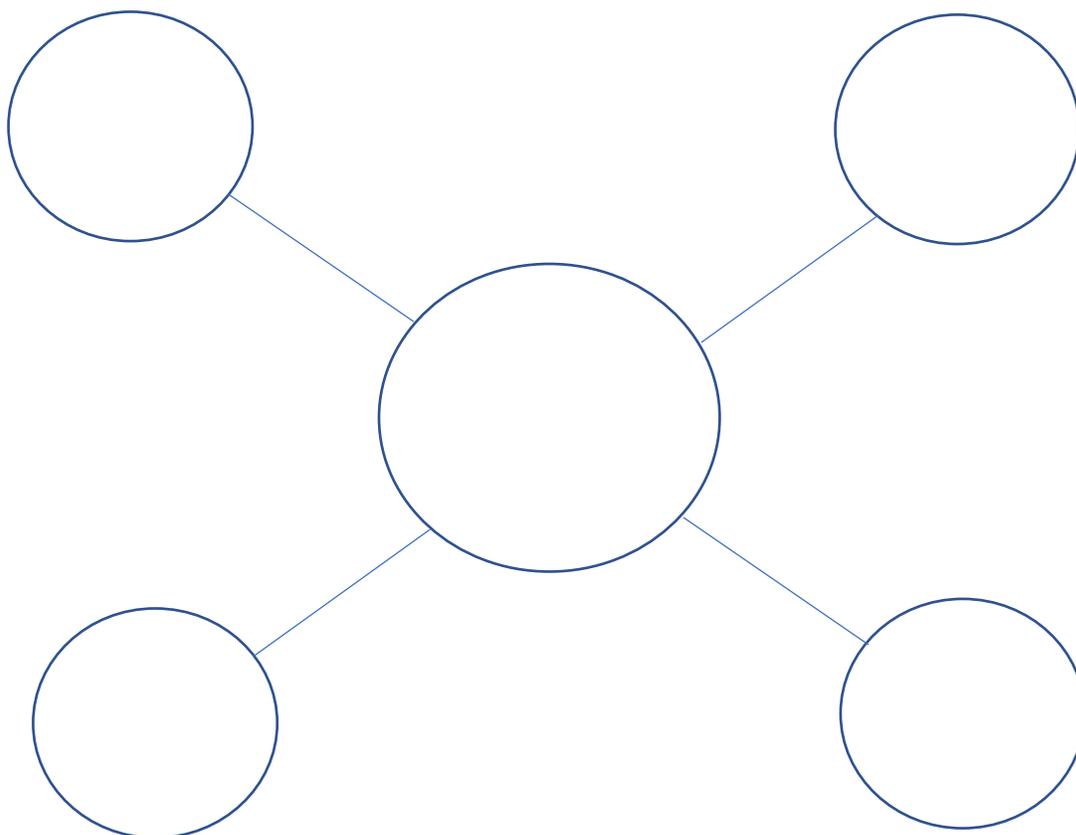
Visit the Peace Corps website and do some of the readings or reflective exercises in the Module on Global Competence: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/global-competence-module-1-identifying-areas-self-growth/>

## My Identity Circles

(handout)

This activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our identities. It addresses the importance of individuals self-defining their identities and challenging stereotypes.

Place your name in the center circle of the structure below. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles -- an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. This can include anything: Asian American, female, mother, athlete, educator, Taoist, scientist, or any descriptor with which you identify.



1. Share a story about a time you were especially proud to identify yourself with one of the descriptors you used above.
2. Share a story about a time it was especially painful to be identified with one of your identifiers or descriptors.
3. Name a stereotype associated with one of the groups with which you identify that is not consistent with who you are. Fill in the following sentence:  
I am (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ but I am NOT (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_.  
(So, if one of my identifiers was "Christian," and I thought a stereotype was that all Christians are radical right Republicans, my sentence would be:  
I am a Christian, but I am NOT a radical right Republican.)

## **Breakout Session #2: Creating a Diverse Community**

(Adapted from [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org) as cited in the Diversity Activities Guide, University of Houston)

This activity will require 25-30 minutes.

### Objectives

The purpose of this breakout session is to work in groups to develop our awareness of the diversity of our community and to reflect on the obstacles to diversity within ourselves and our communities and to explore the steps we could realistically take to make our communities more diverse.

### Relevance of this Activity

Social categorization refers to the way we group people into conceptual categories. It is a natural process and one that can help us make sense of the world. If left unchecked, this process can lead to othering which involved the objectification of out-groups and the arbitrary assignment of characteristics to other groups (Jackson, 2020). If most of our lives are spent with our ingroup, that is, without much input from outgroups, then over time we tend to place a higher value on the behaviors and attitudes of the in-group and potentially view those belonging to an outgroup in a negative way. This is referred to as in-group favoritism and has significant implications for students participating in a study abroad program. According to Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence, it is essential to develop the right attitudes for Intercultural Competence to develop. That is, respect for other cultures, valuing of different ways of doing things, openness and a willingness to withhold judgement about others, and finally a quality of curiosity and discovery about other cultures and those who are different so that we develop a tolerance of ambiguity (Jackson, 2020). So while ingroup affiliations are natural, it is

critical that in the pre-departure phase, our students going abroad have exposure to diversity, different cultures and different ways of doing things so that they are able to appreciate the diversity of the cultures in their host countries. This should be done in a structured way so that students are led through activities and are able to reflect.

#### How this Activity Meets Guidelines in World Readiness Standards

In 1996, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), published the report of its National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. In this publication, eleven standards with five primary goal areas outlined a roadmap for best practices in language learning. The five primary areas, known as the 5Cs, include Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. Specifically for the area of Culture, the key objective cited is to “Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures, ([www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)). The two standards specific to Culture are as follows:

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competence and understanding. This change places a deeper emphasis on reflection and proposes that is a necessary step to move students from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative worldview ([www.aglobalclassroom](http://www.aglobalclassroom)). That is, identify, increased self-awareness and comfort around diversity are an extricable element of language learning.

### Materials Needed

Flip charts for each group, the handout for each person (up front) and different colored marker pens.

### Instructions

Participants should come to the front and each person should get a handout. Then get into groups for 4 -6 people. With your group, grab a flip chart and different colored markers from the back and find a table where you can work together for the next 25 minutes.

Once the groups are made and each group is at a table, ask them to do the following:

- 1) Brainstorm as a group what this community would be like if we had an environment which truly valued diversity.
- 2) Create a graphic image of their vision and draw it on their flipchart, using multi-colored markers. (They may want to conceal their image from the other groups for a grand “unveiling.”)
3. Create two to three action steps which they, as an individual or group, can implement that will contribute to achieving this vision.

4) Quickly look through the following statements regarding privilege and diversity to help you brainstorm:

1. The leader of my country is also a person of my racial group. (RACE)
2. When going shopping, I can easily find clothes that fit my size and shape. (SIZE)
3. In public, I can kiss and hold hands with the person I am dating without fear of name-calling or violence. (SEXUALITY)
4. When I go shopping, I can be fairly certain that sales or security people will not follow me. (RACE/APPEARANCE)
5. Most of the religious and cultural holidays celebrated by my family are recognized with days off from work or school. (RELIGION/CULTURE)
6. When someone is trying to describe me, they do not mention my race. (RACE)
7. When I am angry or emotional, people do not dismiss my opinions as symptoms of “that time of the month.” (GENDER)
8. When expressing my opinion, I am not automatically assumed to be a spokesperson of my race. (RACE)
- 9) I can easily buy greeting cards that represent my relationship with my significant other. (SEXUALITY)
10. I can easily find hair products and people who know how to style my hair. (RACE)
11. In my family, it is seen as normal to obtain a college degree. (CLASS)
12. If I am going out to dinner with friends, I do not worry if the building will be accessible to me. (ABILITY)

After 15-20 minutes, have each group present their vision and graphic image to the whole group. Then, have them list their action steps. The other groups can ask questions or make comments. Summarize by stating that we all want to work and live in an environment where we are free to be who we are, and to be appreciated for our unique contribution. Only by working together, caring about this topic and wanting to create open communities that embrace diversity can we do just that.

Finally, ask each participant to go away with and on their own complete the “Breaking Down Barriers” worksheet. Ask them to focus on individual and staff group actions they can take to break down the barriers to creating diverse communities on their floors. This worksheet should be a continued discussion item for them their communities, classes, clubs and workplaces.

### Suggest Further Activities

Visit the Peace Corps website and do some of the readings or reflective exercises in the Module on Global Competence: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/global-competence-module-1-identifying-areas-self-growth/>

## BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

(handout/worksheet)

### Individual Action Steps

Individual ACTIONS I can take to break down the barriers to creating diverse community are: A few sample action ideas could be... • Talk to someone you've never talked to before. • Fight stereotypes by getting to know different kinds of people. • Reach out to people who are alone. • Volunteer with a community organization. • Mentor younger children; give them a hand or advice when they need it. • Join a new club or organization. Get to know different kinds of people. • Speak up when you hear someone make a put-down or unfair remark.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

### Community/Group Action Steps

Community/Group ACTIONS we can take to break down the barriers to creating diverse community are: A few sample action ideas could be... • Start a floor/hall club that brings together people from different groups. • Work with Area Government to sponsor a community night each week, with sports, homework help or other activities. • On your floor, replicate some of these dialogues or activities as a part of your floor meetings to address all kinds of issues. • Get other RAs involved in co-programming to mix up communities. • Get clubs and organizations to co-sponsor projects and events in the halls. • As a staff group, create or join a "campus climate" committee that includes both students and administrators (e.g. LGBT Concerns Committee, Alcohol Task Force, etc)

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_