

The Spectrum Activity, Questions of Identity

<p>Overview</p>	<p>The Spectrum Activity, Questions of Identity are questions for discussion or reflective writing that prompt students to critically consider their identities and the relationship between identity and context. These questions can be used in conjunction with the Social Identity Wheel and Personal Identity Wheel to prompt students in a discussion or reflective writing exercise about identity.</p> <p>While this activity is intended to be inclusive, there are some considerations for you to make when implementing it in class. For some students, certain identity categories may require them to disclose information they may not be ready to share in such a setting. Forced disclosure is not part of this activity and it is essential that students have the option to choose which category they want to discuss further. In this capacity, students are empowered to answer authentically through their choices. See the Challenges Section for further insight. It is recommended that you facilitate this activity after the class has had time to build community and trust.</p> <p>Another consideration that must be made is accessibility for this activity. This activity requires students to move around the classroom and ensuring that all students have access to do so is imperative. Be sure to address any accommodations before implementing this activity.</p>
<p>Goals</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To encourage students to consider their identities critically and how identities are more or less keenly felt in different social contexts. The classroom and the university can be highlighted as a context as a way to approach questions on barriers to inclusion. 2) To illuminate how privilege operates to normalize some identities over others. For example, a student who speaks English as their first language can reflect on why they rarely need to think about their language as an aspect of their identity while some of their peers may identify language as the aspect of their identity they feel most keenly in the classroom. 3) To sensitize students to their shared identities with their classmates as well as the diversity of identities in the classroom, building community and encouraging empathy.
<p>Implementation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) View this video to see how to facilitate this activity in your classroom. 2) Place the social identity categories around the room before class. 3) If you are teaching an online course, there are still opportunities for you to engage in this activity with your students. Consider using Jamboard or Zoom breakout rooms to facilitate this activity.

Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The students may not perceive the activity as relevant to the course and thus may exhibit resistance.2) If students are unfamiliar with thinking about their identity, they may struggle to answer these questions in critical or dynamic ways. Using the wheel worksheets and discussing anything that might be unfamiliar to students about identities prior to the discussion will help prepare students for the discussion questions.3) Some of these questions may feel especially vulnerable to students with invisible identities that they may not want to disclose to the class. Disclosure in verbal or written form should be voluntary and discussion questions should be addressed broadly enough that students can opt to not talk about more vulnerable aspects of their identities while still leaving space for them to share if they wish.
Materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Social identity categories2) If you are having students complete a social identity wheel, you will need this handout3) Spectrum Activity Questions

Session Sequence

Lesson Structure	Time <i>(Estimated amount of time for each component)</i>	Activity Content and Instructions
Introduction	3 mins	The instructor welcomes the class and provides an overview of the activity: students will critically consider their identities and the relationship between a particular identity and context.
Social Identity Wheel	5 mins	<p>If you are having students fill out a social identity wheel, begin here. If you are not, skip ahead to the next lesson component.</p> <p>1) To prime students into thinking about their identities, have them fill out a social identity wheel (handout link found in Materials section).</p>
Spectrum Activity	20 mins	<p>Before class, be sure to set up the classroom with the different social identity categories for this activity. If you do not have time before class, you can set them up while the students are completing their social identity wheel or have student volunteers place them around the room.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Inform students of the different social identity categories placed around the room. 2) Explain to students that you will be reading off a series of questions and that students will move to the category that most clearly helps them answer the question. 3) When at a category, students should discuss with others who went to the same category why they moved to that space. 4) Read the next question and repeat until you have asked 5-6 questions. <p>Some possible questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What part of your identity do you think people first notice about you? • What part of your identity are you most comfortable sharing with other people? • What part of your identity are you least comfortable sharing with other people? • What part of your identity are you most proud of? • What part of your identity did you struggle the most with growing up? • What part of your identity is the most important to you? • What part of your identity is least important to you? • What part of other people’s identities do you notice first?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For what part of your identity do you feel you face oppression for most often? • For what part of your identity do you feel you receive privilege for most often? • For what part of your identity do you feel least comfortable with at U of M? • Which of your own identities would you like to learn more about? • Which identities have the strongest effect on how you see yourself as a person? • What part of your identity do you see having the most effect on your interactions with co-workers/peers?
Large Group Debrief	10 mins	<p>Lead the class in a debrief of the activity:</p> <p>Some possible debrief questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Why is it important to critically reflect on our identities? 2) What is the significance of learning about the identities of our classmates/peers? 3) What commonalities did you find with classmates? 4) Was there a particular identity that you went to most? Least? Why do you think that is the case? 5) What is the value in completing activities like this in our class?
Citations		Adapted for use by the Spectrum Center and the Program on Intergroup Relations, University of Michigan.