

Identity Signs

Large Group 201 High Trust 20 mins Intersectionality Participants

Materials & Media:

- ❑ Identity signs
- ❑ Clips, tape, or something sticky to hang the signs

Set Up:

- ❑ Hang up the identity signs around the room—ideally, before the workshop begins so they are part of the space from the very beginning. If you think they'll be a distraction, hang another piece of paper in front of each one

Goals & Learning Outcomes:

- ❑ To allow a space for participants to talk about their experiences and their identities in a more personal way and to provide an opportunity for others to learn from those personal stories
- ❑ To highlight that people with similar identities can experience different levels of salience, self-awareness, and can be differently impacted by their intersecting identities
- ❑ To talk about how we experience our identities on a day-to-day basis
- ❑ To highlight how everyone may experience pain, ostracism, or discrimination, yet feel it within the context of different identities

Framing:

“For this activity, we are going to be moving around the room in response to some questions I am going to be posing to the group. The questions are going to be related to your identities, others’ perception of your identities, and your experience of your identities. You can choose to share or not share after the questions. (During most rounds, not everyone will share after every question.) This activity is really about getting to know each others’ experiences and having time to reflect on how we all can have similar or wildly different experiences rooted in our identities or experiences of them.”

Process Steps & Talking Points:

1. Ask participants to prepare themselves to move around the room. (Make sure that the room is set up in a way that will allow all participants to move around the room easily to be under or close to the different signs.)
2. Give the directions for the activity: “I am going to read a series of questions and would like you to choose an identity that you feel answers the question for you. If you have more than one identity that could be true for that question, we encourage you to pick only one as a response. We then will have time to talk about why we answered the way we did and to speak to what that experience was like. After, I’ll read another question and we will continue the process like that. You do not have to share at any point, however, and I encourage you to consider how much you are sharing in order to make space for others. Does anyone have any questions about the instructions of the activity?”

3. Read the first prompt, provide time for participants to move around and give time for sharing and processing. Repeat.
4. Depending on the time you've allotted for the activity, you may also want to debrief the activity after the fact.

Statements for the activity:

The part of my identity that I am most aware of on a daily basis is_____.

The part of my identity that I am the least aware of on a daily basis is_____.

The part of my identity that was most emphasized or important in my family growing up was _____.

The part of my identity that I wish I knew more about is _____.

The part of my identity that provides me the most privilege is _____.

The part of my identity that I believe is the most misunderstood by others is _____.

The part of my identity that I feel is difficult to discuss with others who identify differently is _____.

The part of my identity that makes me feel discriminated against is _____.

Debrief/Process Questions:

What was that activity like?

What did you notice about the way that people were distributed around the room that struck you?

Were there any identity categories that you wish had existed but were not options?

Anything else you'd like to add before we move on from the activity?

Wrap Up:

To close up this activity it is good to summarize some of the major points that were brought up in the debrief and/or to thank everyone for their honesty/vulnerability in what they were willing to name or share in the actual activity itself. Even if some people don't verbally share, moving under/near the signs may bring up a lot of emotion or may take a lot of courage; therefore, it is good to highlight your appreciation of the group's participation.

Co-Facilitator Notes:

It is good to have a few moments to discuss which statements you want to read and which you want your co-facilitator to read. You can also read all the statements and your co-facilitator can facilitate people sharing their thoughts/experiences or lead the debrief.

Bring Your Style:

You can orient this activity around a specific subset of identities so as to generate more in-depth discussion about one area or subset of social justice work. You could do this activity around identity signs related to

sexuality and include signs like: sexual history, sexual interest, sexual orientation, gender identity, attractions to others, etc.

This is also an activity that you can include your own participation or not. If it is a small group and it would feel negatively voyeuristic to not participant, then you may want to consider answering the questions as well.

Challenges & Tips

This activity is labeled as “high trust” because it provides a lot of opportunity for personal and deep sharing and participants often need to feel comfortable, safe, and ready to share personal stories and experiences with each other. Without pre-established trust, participants may not be ready/willing to do this.

Depending on the group and the way folks learn/take in information, you may want project onto a screen the statements that you are asking as you go along so that participants can read them. We would not necessarily recommend providing participants with the statement sheet because they may be distracted by thinking about the statements that come later.

Sexual Orientation

Race

Class

Gender Identity

Gender Presentation

Sex

National Origin

Ethnicity

Immigration Status

Religious Affiliation