

Activity 5.3 Identifying Your Communities¹

Description

This activity will open up the conversation and make visible that there are many different understandings of the term “community” and of where we feel part of or outside of a community. The term is often taken for granted and it is important when opening up conversation on what community means that participants understand how they feel in relation to certain communities or how they exclude certain people from communities they are a part of.

Learning Goals

- Develop a nuanced understanding of community.
- Critically reflect on practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Practice (50 minutes)

Step One	What does community mean for you, and what communities do you feel a part of? Think about these questions independently and either <i>write a few thoughts down or draw your answer.</i> Tip: Allowing participants to draw offers participants a different way of thinking.	10 min
Step Two	In small groups, <i>share what you have written or drawn.</i>	10 min
Step Three	Based on these stories, what for your group makes up “community”? What are the characteristics of a community? <i>Record your list of characteristics.</i>	10 min
Step Four	<i>Debrief.</i> As a class, discuss the following prompt. Refer to your list of characteristics as you reflect upon your responses. <i>Do you feel part of the university, workplace, or broader community where you are based? Why/why not? Are there spaces where you feel like you belong and spaces in which you feel excluded?</i>	20 min

¹ **Citation for this activity:** Janice McMillan (2023). Identifying Your Communities. In Hartman, Britt, & Byrd (Eds). *The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/module-5-civic-collaboration-1>

	Tip: The key here is to help participants understand that communities are complex; they are not necessarily always inclusive; they are not homogenous and there are many views in one community.	
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Reflection Assignment

- Communities can indicate spaces where you feel included, but on the other hand, they also exclude. What practices (intentional and unintentional) do communities use that exclude?
- How is the relationship between the university and the surrounding communities often described? How can we enter off campus communities in ways that indicate a genuine interest in learning about the community?
- What about power in communities? Who holds power in the communities of which you are a part? What does this say about how decisions are made?

Practice Journal

This week, identify one community. Describe how you are included or excluded in this community. Reflect on the practices of this community? Who is excluded? Who is readily included? How does power operate in this community?

Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- [Adichie's TED talk on the 'problem of a single story'](#)