

Activity 1.4 Understanding Your Identity in Collaboration

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Description

There are different ways of thinking about identity ranging from personal to social or perceived to ascribed. This activity encourages participants to reflect on the type of person or identity they bring (or would like to bring) to a discussion.

Learning Goals

- Recognize that all discussion participants bring and withhold parts of their identity.
- Be more intentional about the identities we put forward (or hold back) in group discussion.

Instructions (50 minutes)

Set Up	<p>Prepare for the Activity</p> <p>Organize the participants into pairs or small groups (5-6 ppl).</p> <p>Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.</p>	
Step One	<p>Individually Design Identity Capsules</p> <p>Share the following prompt with participants:</p> <p>Imagine that you have the opportunity to live on another planet with an alien population. The interview process requires that you pack 5 items into</p>	10 min

¹ **Citation for this activity:** Shannon Wheatley Hartman (2023). Understanding Your Identity in Collaboration. In Hartman and Byrd (Eds), The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/activities/module-1>

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	<p>a capsule that best represent you as a person. You decide which 5 aspects of your identity are most important and how you might represent them as objects in the capsule. Write down your answers, being mindful that you will share this information in pairs or small groups. Do not write down something that you are uncomfortable sharing.</p> <p>Facilitator Tip: This step can be shared in advance and participants can actually bring their items to the group discussion.</p>	
Step Two	<p>Share Capsules</p> <p>In pairs or small groups, invite participants to share their capsule items. Discuss these prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you include this item? What part of your identity does it represent? • How might this part of your identity show up (or not show up) in larger group discussions? • When are these identity traits most present and when are they invisible or held back in reserve? 	20 min
Step Three	<p>Debrief as a Full Group</p> <p>Reconvene as a large group and ask participants to take inventory of their identity capsule contents. Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sort of items were in your identity capsules? Any similarities? Anything that stood out? Anything in possible tension? • How do we know which parts of our identity we want to put forth in a collaborative discussion with others? Can we be intentional about this? • Which parts of our identity do we hold back? What is the cost of holding back parts of ourselves? Under what circumstances do we feel safe to put forth a more authentic or whole self? 	20 min

Reflection Journal

- After hearing from other participants, what did you learn about which aspects of their identity are most important to them?
- How might you revise your capsule now that you have had the benefit of thinking about this with others?
- We hear that it is important to show up as our “authentic self,” but under what circumstances is that safe? Under what circumstances should you hold back and share only parts of your identity?

Practice Journal

This week, observe your own participation in a group discussion or in a group activity. What person do you share with others? Which identity traits do you share and which ones do you hold back? How does this affect the experience (for you and for others)?

Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- Van Bavel, Jay J., and Dominic J. Packer. *The Power of Us: Harnessing Our Shared Identities to Improve Performance, Increase Cooperation, and Promote Social Harmony*. First edition. New York, Little, Brown Spark, 2021.

Activity Cluster

1.4 Understanding Your Identity in Collaboration

[1.3 Anticipating Conflict and Forming Group Guidelines](#)

[1.8 Evaluating Your Discussion Style](#)