

Forced Choices

The Purpose of This Activity

This activity will allow participants to think about their own identities and the impact they have on their lives. Demonstrate how different identities resonate with different people. Encourage group disclosure and bonding.

Estimated Time

- 45 minutes – 1 hour to do 5-6 choices, depending on how much sharing is done each time

Materials

- Identity sheets

Introduction

We all have different, complex, intersecting identities that make experiences different for each person. This activity will allow us to explore how different parts of our identity resonate with us, and will also give us the opportunity to learn about each one. Pay attention to which identities your peers select at different point in the exercise, and use this opportunity to learn more about one another.

How to Play

1. In preparation for the activity, hang up the “identity sheets” around the room with space for students to stand in a group near each one. Each should be a piece of paper with one of the following identities: *race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, immigration status, body size/shape, ability, socioeconomic status, education, age, gender.* (Any identities that reflect the diversity or needs of your group can be used.)
2. Instruct students to listen to the following questions or statements, and then walk to and stand by the identity that either answers the question asked or resonates the most with them.
3. After each individual question/statement, provide participants from each identity the opportunity to share or explain what made them stand by their identity sheet.
4. After every person who wanted to speak has spoken, ask the group to return to their seats or to simply sit down for a quick debrief session.

Questions to consider: (Select those you find most helpful/interesting)

- *This is the Identity I am most aware of at: Home*
- *This is the Identity I am most aware of at: Work*
- *This is the identity I most like to share with others.*
- *This is the identity that brings me the most joy.*
- *This is the identity I think about the least.*
- *This is the identity I am most unsure of how to talk about.*

- *This is the identity that I think most people judge me by.*
- *This is the identity I believe is the most important to me right now, in this room.*
- *This is the identity I think about most often.*
- *This the identity that brings me the most struggle, pain, challenge, concern.*
- *When I think of my friend/peer group, this is the identity that we have most in common.*
- *When I think of my friend/peer group, this is the identity we have least in common.*
- *This is the identity that I know the most about.*
- *This is the identity that I know the least about.*
- *This is the identity I tend to keep hidden.*

Suggested Debriefing Questions

1. What are 1-2 words that describe what this activity was like for you?
2. Why did we do this activity?
3. What was it like to have to choose only one identity from around the room?
4. Were there times you felt conflicted?
5. Did someone's selection surprise you at any point?
6. Share one thing that you appreciated that someone else shared.
7. Do you think your responses would be different if we did this exercise again another time?

Things to Consider

Keep in mind that this may not be accessible to students with limited mobility. In these instances and in instances of larger groups (30+), sheets of paper with all the identities on them can be handed out, and participants may remain seated while choosing the ones that answer each question. Selected participants may then speak to the group about their choice.