

Circle

Goal: The purpose of this activity is to explore different ways that diversity both divides and brings people together. It is supposed to bring awareness that the people that a student is in the classroom with come from varied backgrounds, but also to suggest how some of those differences are shared. It explores various forms of privilege while attempting not to make any individual feel vulnerable.

Time: 15-20 minutes to perform activity, 10 minutes for discussion

Materials: A large enough space to form a circle with all of your students. This activity works with most group sizes—larger is better (10+ is preferable), but smaller can work, although that will cause students to be singled out more.

When: This activity would be best used after students have begun to get to know each other a little, maybe a third of the way through the semester. Because of the uncomfortable nature of some of the questions, it would probably work best when the students are more comfortable with the class, college, and each other.

Instructions: Instruct students to stand in a large circle. Tell students to step into the circle if the answer to the question is yes, and to just stay where they are if the answer is no. Start off with the introductory questions, then work your way down the list. Also stress that there is **no talking** during the activity. Students can talk and discuss after the activity is completed.

The questions are ordered from easiest to answer to hardest to answer to try to ease students into the more uncomfortable questions. Following the order is important to help avoid making students feel unsafe. (Questions are rated 1-4 based on difficulty of answering).

It is important to stress that students DO NOT have to answer questions honestly if it makes them uncomfortable, due to the sensitive nature of some of the topics.

It is also important to stress that no one should be singled out—don't ask any students about personal experiences they might not want to share about. Many of the questions can bring up negative emotions and experiences and singling anyone out about them can be damaging.

Introductory Questions

- What does diversity mean to you?
- What does privilege mean to you?

Questions:

1-Have you ever owned a pet?

1-Are you an only child?

1-Are you from Colorado?

1-Have you ever lived in a country other than the United States?

1-Do you live on campus?

1-Have you ever been on a sports team?

2-Have you ever used public transportation?

2-Do you practice a religion?

2-Have you ever felt singled out or visible because of your gender?

2-Do you feel like you fit in a commonly recognized racial category?

2-Have you ever had a job where your religious holidays were not recognized?

2-Has anyone ever misidentified your race?

2-Do you feel like your race is adequately represented in popular media?

2-Have you ever not been able to participate in an activity because of your abilities (could be physical, mental, etc.)?

2-Did you have to share a room with a sibling growing up?

2-Growing up, did you eat food that you felt other people might find strange?

3-Have you ever felt excluded because of your socioeconomic status?

3-Have you ever lied about your socioeconomic status?

3-Has anyone ever tried to “save” you because of your religious beliefs?

3-Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your gender?

3-Have you ever had an event in your life that you feel might have had a better outcome if you were a different gender?

3-Do you feel like your race has ever negatively impacted your life?

3-Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your age (after reaching adulthood)?

3-Do you feel like people perceive you negatively or ascribe negative stereotypes to you because of your age?

3-Have you or has someone you know ever been affected by depression?

3-Do you feel like your environment generally accommodates your needs (i.e. any form of disability, height, weight, etc.)?

3-Would you feel comfortable displaying affection such as holding hands with your significant other in public spaces?

3-Have you ever lied about your sexuality?

4-Have you ever felt unsafe because of your religious beliefs?

4-Have you ever felt unsafe because of your gender?

4-Have you ever had a racial slur used against you in a derogatory manner?

4-Have you or has someone you know been affected by domestic violence?

4-Have you or has someone you know ever been sexually assaulted?

4-Have you or has someone you know ever been the victim of a hate crime?

Follow-up questions and discussion:

- Ask what students think the purpose of the activity was and what they learned.
- Did anything surprise them? Was there anything they found interesting?
- Did their perspective on diversity or privilege change at all?
- What is the value of discomfort within this exercise. Were there specific instances within this exercise that you felt higher levels of discomfort within yourself or with sharing your answer within this group?

SOURCE: This activity was created by FMAC student interns. It is adapted from a similar activity a student did in a class taken at UCCS.