

Identity Matrix

Group Activity

Lesson Guide

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Lesson Overview:

This lesson is an introspective look at the identities we hold and what that means to our experience in the world. Through a guided activity called the *Identity Matrix*, participants will reflect on their own personal experience of their identities. Through guided large group discussion, participants will engage in social learning around the multiplicity of identities and their dynamics in society.

Audience: Older adolescents and adult learners (ages 16-Adult)

Goal:

The goal of this lesson is to expand participants' framework of identity intersections and how those intersections exist in the world.

Objectives:

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Identify at least 2 identities they hold through completing the ID Matrix activity.
2. Identify at least 1 identity intersection of theirs through completing the ID Matrix activity.
3. Describe 2 feelings associated with their identity intersections through large group discussion.

Time: 45-55 mins

Materials:

- Display medium (white board, chalk board, projector, etc.)
- Appropriate display medium writing utensil (dry erase marker, chalk, computer and appropriate cable, etc.)

Preparation:

Read through these teaching notes to prepare yourself for the lesson. Facilitators are expected to have an understanding of personal identities, and how our intersecting identities influence a person's experience of the world around them.

NOTE: *This activity is an exploration of identities. Some people may experience sensitivity around interrogating various identities they hold. Be aware of this sensitivity and the impact it may have on group dynamics.*

Procedure:

Conduct the activity by following the steps below:

1. Discuss the Concept of Identities

- a. Ask participants: “What are identities? When people say we have identities, what does that mean?” Participants may offer answers like ‘who a person is, labels someone uses, social characteristics someone has.’
- b. Ask participants: “What are some examples of identities someone may have?” Participants may offer answers like ‘Black, Indigenous, Gay, Heterosexual, Woman.’ Allow participants to identify roughly 10 identities.
- c. Say: “These identities often fall into groups. What are some of those larger groups or strata of which these identities are a part?” Participants will name strata related to their previous answers. Be sure to check for continuity. They may offer answers like ‘race, sexual orientation, gender.’ **NOTE:** *there can be many. Gather about 5 of these from the group.*
- d. Affirm these answers and move into the ID Matrix activity.

2. Introduction to the Identity Matrix Activity

- a. Let the participants know: “We will now do an activity that involves examining some of these identities in each of ourselves through an activity called the Identity Matrix.”
- b. Prepare participants to fill in information in the ID Matrix. You may ask them to use a pen and paper and draw the matrix themselves or you may print off the below matrix as a handout. Prepare your audience for how they will fill in this information.

3. Doing the Identity Matrix Activity

- a. Display the following image:

Gender				
Orientation				
Race				
Religion				
	Gender	Orientation	Race	Religion

- b. Direct participant attention to this image.
 - i. If you are having the participants draw out their own matrix, instruct them to: "Make a grid of boxes like this."
 - ii. If you are having them use a handout you made, instruct them to "Look at the handout."
- c. Describe the activity to participants:
 - i. Say "This is a matrix of identities. "You will see identity categories listed along the side, and those same categories listed along the bottom. When you fill in your own identities in each of these boxes, you will see they will intersect in the lighter green boxes, and will meet the same identity in the darker blue boxes. For this exercise, you will fill in these each of these green and blue boxes for your own identities. In the blue boxes, you don't have to write the identity twice, but just once."
 - ii. An example of this matrix filled in will look something like this:

Example:

Gender Cisgender Woman	Cisgender Woman		
Sexual Orientation Bisexual	Bisexual Cisgender Woman	Bisexual	
Race Black	Black Cisgender Woman	Black & Bisexual	Black
	Gender Cisgender Woman	Sexual Orientation Bisexual	Race Black

- d. **NOTE:** participants may use identity categories that they would prefer to use for this activity. Let them know they can pick 4 or 5 for this activity, but that there is a longer (more exhaustive) activity online that they can do later described below. For the time together here today, we will be focusing on just a couple to practice the skill of reflecting on these intersections.
- e. Say to participants "List out each of your identities. Oftentimes, the BLUE boxes are how people look at their identities--as a single dimension. You may look at that identity and think about what is like to be that gender in the world, that race, religion, or a person of that sexual orientation in the world. Today, we are going to look at the GREEN boxes--the intersection of those identities."
- f. If participants have learned about intersectionality prior to this lesson, review that here. If they have not,
 - i. You can ask participants if they have heard of the word intersectionality before and ask them to define it, or simply move onto the next statement:
 - ii. Say: "Intersectionality is a concept related to the intersection of identities and the oppression uniquely experienced at that intersection. While intersectionality is an important concept in this activity, it is not the same as just 'an intersection of our identities.' Intersectionality is specifically

about oppression. Today, we are going to look at these intersections in a number of ways not necessarily explicitly related to oppression.”

- g. Allow participants 5-8 minutes to fill in their Identity Matrix.

4. Guided Self-Reflection

- a. Instruct participants: “Now that you have filled out the Identity Matrix, I will pose some questions for your self-reflection on your own Identity Matrix. We will then have a discussion about the process. I will ask a series of questions (about 6) and offer time for reflection in between each question. Jot down some thoughts you have in response to each question. You won’t have to share feelings or reactions to specific identities out loud.”
- b. Ask participants the questions below offering time (roughly 1-3 minutes) in between for reflection:
- c. Begin: “Ask yourself--
- i. Which identity intersection do I MOST OFTEN think about?
 - ii. Which identity intersection is LESS SALIENT to me?
 - iii. Which identity intersection do I experience the MOST JOY?
 - iv. Which identity intersection do I experience the LEAST JOY?
 - v. In what ways am I made fun of, discriminated against, or do I otherwise experience hurt at each of these intersections? (NOTE: not everyone experiences these in every interaction--so “none” is also an appropriate answer)
 - vi. Which intersection am I the most proud of?
 - vii. In which intersection do I feel the most developed?
 - viii. (If time allows) Where do you see role models with these intersections?”

5. Large Group Discussion: Processing Our Identities

- a. Instruct the group: “We are now going to shift from personal reflection back to the larger group. Thank you for taking the time to think about these things.”
- b. Facilitate a group discussion about this process, validating their experiences, asking the participants about
- i. their experience of the activity.
 - ii. which questions stood out to them
 - iii. which of their feelings surprised them (if any)
 - iv. if they think people with the same intersection may feel the same way or differently. Consider what components may influence this.
 - v. what this activity can tell us about ourselves and our identities.
 - vi. what this activity can tell us about the identities of others.
 - vii. if there were any identities they wish they could have included that they didn’t (or didn’t have time to)

1. NOTE: Validate this experience, thank them for their input, and direct them to the [Identity Matrix Workbook](#) if this is something they would like to continue reflecting on. Include “This workbook considers an expanded matrix of your identities with a variety of questions for self-reflection beyond what we discussed today.”

6. Wrapping up the activity

- a. Conclude with the following main points:
- b. Say “Remember, each of these intersections is only 1 instance of 2 layers of you. YOU are all of them together (and more!).”
- c. “Moving forward in your self-reflection beyond this lesson, think to yourself, how each of these would change if you were to change one of those boxes. For example, if you change the “gender” box, it might help you consider things about a gendered experience you have never considered before.”
- d. Direct participants: “If you would like to learn more about this activity, an expanded activity, or the identity matrix, you can find more information at <https://www.marklevand.com/identitymatrix/>.”