

# Introduction to Diversity

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**Overview:** Through interactive sessions and discussion, students will learn that diversity is everywhere. They will discover systems in American society that create diversity in socioeconomic standing as well as personality traits that make us all different from each other. Through discussion, students will have an opportunity to talk about what factors of diversity are important to their group and their purpose, as well as themselves. They will also talk about challenges in dealing with diversity and how they might embrace and encourage continued diversity in their own lives.

**Category:** Diversity, Reflection

**Level:** Explore

**Learning Goals:**

- To understand the meaning, both written and demonstrative, of diversity
- To learn the various types of diversity
- To understand how self-perceived diversity varies from socially-imposed diversity

**Materials:**

- Tape
- Identity Circles hand-out
- Pens
- Race Qualifiers

**How to Prepare:**

- Facilitator should have copies of identity circles prepared
- It is helpful to have tape already on floor before students arrive

**How to Do/ Brief Outline:**

The outline has the following parts:

- |                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Warm-Up: Shake Your Booty | suggested time 5 minutes  |
| 2. The Race                  | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 3. Identity Circles          | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 4. Discussion                | suggested time 25 minutes |

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## Part 1) Warm-Up: Shake Your Booty

Suggested time: 5 minutes

1. Have students move chairs into a circle, with one chair missing
2. Have student without a chair stand in the middle
3. Student in middle says something like, “Shake Your Booty if you like butter pecan ice cream”
4. All students who identify themselves as liking butter pecan ice cream should get up out of their seats and dash to a seat across from them (those seats directly next to them are prohibited)
5. The last person standing who does not have a chair then takes position in the middle and makes another statement to get people moving as before
6. Game continues until facilitator decides to stop

## **Part 2) The Race**

Suggested time: 20 minutes

1. Transition from warm-up to workshop by settling students down and then introducing the activity
  - a. Workshop is an introduction to thinking about the value of diversity
  - b. In the warm-up, we were able to see some of the things that we have in common
  - c. Most people think about diversity as simply race, but we want to think of it in a broader sense
2. Ask the students to think about and answer the following question: “When was the first time in your life where you felt different from others around you? What circumstances made you feel different? How did you feel?”
3. Ask applicable follow-up questions
4. Explain that the next activity will highlight the advantages and disadvantages of living in a diverse society. Whether we always see them or not, there are structures within our economic, social, and political systems that support groups within our society and that sometimes hurt others. Not all white people have an easy ride, and not all minorities have a terrible ride because diversity is much greater than skin color. We need to recognize those systems, but more, we need to recognize that just because a group or community *looks* homogeneous, that doesn’t mean that everyone is on the same playing field. Also, we need to remember that the experiences, both positive and negative, that we have bring a different perspective to the group.
5. Introduce the activity as a race – not one that is physically run – but, a simulation of the race that we are individually a part of to get ahead in a capitalistic society
6. Have students stand on a pre-set line (marked with tape). Have another line marked on the ground parallel to it approximately thirty feet away. Students should see the one line ahead of them as they stand shoulder to shoulder on the first line
7. Ask the questions on the attached “The Race Qualifiers” sheet

8. Once all questions have been asked, have students remain standing where they are, but have them turn and look at where their peers are standing
9. Ask the people in the far back of the group how they feel about their finish of the race and what they feel toward people ahead of them, following up with appropriate clarifying questions.
10. Ask the people in the front of the group how they feel about their finish of the race and what they feel toward those behind them, following up with appropriate clarifying questions.

### **Part 3) Identity Circles**

Suggested time: 10 minutes

1. Have students sit comfortably at tables
2. Give each student a copy of the “identity circle” handout and a pen
3. Explain that each student should write his/her name in the middle of the circle
4. On the eight “spokes” that come out from the circle, students should each write something that is important to their identity. For example, it can be a word, like “Black,” or “gay” or a phrase like “father is a coal miner” or “love baseball.” Everyone should be prepared to share most/all of the qualities.
5. Explain that each person makes a choice as to what he/she shares
6. The facilitator should begin the sharing process, setting the tone and demonstrating humor and trust.
7. Each student should share his/her identity circle:
  - a. What they are most proud of
  - b. What they feel is most controversial for them
  - c. What they were surprised that they wrote down
  - d. 2-3 other things that they would like the group to know about them
8. Everyone should share without discussion or banter

### **Part 4) Discussion**

Suggested time: 10 minutes

1. Transition into a group discussion about diversity
2. Questions:
  - a. Was anybody surprised by any of the words that they chose for themselves in identity circles?
  - b. Are there words that your friends or family might use that you did not use? Why is it that others see us differently than we see ourselves?
  - c. Is race/ethnicity a big factor in identity circles for members of this group? Why or why not? How about gender? Why or why not? How about sexual orientation? Age? Family upbringing? What did people notice as important common factors?
  - d. What are some of the other ways that we differ from each other? What ways are we similar? What can we learn from our differences and similarities?

- e. After learning about things that we have in common, then running the race, and now the identity circles, how would you define diversity?
- f. Why is diversity important?
- g. What are some challenges of working in or with diverse groups?
- h. What hinders diversity?
- i. How do we encourage diversity? (brainstorm on newsprint)