

TOOL

Identity Pie

Developing, Understanding, and Strengthening Cultural Humility

The Identity Pie activity¹ guides you through understanding your own identities and cultural assumptions. By strengthening your ability to enact cultural humility, you prepare yourself to build healthy relationships with your peers and work together as team, as well as learn how to collaborate successfully with diverse people in a variety of community contexts. You can reimagine how institutional structures of power and privilege can be more inclusive of all identities and ways of being — and you can find ways to influence those structures. Cultural humility is an ongoing, lifelong learning process for all of us, regardless of our identities.

Learning objectives

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Articulate the meaning of cultural humility as a three-pronged concept.
- Describe and explain the meanings of different dimensions of your identities.
- Identify and articulate your own deeply held cultural assumptions — an essential component of exercising cultural humility through lifelong learning and critical self-reflection.

Preparation for class

To prepare for class, please search for the seven-minute video “Cultural Humility: People, Principles and Practices Part 1” by San Francisco State University Associate Professor of Health Education Vivian Chavez, physician and consultant Melanie Tervalon, and UC Davis nursing professor Jann Murray-García. The speakers describe the three core commitments of cultural humility:

- Pursuing lifelong learning and critical self-reflection
- Recognizing and challenging power imbalances
- Holding institutions accountable

¹ From Hartman, Kiely, Boettcher & Freidrichs (2018). *Community-based global learning: The theory and practice of ethical engagement at home and abroad*, toolbox 3.2, p. 66. Stylus Press.



Purpose of the Identity Pie



The primary purpose of this activity is to assist you in becoming more aware of your identities and worldview. The activity highlights how culture defines who we are, how we understand and relate to others, and what misperceptions we might have about our own or others' cultural identities and assumptions (i.e., stereotypes). In a comfortable and safe way, the activity helps you better understand your identities and explore the marginalization and harm that some people experience. You can repeat this activity over time and in various contexts with different collaborators and will often have different insights.

Instructions for creating your Identity Pie

- 1 Draw a circle on a piece of paper. Take a moment to think about who you are, then write down five to ten aspects of your identities. You might represent the different elements as slices that vary in size in the circle, where larger slices of the pie represent more dominant aspects of your identities.
- 2 Reflect on the meanings of each dimension of your identities, life experiences that have shaped who you are, and the role and importance that each aspect plays in your life. Write notes on each slice about the meaning you associate with that part of your identity.
- 3 Provide examples of visible and invisible aspects of your identities.
- 4 You don't have to use the pie as a metaphor for drawing, but you do need to draw the things that you feel compose your cultural identity. The pie can help describe elements of your identity that have greater or lesser significance by varying slice size.

Reflecting on your Identity Pie

After developing your Identity Pie, read Beverly Tatum's "The Complexity of Identity: Who Am I?" and write down your responses to the following questions:

- What does each element (three to five) of your identities mean? (For example, what does it mean to be a Christian from Brooklyn who is vegan and introverted?)
- How does what you described in your Identity Pie compare to the concepts (i.e., dominant/subordinate groups) that Tatum describes in the patterns she observes in the ways students describe their identities?
- What roles do different elements play in your life?

Note: Please prepare to share two or three elements of your Identity Pie with a partner in class. You may choose what you share: You may share only certain items or, if you prefer, none at all.

