

**Introduction:**

The activity introduces a very basic cultural notion: the multifaceted self, a self that has been shaped, and that will continue to be shaped and to evolve through life, through our engagement with a large number of cultural groups.

**Facilitator Notes:**

This is Mick Vande Berg's version of an activity that's been around, in various forms, for many years.

**Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the origins of their own cultural identity.

**Time:**

45 minutes.

**Group Size:**

Small Group.

**Materials:**

Paper; pens/pencils; Flip chart/blackboard or Training Culturally Diverse You Slides ([in Downloads](#)).

**Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

**AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**

Cultural Self-Awareness

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

**Other Skills:**

Friendship; Mentorship & Leadership.

**Activity Instructions:**

1. Open the activity by posing a question to the whole group: What has the greatest impact on who we are, what we think, what we desire, how we act, etc.?



- Is it our common humanity—universal things that we share with all other humans?
- Is it our unique personality?
- Is it our culture?

Allow time for the group to offer opinions. Then, break them into small groups of 3-4 people, and give them 3 minutes to assign a percentage to each of the three. Then, write these responses on a flip chart, showing a line across the page, with “universal” at the far left; “culture” in the middle; and “personality” at the far right.

Note that your teaching goal at this point is to work toward a definition of “culture” that allows learners to see that culture is that which organizes the way we experience and give meaning to the world; it tells us how things are organized, both mentally and in our physical world.

2. Give each participant a blank piece of paper.
  - Ask them to draw a small circle in the center and write “me” inside the circle.
  - Ask them to connect to the circle a series of lines, radiating outward, that provides a constellation of groups that they have each belonged to, or still belong to, that have had an influence on who they are today. A “group” can be as small as an immediate family, or as large as a nation, or a region in a nation. It could be a profession, a religious group, a school or university, a civic organization, a band or an orchestra, a social or economic class, a sports club or team, etc. If they can’t think of very many groups, encourage them to identify individuals.
3. Write the following questions on the board or flip chart or utilize the Training Culturally Diverse You Slides ([in Downloads](#)):
  - What was most important to each of these groups? Write down at least two things that were/are important to each group or individual in the constellation.
  - What kind of behavior was/is rewarded or punished? Write this down, next to the group.
  - List at least two values that you’ve absorbed or learned from each of these groups.
4. If time allows, ask the participants whether there were or are conflicting values among the groups, and how they have, or are, attempting to respond to this.
5. Ask them, “Were/are you the same person in each of these groups?” Ask some students to share their insights about their own contrasting behavior and priorities as they functioned in their various groups.

Encourage and/or emphasize the learning point: That they’re already learning and adapting across cultures, and that their engagement with others will allow them to develop skills that they already have, through, among other things, becoming more aware of how they’re responding to others, and of the cultural groups that have taught them to respond in those particular ways.