

Overview:

This lesson plan will challenge participants to recognize the cultural and personal significance behind names, as well as the importance of calling someone by their preferred name and pronouncing it correctly. In this activity, participants will first reflect on the history behind their own names. Then, they will share those histories with each other and discuss the cultural nuances that they bring with their names.

Background and Information:

This activity, originally called "My Name Is," was created by Donna M. Stringer and Patricia A. Cassiday and is available in their book, *52 Activities for Exploring Values Differences* (see citation below). There are also versions available from University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) Inclusive Teaching and Paul C. Gorski's EdChange project. Additionally, there are supplementary materials that can be used with this activity. Please see the following page for links and more information.

Objectives:

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

1. "Identify the importance of names as part of personal identity."
2. "Identify different cultural ways of naming people."
3. "Understand the importance of calling people by the name they prefer—and pronouncing it properly" (Stringer & Cassiday, 2009, p. 157).

Time:

1 hour

Group Size:

Entire group

Materials:

Optional: copies of the My Name Is handout in [Downloads](#) and writing materials if you want participants to record their answers during discussion.

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).

Curiosity:

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Other Skills:

Friendship; Teamwork; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Links to Activity Instructions and Supplemental Materials:

- [A version of this activity from University of Michigan LSA Inclusive Teaching](#) and [a version of this activity from Paul C. Gorski's EdChange project](#)
 - Facilitators can use the My Name Is handout in [Downloads](#) with these instructions. Facilitators may also consider consulting Kris Acheson-Clair's video "[How to Facilitate the Name Game](#)" for tips.
- Facilitators might consider showing participants "[Say My Name](#)," a video created by Chinese international students at Columbia University in response to a xenophobic prank where name tags displaying Chinese names were ripped off of residence hall doors. Using this video in conjunction with this activity, participants can develop empathy for individuals who are often discriminated against because of their names or denied the right to be called by their preferred names.
- [A CNN article that features Melvin Carter, Mayor of St. Paul](#), references Carter's grandfather's experiences as a Black pullman porter. Carter says that all Black porters were denied their own names and referred to as George, and connects that to the murder of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer. Facilitators may choose to share this article with participants as a part of this activity and incorporate it in to their discussions about the relationship between names and cultures. However, the facilitator should also be careful to approach the discussion sensitively and understand that it may be a triggering topic for some.
- Facilitators might also ask participants to read "[Names That Are Unfamiliar to You Aren't 'Hard,' They're 'Unpracticed'](#)" from *Teen Vogue* and/or watch "['Black Sounding' Names and Their Surprising History](#)" from *Say It Loud* to discuss stereotypes and discriminatory assumptions associated with names as well as the importance of pronouncing names correctly.

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Cultural Autobiography](#)
- [Who am I? Identity Dialogue](#)

Tools to use in conjunction with this lesson:

- [Say My Name](#)