

## CIRCLES OF MY PLURICULTURAL SELF

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### **Target audience:**

- Pre-service teachers
  - Secondary teachers

### **Itineraries :**

- Identity exploration
- Exploring attitudes towards languages and cultures

### **Abstract :**

The activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our own identities. It helps to look at ourselves from various angles and define our place in the family, community, work environment and the whole society.

At first students define their own identities and exchange information on them. Secondly, they try to find commonalities and explain differences. This activity will be especially efficient in pluricultural classes where the students will find out more about their classmates and their classmates' pluricultural background. Next, looking at their numerous identities they will be able to define their priorities in life resulting from their identity and understand the identities of their family members, colleagues, co-citizens and consequently avoid stereotypes in perceiving people coming from different environment. Analysis of identities will lead to better understanding and tolerance.

### **Rationale :**

Based on the recognition of **individual** identities when the individual primarily identifies with self, with the needs of the individual being satisfied before those of the group, students will start thinking about their role in a group, e. g. the family or a work team. Looking after and taking care of oneself, being self – sufficient, guarantees the well being of the group. In general people tend to distance themselves psychologically and emotionally from each other. One may choose to join groups but group membership is not essential to one's identity or success. **Individualist** characteristics is often associated e.g. with men or people in urban settings.

On the other hand, each individual has a function in a group. The survival and success of a group ensures the well - being of the individual. Harmony and interdependence of group members are stressed and valued in many cultures. **Collectivist** characteristics is often associated with women and people in rural settings.

### **Personal and social dimensions :**

- Identification of the concept of self, differences between universal, cultural and personal, definition of the circle relations.

- Limits of friendships, cooperation, tolerance to 'otherness', education towards pluriculturalism and plurilingualism through understanding different cultures, histories, traditions and backgrounds.

**Professional dimensions / dimension professionnelle**

- education of young teachers
- teachers' training

## Worksheet 1

Timing: 60 minutes

Material required : activity worksheet

Grouping :

 (individual) /  (pair work) /  (group work) /  (whole class)

Description of the activities :

1. Students place their names in the center circle of the structure. They are asked to put down their individual identities (boy/girl, son/daughter)...
2. They exchange information about their identities in a group.
3. They highlight the identities they are mostly proud of.
4. They answer questions in task IV.

**Assessment :**

After discussing their individual and group identities the students can make a list of characteristics of national traits, values and priorities. Groups of students can prepare material (cartoons, slogans, short stories or anecdotes) criticizing intolerance and stereotypes about 'other' cultures, nations or religions.

**Notes for teacher educator :**

There may be some temptation to process each question separately. It would be advisable to go through all the questions and answers first as it can be sometimes difficult to be reminded over and over how little we know about the issues of identities. Some students may want to challenge particular questions. This is a common defensive tactic some individuals use to relieve themselves of dealing with the content of the quiz. Explain that part of the purpose of the quiz is to learn to be more critical about all information we hear or read about cultural identities and stereotypes and to be open to all reactions relating to our own culture.

We are not always conscious of the sources of our stereotyping different nations, nationalities and minorities and resulting prejudices. The activity aims at realizing our subconscious prejudices and stereotypes, finding explanations for them and thus eliminating them to minimum.

**Worksheet 2**

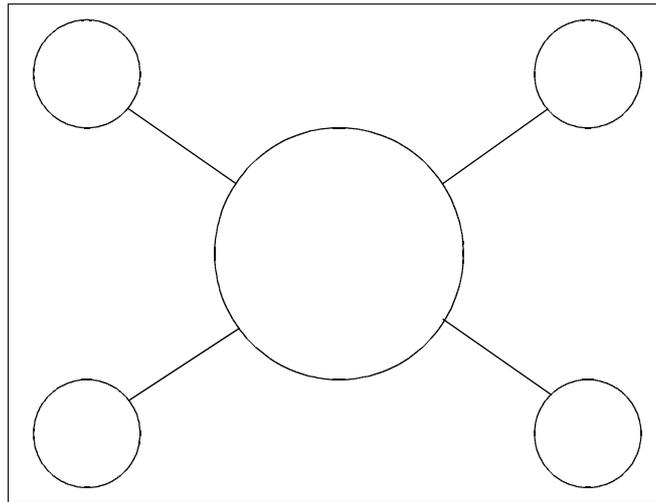
**Timing: 60'**



**I. My own identity**

**Timing: 10'**

Place your name in the center circle of the structure below. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles – an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. (You can add more circles if necessary). This can include anything: Italian, Chinese American, French Muslim, female, brother, sportsman, student, pianist, choir singer, etc.



**Interaction**  
**Timing: 15'**

Exchange information about your identities with members in your group. Can you find some commonalities?



**III. Sharing information**  
**Timing: 20'**

1. Share a story about a time you were especially **proud** to identify yourself with one of the descriptors you used above.
2. Write a story about a time it was especially **painful** to be identified with one of your identifiers. (This can be in form of homework)
3. Name a stereotype associated with one of the groups with which you identify that is not consistent with whom you are. Fill in the following sentence:

I am (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ I am NOT (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ .

*(So if one of the identifiers was "a Mexican", and you thought a stereotype was that all Mexicans are always late, your sentence would be:*

I am a Mexican, but I am NOT always late.



**IV. Several questions can be used to process this activity:**

**Timing: 15'**

1. Where do you get information about individuals and groups related to ethnic group, gender, social class and other social and cultural identities?
2. How do you process information that you get from these sources? Is your understanding of the information supported by your own experiences or worldview?
3. How can misinformation about these issues contribute to stereotyping and oppression?
4. What is your role as an educator in challenging these stereotypes or providing fuller understandings of these issues? Work in small groups and then try to write a manifesto for young teachers as your homework.