

Activity: Name Story

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NSE Goal Focus: Cultural Humility

Activity Goal: Students will gain an understanding of engaging with people that may be different from themselves and the importance of cultural humility.

Activity Objectives: To learn about one another and get to know each other in the context of their names.

Materials: None needed, but sticky name tags can be helpful.

Modification: Can be conducted in person or on-line. On-line would require the ability to break into small groups utilizing room functions in zoom or setting up individual sessions between students.

Caution: 1) Some individuals do may not know or be aware of how or why they are named what they are named. They may have never talked about it with their family or have no connection to their family to be able to know this information. 2) Some individuals may feel that their 'name story' is not significant enough to share. They feel as if they were named 'on a whim' or 'without any thought behind the name', or for some they feel as if their name doesn't have deep meaning or connection so they may feel isolate if sharing with someone who has a more in-depth name story. 3) If students are transgender, the name given to them at birth may not be the name they currently use, and this exercise may confuse them as to what name we are asking them to share about. Please use language that instructs students to share whatever name they use or are comfortable sharing, remember it is their name or nickname, and their story to tell.

Activity:

First, provide a general statement to the class before you divide them. Let them know they are going to engage in an activity that will allow them and is designed for them to get to know their classmates better. Let them know this activity is 'challenge by choice', meaning they do not have to share or reveal anything they are not comfortable sharing but also challenge them by stating that this is a 'brave space', meaning we want them to stretch the limits of their comfort zones and try and embrace the exercise by sharing something about who they are. Also, inform the class that the stories shared in this activity are the stories of the individuals telling them, and they may not want you to share with others outside of this exercise unless they grant permission.

Second, In groups of 2 or 3 have students introduce themselves to one another.

Third, Ask them to share what their name is and the story behind their name. Use the following questions to prompt students:

- Who are you named after and why?
- Where does your name originate from?
- Who named you? Who chose the spelling of your name?
- Does your name hold any special meaning for you or your family?
- Do you have any memories or stories about your name?
- Do you like your name? Why or why not
- If it is a name you chose for yourself, why did you choose this name in particular?

Fourth (optional), Regroup the students all together, and ask each student to introduce their 'partner/one of the partners' to the rest of the class.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Did this exercise make you think more about your name and the meaning/history of your name?
- 2) Before today, have you ever spent time considering your naming story? If so, when and why?
- 3) For you as a person, does your name guide you in any way?
- 4) Can you think of reasons why your own name and the names of other people are important, especially as you start your college career?

Reflection Prompts:

- 1) Have you ever experienced a time when someone mispronounced your name, if so, how did it make you feel?
- 2) When you think about your name and/or the origin of your name, what does it mean to you?
- 3) Do you share your name story with others? Is it something that might help people get to know you?
- 4) Do you think knowing other people's name story will help you get to know them better?
- 5) How does our cultural heritage and family history help develop our name stories?