



Groups Within Groups: Exploring Dimensions of Diversity

BWBR Description: Bonner Curriculum workshop guides participants into a deeper appreciation for diversity within a program and community, by having them reflect and discuss issues like class, race, gender, religion, and other aspects.

Overview: This is a longer workshop exploring dimensions of diversity, suitable especially for a retreat. It consists of a series of *group within group* discussions and sharing sessions. You can set this up using a range of characteristics — including age, gender, class, ethnicity/race, etc. For each topic, the same structure, technique and guiding questions are used. The overall purpose of this activity is to build understanding of, and appreciation for, how people value and interpret their own identity and to build the capacity of a group along issues of diversity. This is a great activity for a group (e.g. Bonner class, a campus-based program or student group) at a more developed stage of exploring diversity issues. This activity can help participants process how they define identity and also how to respond to or challenge stereotypes.

Category: Reflection; interpersonal skills; identity development; diversity awareness; communication and dialogue

Level: Suitable for many levels, however may be most effective following other diversity exercises that build basic self-reflection and communication (such as Identity Circles), but before more risk-oriented or complex diversity workshops. This may be too reductive for students who have had extensive training or work in issues of diversity and want more complex analysis.

Recommended Bonner Sequence: This training can be used at any time during the Bonner program but is recommended for Bonner students during the

sophomore year in conjunction with the diversity awareness baseline/intention, if chosen by the campus.

Learning Outcomes:

- Build the larger community (as defined) by providing a structure for groups within that community to talk and share thoughts and feelings related to their identities
- Develop individual and group competence in reflecting on and articulating issues connected to how individual characteristics shape individual and group experience
- Build the capacity for teamwork

Materials:

- Pre-rolled sets of flip chart paper (2-4 pages)
- Markers
- The main five questions (see below) written up on flip chart or handouts

How to Prepare:

To be really effective, this workshop requires roughly 60 minutes per topic. A day-long diversity workshop could be constructed. Or, this activity can be spread out over multiple days and meeting times. Be sure that as a facilitator you are prepared to run the workshop in an objective way, and that you believe the group is mature enough to handle the particular topic in a constructive way.

To prepare, read the activity. Select topics. Include a good balance. Don't expect that this workshop can be a panacea for community understanding and building; use it in tandem with other diversity activities. Be selective and consider the usefulness, readiness, tone, maturity, and attitudes of facilitators and participants. Pre-determine groupings (loosely) for each topic.

Brief Outline:

This activity basically includes a repetition of a two-part structure of discussion and report backs.

A 3-4 hour workshop would include:

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| 1) Light warm up | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 2) Set context, ground rules, intro | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 3) Grouping 1: Gender (discussion) | suggested time 25-30 minutes |
| 4) Grouping 1 Reports: Gender | suggested time 25-30 minutes |
| 5) Break | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 6) Grouping 2: Race/Ethnicity (discussion) | suggested time 25-30 minutes |
| 7) Grouping 2 Reports: Race/Ethnicity | suggested time 25-30 minutes |
| 8) Break | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 9) Grouping 3: Class (discussion) | suggested time 25-30 minutes |

10) Grouping 3 Reports: Class
11) Wrap

suggested time 25-30 minutes
suggested time 10-15 minutes

Part 1) Light Warm Up

Suggested time: 5 minutes

You probably want to lead into the workshop with some kind of light warm up that sets a tone of sharing, trust, and relaxed fun. For example, you might try a song, a pair question, or a game that involves movement.

Part 2) Set context, ground rules, and introduction

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Facilitators should introduce themselves and set a tone of relaxed but respectful sharing. Explain that this workshop will be an opportunity to explore some of the groupings that may exist in different ways in the larger community. The topics used in this workshop may have different value, importance, or meaning to different people; some may find certain topics very important to how they think of themselves and others may find them less so. This workshop is a chance for people to explore their own thoughts, feelings and perceptions about those groupings, including likes, dislikes, stereotypes, and how people want to be thought of or treated.

Explain that the activities may not be an answer for everyone. Ask people to participate genuinely, but don't take oneself too seriously.

Set Ground Rules:

- Speak for yourself, not others. Use "I" statements.
- Gut check yourself when speaking to others – being respectful of all is expected.
- Listen actively, and show you are listening with your body language and actions.
- Anyone who cannot participate in respectful manner may be asked to leave.

Also explain that this workshop relies on participants choosing to belong to one particular group for the purposes of the workshop. For each topic, a few groups have been determined, and they may not be comprehensive or could feel not fitting. Go with it, if you can. One may "belong" to a group by trait and not necessarily feel a sense of belonging – this is the point of exploring these groups internally in more depth.

Part 3) Grouping 1 Discussion: Gender

Suggested time: 10 minutes

In general you want to start with gender because it is an area in which people have a lot of experience thinking, and it is generally less risky for group sharing.

The facilitator starts by asking participants to self-select one of the two groups: men/males and women/females (there may be some communities in which a transgendered group would also prove helpful to have; use your discretion).

If you are doing this with a large group, further split the groups so that they contain 4-7 people and keep them roughly the same size. Each small group should have a pre-designated facilitator (who is a member of the group) who can ensure that the group moves through the following tasks. Also, ask someone in each group to keep notes and summarize the discussion (can be facilitator):

- List the (false or true) perceptions or stereotypes people have about this group.
- Talk about your experience being in this group.
- Talk about the first time you understood/experienced belonging to this group (e.g. how did you first come to know that there was such a thing as gender/sex?)

As the main facilitator, your role is to keep track of time, keep things moving, keep the discussion flowing, prevent a single person from dominating the group's discussion, etc.

After the assigned time (10 minutes) is over, 1-2 people should be prepared to present the responses to these three items briefly to the large group.

Part 4) Grouping 1 Report Backs: Gender

Suggested time: 25-30 minutes

Then, bring the groups back together and allow for each of the groupings to briefly present their ideas and questions. Be rigorous about time, giving each group a designated time (5 minutes, depending on number). Allow for each other group to respond to the question asked.

Here, you must play the role of keeping things in a mode of INQUIRY, not degenerating into a back and forth, which can happen if the group gets silly or resentful.

After presentations/questions, open the floor for questions and comments.

Part 5) Break

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Part 6&7) Grouping 2 Discussion and Reports: Race/Ethnicity

Suggested time: 50-60 minutes

Follow steps 2 and 3 again, this time for groupings based on ethnicity/race.

Make sure to determine some basic groupings based on the size and composition of your group. For example, a basic "census-like" grouping could include:

African-Americans/Blacks

Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders
American Indians/Native Americans
European Americans/Whites
Hispanics/Latinos

If a given city or campus, however, you may want to break down the categories in relation to the population. For example:

African Americans/Blacks
Caribbean Blacks/Jamaicans
Cubans
Puerto Ricans
Whites/Protestants
Jewish
Asians

You don't want to have too many groups, but you do want to create the opportunity for major groupings to reflect on and articulate some of the issues they believe they encounter in the community, especially as they relate to the work that the group does.

The point is to make the groupings in the language and structure that is most appropriate to provide for meaningful sharing. You may want to provide some explanation/rationale for the suggested grouping.

Observe the same basic time and process (25-30 minutes for discussion and 25-30 minutes for report backs and exchange). Use the same five items for discussion:

- List the (false or true) perceptions or stereotypes people have about this group.
- Talk about your experience being in this group.
- Talk about the first time you understood/experienced belonging to this group (e.g. how did you first come to experience being part of or belonging to an ethnic group?)
- Decide, as a group, one thing you'd like to share with the larger group about your group.
- Think of one serious, real question that you'd like to ask each of the other groups.

Reinforce ground rules.

Part 8) Break

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Part 9&10) Grouping 3 Discussion and Reports: Class

Suggested time: 50-60 minutes

Using a categorization along class lines such as:

Poor/low income

Working class

Middle class

Upper middle class/wealthy

Observe the same basic time and process (steps 2&3) for discussion and report backs.

Use the same five items:

- List the (false or true) perceptions or stereotypes people have about this group.
- Talk about your experience being in this group.
- Talk about the first time you understood/experienced belonging to this group (e.g. how did you first come to know that there was such a thing as gender/sex?)
- Decide as a group one thing you'd like to share with the larger group about your group.
- Think of one serious, real question you'd like to ask each of the other groups.

Again, set up the groups for discussion and facilitate the report backs, guiding the participants into reflection, sharing, and critical thinking.

Part 11) Wrap

Suggested time: 10-15 minutes

Have everyone join a larger circle. Explain that in closing, people will have the opportunity to share their overall reflections about how this experience had helped them reflect on, learn about, or share aspects of their own and others' identity.

You may use the following questions, moving around the circle for comments.

- What insight or new learning did you have about yourself during these exercises?
- What insight or new learning did you have about the larger community, in other words what did you learn about the community?
- How might you act on the information shared during these activities to help build and maintain the community as a place that respects everyone?

Also, if this session is part of a larger process to build or contribute to a distressed community (e.g. a community that has encountered issues of diversity in a negative or destructive way and needs some support to rebuild trust), explain your expectations and what else will be happening. (For example, are there other trainings, discussions, processes?) Allow people to state their expectations for themselves and others, but also make sure that this wrap provides a sense of closure/transition to future activities. In general, you want to foster a sense of accountability that starts with each person as an individual to the group.

