

Personal Reflection Exercise: Identity Gears

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

✓ PREPARATION

- ▶ Print and complete the Identity Gears worksheet (front and back) to use as an example.
- ▶ Print one copy of the Identity Gears worksheet (front and back) for each participant.

GOALS FOR THIS SECTION:

- ▶ Make space for people to think individually about their own worldview in a way that separates the need for expertise from the willingness to enter into interfaith experiences
- ▶ Help participants articulate their worldview, explore how it developed and continues to develop, and identify their potential biases, so they are willing to model worldview engagement for their students

➔ INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Tell participants: We often think we have to be “experts” on religion or know everything there is to know about our traditions in order to engage worldview. This is one of the reasons why interfaith dialogue is often seen as something that only happens between religious leaders and religious scholars.

But the truth is, anyone can participate because everyone is an expert on their own experience. You are only required to speak for yourself, not for your tradition. You are not required to represent your entire tradition, only the ways that it manifests in your life.

That said, it is important to do some pre-work to explore your beliefs and your identities. These exercises will help you to do that.

Ask participants:

- ▶ Is reflecting or engaging your own worldview something you do on a regular basis? Why or why not?
- ▶ Why do you think it’s important to know how to talk about worldview?

This is a completely independent exercise and best for groups that are new to the conversation around worldview and/or don’t know one another well. Participants will need a writing utensil and a copy of the Identity Gears worksheet.

Tell participants: The activity is simple; the thinking involved is complex. What I will invite you to do is to consider the different parts of your personal identity and how they all interact to make you the person you are. This exercise is often called “Identity Wheels” but we’re going to take it a step further and think about the parts of our identity as gears, since they all work together.¹ Worldview does not exist in a vacuum, and knowing how it influences (and is influenced by) your other identities will help you understand what you bring into the interfaith interactions you have with your colleagues and students.

IDENTITY GEARS ACTIVITY: PART ONE (20 minutes)

Distribute Identity Gears worksheet

Tell participants: In the gears on the sheet describe the different identities you carry. Assign gears sizes based upon how much they influence your self-efficacy. For example, if you think of yourself first as a woman, assign “woman” to a larger gear, and if you see your Christian identity as less of an identifier, assign it to one of the smaller gears. If you see all the intersecting parts of your identity equally, make note of that.

Note that the point of this exercise is not to assign ourselves labels, but to explore the different parts of who we are and how that plays into our understanding of our worldview (even if that worldview doesn’t fit neatly into a box).

If you’re someone who prefers to avoid labels, you can think about the gears in terms of your relationships, experiences, stories, your family history, heroes, values, etc. This exercise is completely yours, so if you want to write in “I’m NOT _____” in terms of your identity, that is completely okay.

Share a little bit from your own worksheet as an example.

IDENTITY GEARS ACTIVITY: PART TWO (20 minutes)

Instruct participants to flip the sheet to the other side of the worksheet.

Tell participants: Let’s go back to the same exercise we did before, but this time you’re going to bring your worldview identity into focus. If your worldview identity is in formation, or you’re still considering how you identify, that’s completely fine.

Write in questions you are considering, ways that you define your relationship with a higher power, or higher purpose. You can include elements of different worldviews that you do identify with and elements you don’t. Again, this isn’t to compartmentalize ourselves.

I encourage you to be compassionate with yourselves during this exercise; there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers.

[Optional slide, IDENTITY GEARS PART 2: YOUR WORLDVIEW]

Prompts to help you fill out the gears:

- ▶ Someone doesn’t truly know me unless they know _____ about what I believe.
- ▶ It is so important to me, but I’m scared to let other people know that I believe _____.
- ▶ I know I may carry a set of biases toward _____ worldview.
- ▶ One thing that angers or frustrates me about an aspect of my worldview is _____.
- ▶ People often have inaccurate perceptions about this aspect of my worldview: _____.
- ▶ I don’t identify strongly with any worldview, but I do hold strong values such as _____.

¹ Adapted from “Voices of Discovery”, Intergroup Relations Center, Arizona State University.

DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

Instruct participants to find a partner (trios are fine if there is an uneven number of participants) and reflect together about the exercise for 10 minutes. Here are some discussion questions:

- ▶ What's different in talking about worldview identity versus other identities?
- ▶ Did you learn or discover anything about yourself through this exercise?
- ▶ How could you use this activity with your students?

Reconvene and ask participants to share their reflections on the exercise.

Tell participants: I will end by offering the disclaimer that this is a beginning. Hopefully you will continue your personal reflection and fully integrate your worldview into your overall description of what makes up your identity.

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!