

**Multiple Stories Activity**  
**Intercultural Communication**  
**Mary Meares, University of Alabama**

**LOC:**

**LOC #8: Utilize communication to embrace difference**

- Articulate the connection between communication and culture
- **Recognize individual and cultural similarities and differences**
- **Appreciate individual and cultural similarities and differences**
- **Respect diverse perspectives and the ways they influence communication**
- Articulate one's own cultural standpoint and how it affects communication and world view
- Demonstrate the ability to be culturally self-aware
- Adapt one's communication in diverse cultural contexts

**Objective(s) or Learning Target(s):**

- Build empathy and curiosity for those from different cultures.

**Length of Assignment:** One week

**Instructions:**

1. **Part 1: View "The Danger of a Single Story"** TED Talk by Chimamanda Adichie.  
([https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story))
2. **Part 2: Online discussion**
  - Answer the following questions in the group discussion.
    - *Have you ever been "single storied" by another person? How did that feel? How did you respond? Think about a time where you realized that you only knew a single story about another culture. How did you come to this realization? How did you (or might you) develop a more complex concept of that culture?*
    - Respond to at least three of your classmates' comments.
3. **Part 3: Investigate an Unfamiliar Culture**

Technology often allows us access to different perspectives and different stories. For this assignment, you will explore an unfamiliar identity (one that is **not** your own and that you do not know much about) through a personal blog where an individual or small group of people examine issues related to their own identity and how it relates to the larger society. **Your goal is not to criticize or critique the blog or the individual writing it, but to look at what ideas or viewpoints you have not been exposed to, to see with more complexity, and to see things from another's perspective, whether or not you**

**agree with it.** Try to imagine yourself in their place. You can use one of the following blogs or you can search for your own. See the variety of stories you may have not been exposed to. Spend at least 15-20 minutes reading the blogposts.

**Note:** Some of the following blogs are sarcastic or political (advocating for change) or angry, but they only represent the writers’ perspectives. Keep in mind that the writer does not represent everyone in their group(s). In other words, don't stereotype!

- [Korean American Story \(video interviews\)](#)
- [Mia Mingus \(Intersectionality\)](#)
- [Angry Asian Man](#)
- [Black Girl Dangerous](#)
- [Notes from a Hyphenated American](#)
- [Purple Headphones \(Saudi Woman, Doctor\)](#)
- [Crunk Feminist Collective](#)
- Or find your own!

**4. Part 3: Discussion of Blogs**

After you have spent some time with your blog, click the discussion link and answer the following in the discussion forum:

- Reflect on your experiences viewing the videos and reading your blogs.
  - Describe your blog writer(s) and how they are similar and different from you. Based on your investigation, how does culture influence us?
  - What have you learned about the complexity of culture and stories other than your own? What about your own culture? As you answer, be aware of your language and try to avoid stereotyping.
  - Utilize vocabulary and theories (for example, the Communicative Theory of Identity, Hecht, 1993; Hecht, et al., 2005) from this class in your answer
- Read your classmates’ posts and respond to at least three of them, engaging in discussion by asking questions, sharing perspectives, and delve more deeply into the issues of culture and identity.

**Rubric or Scoring Guide:**

<b>Criterion (Score 0 if element is absent)</b>	<b>Below Expectations (1)</b>	<b>Meets Expectations (2)</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations (3)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Discussion Post 1: Recognition of the complexity of culture and the	Does not adequately identify connections	Identifies connections between the TED talk and life	Identifies connections between the TED talk and life	

ability to be culturally self-aware.	between the TED talk and life experiences, or does so with little empathy and/or insight into the complexity of the role of culture.	experiences, but with less empathy and/or insight into the complexity of the role of culture.	experiences, with empathy and insight into the complexity of the role of culture.	
Discussion 1 Replies: Respect diverse perspectives and the ways they influence communication.	Posts responses, but does not fully engage with the comments of classmates, or is not respectful or constructive.	Fully engages with the comments of classmates, in a respectful and constructive manner, but not necessarily providing more substance to the conversation.	Fully engages with the comments of classmates, in a respectful and constructive manner, adding substantively to the conversation.	
Discussion 2: Recognize and appreciate individual and cultural similarities and differences, as well as the complexity of culture.	Provides inadequate or is missing examples from the chosen blog and from the student's life. Support for arguments is missing evidence, and/or provides little insight about the nature of culture.	Provides fewer examples from the chosen blog and from the student's life. Supports arguments with evidence, and provides more mundane comments about the nature of culture.	Provides examples from the chosen blog and from the student's life. Supports arguments with evidence, and provides insightful comments about the nature of culture.	
Discussion 2 Replies: Respect diverse perspectives and the ways they influence communication.	Student posts responses, but does not fully engage with the comments of classmates, or is not respectful or constructive.	Student fully engages with the comments of classmates, in a respectful and constructive manner, but not necessarily providing more substance to the conversation.	Student fully engages with the comments of classmates, in a respectful and constructive manner, adding substantively to the conversation.	
<b>TOTAL</b>				

**Notes:** This activity is best done after there has been some overview and discussion about what culture is, ideally after asking the students to reflect on their own cultural identity. This layered approach to online discussion allows the concepts to unfold in a more meaningful way than when they are just provided with examples in lecture or discussion.

**References:**

- Hecht, M. L. (1993). A research odyssey: Towards the development of a communication theory of identity. *Communication Monographs*, 60, 76–82.
- Hecht, M. L., Warren, J. R., Jung, E., Y Krieger, J. L. (2005). The communication theory of identity. In W.B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 257-278). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.