

My cultural proficiency is built on the experience of living and working across three countries across three different continents. I was born and raised in various parts of India, moving five times before I graduated high school. As a professional, I have worked and lived in my country of ethnicity and citizenship (India), in the country of the former colonizer (U.K.) and the country of my child's citizenship that I know call home and raising my family (U.S.A). Having spent 40% of my life in cultures different from my own, I recognize the need to include everyone in my class.

Communicating and researching race, ethnicity, culture, and citizenship can be controversial. These factors are essential parts of our identity, and as individuals, we decide to focus on some of these elements to communicate our identity. Past summer, I was in Salzburg for three weeks, attending the Salzburg Media Academy, in which students and faculty from more than 25 countries participated. In the introductory session, each one of us had to say where we belonged to. I have to tailor my response every time I answer this question thoughtfully, I was born and raised in India, but I live and call Maryland my home now because I have been here close to 9 years and raising a family. I was surprised to find this one time that in a room close to 100 students and faculty many had a similar answer to mine. They were born in part of the world, but now home was elsewhere. Our identities are fluid, we are different, but there are specific issues when we come together.

At the academy, I also taught a group of 10 participants on creating a protocol to interview survivors of sexual assault. It was a diverse group of nationalities; American, Argentinian, English, Lebanese and Mexican. I was expecting to see some disagreements or even opposing views on the framing of questions. Much to my surprise, everyone seemed to agree with the biased media framing of sexual assault survivors; across all cultures. Whether it was rape on campus, stranger rape, date rape, or marrying the rapist; there was a consensus among the participants about the way sexual assault survivors are questioned and doubted. During the other sessions, we also discussed culture, ethnicity, and citizenship. Despite our identities transcending the border with the help of social media platforms; some names, identities, and nationalities are advantageous over the others. Students from Argentina, Lebanon, Mexico, Syria, Jordan, and Kenya agreed that having a US passport and having an Anglo-Saxon or western sounding name opens more opportunities, as compared to having an ethnic name. We communicate our identity through our names. I added if my name was Patricia Green, I would get more responses to my academic applications and people would extend the courtesy of communicating the result after job presentations. The experience from the academy helped me to construct innovative teaching and research ideas and situate my research as an interdisciplinary study.

Being a woman journalist of color and working in a predominantly white newsroom in the UK, I have also used my real-life experiences of intersections of gender, race, politics, and media in my classes. My interest in the interdisciplinary research dimension comes from my academic background of Political Science, International Relations, Communication and Women's Studies. My international and interdisciplinary background has not only contributed to research but also in my teaching and pedagogical training of international graduate teaching

assistants and graduate instructors of record. I have conducted communication workshops and mentored graduate instructors at UMD and the CIRTL Network (Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning: A network of 43 universities in the U.S). This experience has prepared me to develop strong communication skills to explain knowledge in effortlessly to a diverse population, irrespective of their age, experience, and educational background, which is expected of any prospective faculty.

Researching diverse culture requires the experience and expertise of using a wide variety of research and communication tools. I am cognizant of the role communication plays in cultural diversity; having worked as a journalist in three countries across three continents. In the past five years of teaching, I have always noticed that students of similar gender and ethnicity prefer to sit together in class. And they always sit at the same place every single lecture. I decided to encourage my students to sit with class members who they did not know. I realized simply encouraging doesn't help, so I put place cards, and every student had to pick a number from a raffle box and sit in the number spot. This forced the students to come together and know each by name and not by "the brown cap," or "blonde hair." This exercise also helped my students to debate healthily without being disrespectful to each other since they learned to appreciate different arguments and be inclusive.