

Case Study: Where are you from?



Brief description	Due to different understandings of culture, the question "where are you from?" is interpreted differently. While the interviewee assumes a closed, national-cultural understanding behind the question, the questioner tries to find out whether they know each other from a different context.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection on open and closed concepts of culture• Consideration of interpersonal encounters on the basis of a dynamic understanding of culture• Sensitisation to the different interpretations of interpersonal encounters based on different understandings of culture
Time	Approx. 45-60 min.
Method	Culturally unspecific; Distributive/instructive
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case study
Implementation	<p>The trainer divides the participants into small groups. They discuss the case studies and answer the following guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What understandings of culture underlie the case study?• What influence do different understandings of culture have on the interpretation of the encounter?• How do you interpret the question "where are you from?" from a closed or open understanding of culture? <p>Evaluation in plenary: The participants present their results. The trainer moderates the presentation and summarises the core results.</p>
Notes	n/a
Source	Annika Schmidt/ Andrea Voigt



Task

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Mara works in a tax office when a new colleague is hired who looks familiar to her. She approaches her during the lunch break and asks where she is from. When she replies that she was born and raised in Berlin, Mara shakes her head vigorously. "That's not what I mean," she says and starts to explain. The new colleague, however, does not let her continue, but continues with a huff that her grandparents were from China, but that she does not even speak the language anymore, has a German passport and is tired of having to have such discussions. Mara looks down in a daze. She stammers a short apology and explains that she actually wanted to know where she had studied and whether they had perhaps met during their studies.

Read the case study and discuss the following questions:

- What understandings of culture underlie the case study?
- What influence do different understandings of culture have on the interpretation of the encounter?
- How do you interpret the question "where are you from?" from a closed or open understanding of culture?

Record your findings in writing.

Source: Annika Schmidt/Andrea Voigt