

**Yvonne:** Hello, Gabriella! I feel pleased to have a chance to meet you today. Thank you for taking the time. So, today I have invited you here to have an interview, which I have due on a cultural conversation assignment, and the concept I have is to have an honest, casual discussion about our cultural identities. Here I will discuss our similarities and differences, and think about how our backgrounds impact the way we see the world, make decisions, and have conversations with others. I will also analyse the misunderstanding overcoming strategies or challenges that can arise from cultural differences.

**Gabriella:** Hi Yvonne! I am thrilled to be here to assist you. I believe this session must be interesting. I never usually observed any cultural differences, though I think after this discussion, I will also get a chance to gain some knowledge on them.

**Y:** Absolutely, I want this conversation between us to be neutral, unbiased, like we will share some of our personal experiences here at the coffee shop. It is more like a gup-shup. We would not judge each other, though we will delve into the values, experiences, and visions we share. We can talk about our origin, our family tradition, our community, and the effects of cultural identity on our schools, workplaces, and relationships. It will be a chance for both of us to scrutinise areas where our backgrounds may create a nuisance and what coping mechanisms we can adapt.

**G:** Oh, it makes sense. You know, conversations like this are rare. I will be happy to help you with this. Sometimes, we want people to understand our points of view, though discussion is most important to understand important contexts.

**Y:** I appreciate that, for this conversation, we can start by sharing our cultural identity markers. After that, we would shift towards the similarities and differences, and then we would see how strong our understanding and relationship can grow. This conversation is going to be meaningful.

So, to start, let's discuss our cultural identity markers where you can address your nationality, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and family background. It will be advantageous for us to establish an understanding of each other's experiences.

G: Oh, sure. I am Gabriella, a Latina girl. More particularly, a Mexican-American who has grown up in Houston, Texas. I am bilingual, as I speak both English and Spanish. I identify as a cisgender woman, and from my sexual orientation, I am heterosexual. Religion has a vast role in my life as I belong to a Catholic family. I have grown up in a conservative family where I received lessons on traditions, family support, and close ties with people. I think these features shadow my identity that shapes my approach to work, friendship, and challenges.

Y: That's interesting of you. As you stated, you are bilingual, which must have delivered you with some priceless experiences and POVs. I am a Somali Muslim, grew up all my life here in the U.S. I was also from a conservative family, where religion plays an important role. Our religion, Islam, has taught us to be community-centric, resilient, and responsible. I think identity has a real power over everything, starting from the communication style to the approach in our school, work, and friendships.

G: I agree. It is wholesome. We belong to different backgrounds, different cultures, and different religions. Still, the values we share are similar, like we value our community and prioritise our family. Don't you think cultural identity is multifaceted? Though multiple similarities coexist within different parts of society.

Y: Absolutely. I have started by discussing identity markers due to this. It assists us in observing different obstacles in our relationship. It can be our assumptions as well as misunderstandings, and allows us to showcase the approach with curiosity and openness.

Now, I wonder, Gabriella. What family functions or traditions, or holidays did you give most attention to when you were a child? Do you think having these kinds of traditions can shape our lives?

G: Of course, Yvonne. Holidays have always been my favourite, and I consider them to be important than anything. We celebrated Las Posadas, Día de Muertos, and Christmas. These days, all our family members get together and celebrate. We enjoy the day with lots of food, music, and gossip. Due to this tradition, all our family members, especially the children, can learn more about family and cultural heritage. Still, I carry on celebrating all those, as it makes me remember where my roots are. Here, children are taught to maintain close ties with family members and respect elders.

Y: Oh, that must be a magnificent experience. For us, not only the cultural holidays, but whenever we get the chance to meet all our family members, I feel happier. Family gatherings are always my favourite, though my nephews are my strength for all time, be it a family gathering or not. We celebrate Eid, Muharram, and special days for Prophet Muhammad, who taught me to value our family morale and responsibility. The utmost knowledge I gathered is that maintaining a robust social string is crucial for steering through the challenges of life. Yes, we have different traditions, but I think the underlying values for each are the same: to care, respect, and unity.

G: Indeed, traditions, irrespective of whether they are family-specific or cultural, teach values and lessons. They assist in shaping our identity and relationship with people. I think traditions work like a creative artist that shows a unique sense of identity and belonging.

Y: Even when it comes to different customs or celebrations, the aim behind them remains the same: to honour each other's heritage, relationship, and maintain values. Having an elemental knowledge of this helps us admire the differences without getting into any more challenges.

You know, I think language is a big part of identity. As you have mentioned earlier that you speak English and Spanish both fluently, do you think this ability has any influence on your interactions and visionary principles?

G: Of course, language has been my core identity. As I can understand and communicate in both these languages, I can steer different cultural spaces and get accustomed to different communities fast. I can find the linguistic delicacy and the contexts while communicating with others, which I think monolinguals miss at times. Language is not a group of words. Language shows values, cultures, and identity so well. I have turned out to be sensitive and empathetic enough due to my bilingual ability. I can even recognise smaller differences in tone and expression that might affect any connection.

Y: I understand this. I brought up speaking English only, and truly, this monolingualistic ability has shaped my vision differently. Mostly, while I interact with bilingual people, I tend to miss out the smallest cues. I get curious with all of them and try to find out the meaning, understanding, and relationship.

G: Yes, communication does not mean something that has been told by someone. The one to whom the statement has been told needs to understand that. My bilingual ability is a mechanism to address these diversified situations, and I think it supports my caution of other experiences as well.

Y: True, language shapes our identity and relationships. We should respect the differences all of us have. In this way, we can get out of misunderstandings. Not only that, but it also allows us to connect with people more meaningfully, irrespective of their cultural identity.

Have you ever gone through any bias or discrimination due to your identity as a Latina? If yes, how did you come out of the stress?

G: Yes. People mostly assume that, being a Latina, I cannot get enough education. At times, they think I cannot speak Spanish perfectly. All these are stereotypes, and very frustrating. Due to these assumptions and people-driven expectations, I have learned to navigate spaces carefully. No assumptions can define who I am. If someone needs to judge me, they should be fair enough while advocating. To be honest, I have faced multiple biased situations, but I have never underestimated my own ability, and I have become stronger and empathetic after every challenge I face.

Y: I can relate to your words. I have been through so many racial biases in my school days. Not only have I faced racial disparities, but I have also faced bias due to my religion. People often get curious about my character and abilities, assuming something about my race. These experiences leave a robust impact on our social situations and relationships. I get inspired to break the stereotypes and create inclusive spaces.

G: Yes, it is important to be aware of any discrimination. It highlights the nuance of communication and understanding while building intercultural relationships.

Y: I also think this way. Discussion on our personal experiences is prudent and helps in standardising conversations regarding bias, and inspires us to approach differences with honour.

Do you think your cultural identity has impacted your education and professional choices?

G: Absolutely, when I grew up, my family encouraged me to read carefully, and they stated that education is the ultimate key to success. I have also been aware of cultural stereotypes that could hinder people's understanding professionally. This way, I got encouraged to study hard and break the stigma. Also, my cultural identity affects my interaction with my mentors and colleagues, due to my respect for collaboration and community. I want to design a creative space in my career where I will respect everyone for who they are.

Y: That's nice of your vision. My cultural identity taught me to be more determined and perseverant over time. I am encouraged to create my own opportunities for myself and others belonging to my community. I also observe that my vision affects my mentoring ability and support. Cultural values like resilience, respect, and empathy shape both my career decisions and academics.

G: This is interesting how culture can guide not just personal values, but also our professional behaviour. Having a succinct knowledge of our cultural identity helps us steer through the challenges and make voluntary choices/

Y: Yes, and sharing such experiences with others allows us to see all the points of commonality and divergence in shaping work ethic, ambition, and professional relationships.

How do you think cultural diversity impacts your social life and friendships?

G: To be precise, these differences can be enriching yet challenging at the same time. Sometimes people are curious to know about my cultural practices, with all that I get, sincere opportunities to connect with people and learn from them as well. Friendship with liberal people is easier to maintain. I have learned that being honest about my values and cultures, our trust and understanding are influenced.

Y: I agree with you. Cultural differences can be a roller-coaster source of learning. While they obscure that path of assumption, they enlarge our viewpoints. Sharing experiences boldly allows us to befriend people and make stronger connections. Not only that, but I also think that shared values, such as respect and honesty, underpin stronger bonding even when cultural practices contradict.

G: Yes, we should not consider the differences to be our limitations. They can polish our social lives through calling for new experiences and perspectives.

Y: I agree, I think the ties of friendship get robust when both people nourish it intentionally and approach it with curiosity, and stay away from judgment.

Do you consider all the differences to be real or some of them as perceived?

G: Many perceived differences mostly have a subtle connection with stereotypes and assumptions. Once we communicate or share our experiences, those perceived differences drop off. There are indeed some real differences, like family traditions or languages. Though the perceived differences feel much weightier than they actually are. Open communication on these differences allows us to see that similarities are more crucial than the differences.

Y: Absolutely. This conversation seems to indicate that since our backgrounds are different, we can interface through shared values, such as community, family, and sensitivity. There are many differences we care about as they generate tension, fear, and misunderstanding.

G: Yes, and also being aware of both the real and the perceived differences, we can approach our relationships in a thought-provoking manner. It boosts our curiosity and diminishes the risk of misunderstanding.

Y: So true, identifying the perceived differences, we can concentrate on what really matters to us, the understanding and collaborative respect.

Now that we have had a prolonged conversation regarding identity, family, language, and experience with bias, I will now delve into something more nuanced. How do you think we can get out of cultural differences while interacting with our friends or people we really care about?

G: Here also, I would say, communication is the key. Being honest and open about our experience, we can get help in avoiding misunderstandings. Asking genuine questions shows our curiosity as well as interest, which might seem confusing at times. Respecting boundaries is a remarkable need. Sometimes people need a good space to share their culture as they do.

Exposure to different cultures also helps with this. Trying small things, such as celebrating the family traditions and holidays, demonstrates that we value someone else's background.

Y: Yes, I agree. I think patience is also crucial. Cultural understanding is not something that comes up overnight. It is a never-ending quest that necessitates learning, listening, and reflection. Sometimes we blindly assume something about people, though asking and active listening can clear that mess. Also, I consider empathy to be important in the same way. Having comprehension about someone else's vision and experiences helps us build stronger, more meaningful relationships.

G: That's genuine. I also think being empathetic helps in challenging one's own prejudices. Sometimes, we do not even understand how the stereotypes are affecting our own points of view. Being cautious of that and making a timely effort to approach others without assumption is highly important.



Y: Yes, acknowledging the biases and understanding the differences let us continue a meaningful conversation. I think we should concentrate on some generic grounds while valuing or esteeming the inherent differences.

If someone wanted advice on interaction with people from a diversified cultural background, what would your opinion be?

G: I would say, do not be judgmental, be curious. Listen more before you speak, especially from the beginning. Respect differences, yet also chase down the similarities that you feel a greater connection with. No need to be afraid about asking questions, because it shows your care and understanding. Eventually, approach the interactions with benevolence. It is not possible that you would know every culture, and that is okay. Just having curiosity alive and openness goes a long way.

Y: Wow, I like that. Can I add some more?

G: Sure. I would love to know what you are going to add.

Y: Be patient, with yourself as well as with others. Cultural understanding is a genuine mechanism, and everyone makes mistakes at some point in life. When you approach such conversations, keep the respect and curiosity intact. This way, you are more likely to construct a genuine connection. It is also important to showcase your own culture and its effect on your assumptions.

G: Obviously, self-awareness is a basic requirement. Understanding your own background will further assist you in better understanding your own culture and its roots. Also, sharing your invaluable experiences openly would inspire people to share theirs, and further support the relationship.

Y: I believe relationships, irrespective of the cultural distinctions, push us to grow, learn, and be empathetic. The more keen we get by understanding others, the stronger and closer-knit our connections turn out to be.

Looking back at our conversation, what do you think was the most attractive idea we discussed?

G: The biggest takeaway from this conversation, from my point of view, is how much we can learn from each other. You have different experiences from mine. Still, I found various similarities with you, from aspects like community, family, and resilience. We have shared stories on our upbringing, traditions, and the topsy-turvy path we have come across. I have seen some remarkable differences at some point there, though the differences cannot be our limits. Instead, they can actually embrace the overall relationships. It also makes me remember the perceived differences, which sometimes make us vulnerable in reality.

Y: True, our thorough conversation entailing traditions, families, upbringing, and multiple experiences regarding bias helped me to showcase how my identity has been up to date and how it influences my perspectives. I understood that having a concrete realisation about someone's cultural background necessitates curiosity and listening. I also realised that shared values can bridge all the gaps we have, even if they relate to different languages and customs.

G: I appreciate the point on empathy. We cannot fully recognise the pros and cons of every experience we go through. Still, we can remain free to listen and respect what others have been through. That leaves a long-lasting impact on constructing trust and meaningful connections.

Y: Indeed. This session supported me through various cultural differences, opportunities, and not some rigid challenges. We should be patient, open, and keen to construct a stronger bond that would be understanding and respectful.

Thank you so much, Gabriella, for your valuable time. This conversation is valuable and meaningful. I feel like I have learned a lot about your experiences and your visionary principles. It was a productive session that pulled out minute details about our own identity.

G: Thank you, Yvonne. It was such a nice session that I learned a lot about your experiences and values, and it helped me to rethink how I approach relationships with people from multifaceted cultures. It cheered me up while you portrayed the differences; we can find some generic grounds and meaningful connections.

Y: I think that was exactly what was required for this assignment to complete, to reflect, learn, and understand. Cultural differences cannot separate us. They can be a path to develop ourselves and be more empathetic. I am happy to get this opportunity to discuss these issues with honesty and openness.

G: I appreciate. I also consider this to be a stark reminder that every relationship serves as an opportunity to learn, whether it's school, friendship, work, or family. Being cautious about both the real and perceived differences assists in stopping misconceptions and promotes respect.

Y: Yes, I got inspired from this interactive session. I would try to remain more intentional about all my interactions hereafter. I want to keep up learning from others and construct relationships relying on respect, curiosity, and understanding. Thank you again for your depth and honesty.

G: Thank you, Yvonne. I really enjoyed helping you with the interview. I feel more confident from now onwards whenever I approach relationships with people from various backgrounds. I would consider the cultural differences from an opportunistic dimension from now on, and not as a challenge anymore.

Y: Exactly. I hope we can continue having these kinds of conversations again in the future. Not for an assignment this time. It is a splendid way to connect, learn, and develop.