

Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild@HWDSB: Building a Community of Care
Module 2 Understanding Identity and Intersectionality

Lesson #12
Identity and Race, Part 1 (Grades 2-3)

Learning Goal: To explore different aspects of identity and to see racial identity as an important aspect of who we are.

Key Vocabulary

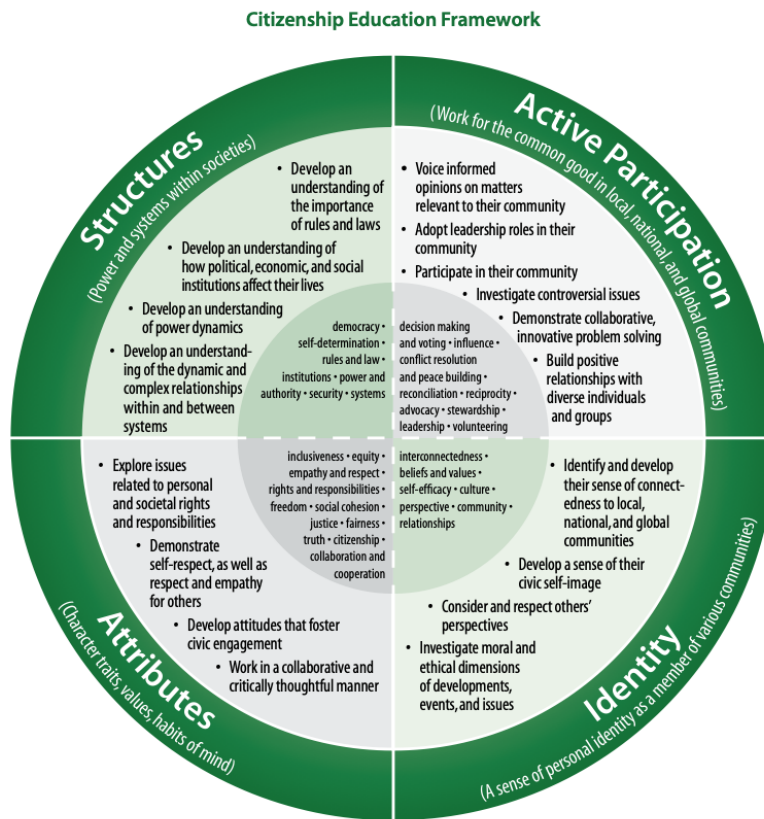
Race - The idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups based on inherited physical and behavioral differences. Racial categorization schemes were invented by scientists to support worldviews that viewed some groups of people as superior and some as inferior. Genetic studies have concluded that race is a made-up social construct to uphold European and white standards, and not an actual biological fact. (Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*. Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2002, p.141).

Racialization - Racialization is the very complex and contradictory process through which groups come to be designated as being of a particular "race" and on that basis subjected to differential and/or unequal treatment. Put simply, "racialization [is] the process of manufacturing and utilizing the notion of race in any capacity" (Dalal, 2002, p. 27). While white people are also racialized, this process is often rendered invisible or normative to those designated as white. As a result, white people may not see themselves as part of a race but still maintain the authority to name and racialize "others" (SOURCE: [Calgary Anti-Racism Resources](#))

Racial identity - An individual's awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience ([Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook](#). Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Routledge, 1997).

Curriculum Connections

Social Studies



Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8

The combination of the citizenship education framework and the knowledge and skills in the curriculum expectations brings citizenship education to life, not only in social studies, history, and geography, but in many other subjects as well.

The Citizen Education Framework in the front material of the Social Studies/ History and Geography curriculum outlines the information and skills a learner needs to understand in order to study History and Geography. One quadrant focuses on Identity, and one's place within their local and the global community. This lesson is a component of students acquiring the knowledge necessary to understand themselves, and their role as citizens of Canada.

Grade 2-3 (Visual Arts)

D3. Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts: demonstrate an understanding of a variety of art forms, styles, and techniques from the past and present, and their social and/or community contexts.

Tools and Materials

- Book for read aloud – Frida
- [Frida Kahlo's Self-portrait with Thorn and Hummingbird \(1940\)](#)
- Chart paper

[Self-portraits by well-known, racialized artists](#) like, Frida Kahlo, Horace Pippin, Hughie Lee-Smith, Adrian Piper and Kimiko Yoshida, and Indigenous artist [George Littlechild](#)

Reminder: Log into YouTube using school email and play videos in safe mode.

Educator Pre-reflection

Before engaging in this lesson, consider/think about...

Racial colourblindness is an approach to reduce interracial tension which proposes that “racial categories do not matter and should not be considered when making decisions such as hiring and school admissions. The primary tenet of this approach is that social categories should be dismantled and disregarded, and everyone should be treated as an individual” (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2003; Firebaugh & Davis, 1998; Lipset, 1996; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993). This ideology posits itself on the premise of equality for all, rather than equity and thus, at its core is an insidious practice of racism in itself.

The core premise of this lesson is to negate such colourblind practice by attempting to bring race into the conversation in primary classrooms. This is an extremely necessary and important way of disrupting the development of racist beliefs and thoughts in the early years as children start internalizing racial bias by the time they are 5 years old (Baron, 2015; Dunham, Baron, & Banaji, 2008).

Furthermore, please be aware that race is a heavy burden many racialized students carry even at a very early age due to their lived experiences. If a racialized student is unwilling to share, participate, or even be present for these conversations, it may be due to personal triggers. Thus, enforcing them in a conversation about race they do not feel safe to participate in may cause added harm to such students. As the expert on your students’ background history, triggers, body language, and classroom dynamics, please make informed and empathetic decisions regarding ensuring a safe and inclusive setting to engage in these brave conversations.

Student Pre-reflection

Before you begin, think about...

- *What do I know about the word “race”?*
- *What do I know about the word “identity”?*

Provocation

Possible Diagnostic Task:

Before beginning this lesson, consider having students draw a picture of themselves, focusing on their face and hair. Take a picture of these drawings as documentation, noting how students portray themselves prior to this lesson.

Read Aloud: Read the book [Frida](#) to the class to provide context regarding the discussion to follow.

Show students [Frida Kahlo's Self-portrait with Thorn and Hummingbird \(1940\)](#). Explain to students that self-portraits are pictures that artists make of themselves; they often use self-portraits to show how they feel about themselves and their place in society. Have a class or small-group discussion using the following prompt:

- *Using what you know about Frida from the book, what is she trying to show us about herself in this self-portrait?*

Students may briefly share their ideas with the class if they are comfortable to do so.

Learning Task/Activity

Ask students what they know about the word “*identity*”. On chart paper record their initial ideas (i.e., gender, age, grade, country of birth) in a web. Emphasize that a self-portrait is an artist’s way of thinking about and expressing details about who they are on the inside and on the outside - their identity.

Discuss that often “*race*” is misunderstood to only represent skin colour. However, a person’s racial identity is more than the colour of their skin; it is also about how they see themselves based on their culture, life experiences, family life, language, where they were born, etc. Using Frida Kahlo’s self-portrait as a reference, ask students to add these ideas about racial identity on the web based on their deeper understanding and using the language they use to describe them.

Explain to students that Frida Kahlo is a “*person of colour*”. Ask them what they think that may mean (i.e., she has brown skin, she looks different, she’s from a different country, etc.). Discuss that a person of colour may also be called a “*racialized person*”. Although there is no real biological difference between people from different races, race is frequently used to group or categorize people. While being white is a category of race, only non-white people are referred to as “*racialized*” or “*people of colour*”.

Ask students the following question:

- *What are some ways Frida Kahlo’s shows her racial identity in her self-portrait?*

Anticipated responses/questions may include the following:

- *“She sees herself as a racialized person”*
- *“She dresses and wears her hair according to her country’s culture”*
- *“The animals are from the country she was born in”*

Show students [self-portraits by well-known, racialized artists](#) like, Frida Kahlo, Horace Pippin, Hughie Lee-Smith, Adrian Piper and Kimiko Yoshida, and Canadian indigenous artist [George Littlechild](#).

As a whole class or in small groups, look at the self-portraits of the artists in this lesson. Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions:

- Which details in the portrait stand out as representing the artist's racial identity (i.e. physical appearance, cultural affiliation, life experience)?
- What is the artist trying to show about their feelings/emotions?

*It is recommended that you join one of the groups to be a part of the conversation in order to build trusting relationships regarding discussions about race and set precedence about creating student centered learning space where brave dialogue is facilitated based on a collective, rather than teacher directed learning; this is a key component of the anti-oppression/anti-racist educational framework.

(Portions of this lesson have been adapted and modified from the Art and Activism series from the Teaching Tolerance website at <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/art-and-racial-justice-what-is-in-a-selfportrait>)

Consolidation

Once students have completed their dialogue, summarize all of their observations by asking: What are some similarities and differences between the ways each artist has portrayed themselves? Invite students to share their ideas.

Educator/Student Post-Reflection

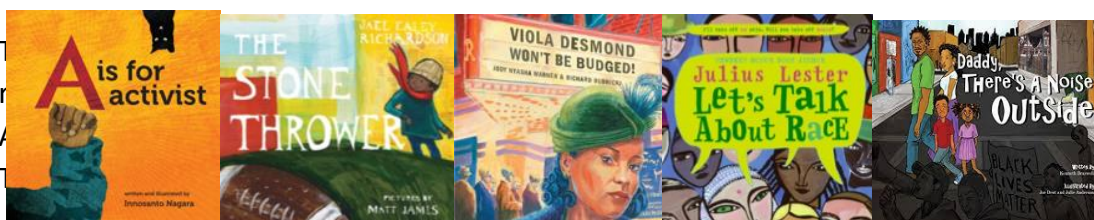
- What is the main idea I want to remember or take away from this lesson?
- What is my next step?
- What do I need to learn more about?
- How is my mental wellbeing after this co-learning experience?

Ideas for Going Deeper/Further Resources

For deeper understanding of racial identity and racial bias, a natural discussion may occur or may be prompted with the following question:

If each person belongs to a certain race, why is it that only non-white people are called “racialized”?

This may lead to conversations regarding racism and may lead to further inquiries about the history of anti-Black racism in Canada, the colonization and mistreatment of Indigenous people in Canada, the reasons for current racial tensions and protests regarding racism in North America, the myth of white supremacy, the interconnectedness of racism and mental health, systemic inequalities due to racism, etc.



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