

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

Lesson # 14 - The Flower of Power

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

Key Vocabulary

Anti-Racism: Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

Identity: the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person (self-identity in psychology) or group (collective identity in sociology). ... A psychological identity relates to self-image (one's mental model of oneself), self-esteem, and individuality.

Racialized identity: are identifications with “groups of people that have been socially and politically constructed as “racially” distinct... [They] have notable cultural dimensions, but they are primarily a manifestation of unequal power between groups” (Baum, 2006: 11)

Oppression: The combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called “target groups”) and benefits other groups (often called “dominant groups”). Examples of these systems are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism. These systems enable dominant groups to exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources such as health care, education, employment, and housing.

Four Levels of Oppression/“isms” and Change:

- **Personal:** Values, Beliefs, Feelings
- **Interpersonal:** Actions, Behaviors, Language
- **Institutional:** Rules, Policies, Procedures
- **Cultural:** Beauty, Truth, Right

Curriculum Connections

Social Studies Curriculum, Grades 1-8



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.

Tools and Materials

- Flower of Power worksheet, copied for each student, and a large one to display so teacher can model for students
- Colored pencils or highlighters

Modification for Remote Learning: PowerPoint will include visuals and modifications needed for teaching this lesson remotely. Students will use whatever art supplies they have at home.

Educator Pre-reflection

Before engaging in this lesson, consider:

How comfortable am I talking about race with my students?

How might my comfort/discomfort effect the students' ability to engage in this learning? Particularly for racialized students?

How can I model a learning stance despite discomfort as I co-learn during this lesson?

*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, forcing them to participate in a conversation about race where they do not feel safe 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.

Tips for talking about race with students (<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about>) The article linked with give you some tools and support leading these conversations.

Recognize that you are a learner too, and that you are also working towards becoming an Anti-Racist Ally

Please note: “Oppressions are like jigsaw puzzles or Lego pieces where the different forms connect together and support each other, and they do not occur in isolation. For example, a gay man of colour faces homophobia and racism, just as an older trans woman endures ageism and transphobia.

It is important not to rank or rate oppressions. All forms of oppression require resistance from and work to end. Focusing solely on one inequality does not address the root causes. Here are some other reasons we must not rank oppressions from the [Youth Environmental Network](#)

“The practice of ranking oppressions, then:

- Leads to disputes over which forms of oppression are the worst and least severe.
- Fails to recognize how different forms of oppression intersect or work together to oppress people.
- Avoids looking at structures of power and privilege because people end up spending time arguing over which forms of oppression are the worst instead of focusing on how power structures divide struggles against racism from struggles against sexism (e.g., ‘divide and rule’ strategies).
- Overlooks the fact that all forms of oppression are harmful and unjust, and it fails to recognize that the best strategy to end oppression involves tackling all forms of oppression at once.”

Student Pre-reflection

Before you begin, think about...

- Who are you? What makes you who you are?

Provocation

Write the student pre-reflection question on the board. Ask for volunteers to give a short presentation answering this question and write down in point form what they say to describe themselves. After about three presentations, have the class reflect on:

- What aspects about themselves students listed first.
- What aspects did they omit altogether?

Display the definition of identity so students can see it:

Identity: the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person (self-identity) or group (collective identity). ... A psychological identity relates to self-image (one's mental model of oneself), self-esteem, and individuality.

Review that there is more than one way to identify: visually (what you look like), emotionally (what you feel about yourself); through associations (who are your friends, where you live, your religion) and sociologically, or social identity- what we are going to learn today.

Learning Task/Activity

Learning Objectives—At the end of this activity, you and students will be able to:

1. Visualize how your identity lines up with dominant groups
2. See which identities give you unearned privilege and which identities do not
3. Understand the assumed norm (aka dominant identity) in the various systems of oppression

Distribute the handout “The Power Flower” to students and have a large copy that you can work on filling in your own information as the activity progresses.

The centre of a daisy-type flower is divided into 16 segments, each representing one facet or category of our social identity. This centre is surrounded by a double set of petals, one outer, one inner. The outer petals describe the dominant or powerful identities in society. The inner petals are filled in by participants and describe the social identity of each individual.

Explain the object of the activity: to discover how close, or how distant, each person is to the dominant identity of their current society. The more inner petals match the outer (dominant) ones, the more social power that person possesses.

Working as a group, fill in the outer petals together. For instance, when completing the social dominance category, it would not be too difficult to agree that “white” should go in the outer petal. The same might go

for “English” in the language category language, and “heterosexual” in the sexual orientation category. Refer to the attached answer key for the appropriate information for the outer petals.

Distribute one blank individual diagram and have everyone transfer these outer petal descriptions onto their individual sheets.

Working individually, have participants locate themselves in each inner petal on their own sheet. You can model this by going petal by petal, modelling entering your own identity information and have the students add their identity on their sheets.

Count the number of matching petals, colouring each petal that matches. Let each pair compare their results with that of their neighbours, making observations as they go along.

Note that coloured petals represent social power OVER people different from the social “norms” of the outside petal. This is how oppression functions.

Consolidation

Lead a class discussion focusing on the different types of identity and its relation to oppression:

Personal social identity: Count how many of your petals are different from the dominant outer petals, which means you do not share those areas of power conferred by society. How does this help you understand the ways you might have been treated as a person of privilege or a marginalized person? Which of these cannot be changed (for example, where you were born), and which ones could be changed (e.g., level of education)?

Group social identity: What does the composite picture tell you about who you are as a group? Are you privileged? In what ways are you not privileged? How might this affect, for example, the way we work and learn together as a community of learners?

Interpersonal relations within your group: Notice who has fewer matching petals and thus less social power, and who has more. How can you turn this knowledge to advantage as the group works together? As you make decisions? For instance, you might as a group decide to take measures to make sure members with less power do get a chance to be heard. How do you as the classroom teacher/facilitator compare with your students? What does this reveal about possible tensions?

Reflect on the unequal weight given some of the categories, for example, race or social-economic class, and thus the need to adjust the “power quotient” wielded by some petals over others.

Educator/Student Post-Reflection

How does your new understanding of power and privilege change how you think about your identity? Did it affect how you would identify yourself, if you had to answer the question “who am I?” and “what makes me who I am?”

Ideas for Going Deeper/Further Resources

The Power Flower exercise is also a good way to help us visualize systems of oppression. There are many forms of oppression: racism, sexism, classism, sexuality, ability, age etc. Oppressions have a long history and a part of our society in every context-political, economic and social. What we consider the norm and what we think of as the “other” is based in oppression. Something as trivial seeming like hair and what we value as a society is deeply rooted in historical oppressions. For example, there have been several media reports of school children being sent home or suspended because their hair was not deemed suitable for school. (See article: <https://jezebel.com/florida-school-forces-black-student-to-cut-hair-or-face-1472062679>)

Sources:

This lesson is adapted from the LGBTQ2S Toolkit from:

<http://lgbtq2stoolkit.learningcommunity.ca/training/power-flower/>

Additional Sources:

Aran, I. (2013, November 26). Florida School Forces Black Student to Cut Hair or Face Expulsion. Retrieved February 8, 2015, from <http://jezebel.com/florida-school-forces-black-student-to-cut-hair-or-face-1472062679>

Canadian Race Relations Foundation. (n.d.). CRRF Glossary of Terms. Retrieved February 9, 2015, from <http://www.crr.ca/en/library-a-clearinghouse/glossary-a-terms-en-gb-1>

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A Tool for Everyone: Revelations from the “Power Flower”. Retrieved February 8, 2015, from <http://lgbtq2stoolkit.learningcommunity.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/flower-power-exercise.pdf>

Youth Environmental Network. (n.d.). Green Justice Guide. Retrieved February 8, 2015, from <http://antiracist-toolkit.users.ecobytes.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Green-Justice-Guide-Part-1.pdf>

The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies Grades 1-6; History and Geography Grades 7-8, Toronto: Queens Park, 2018.