



***In Our Family:
Portraits of All Kinds
of Families***

The Photo-Text Exhibit
Resource and User Guide

In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families

The Photo-Text Exhibit Resource and User Guide

Edited and compiled by Phyllis Labanowski

A companion to the exhibit *In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families*

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***This guide is dedicated to all of the families
in the exhibit, In Our Family, for their courage
and willingness to be visible.***

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This first version of the *In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families* Photo-Text Exhibit Resource and User Guide is a work in progress. We invite your comments, concerns, and questions and appreciate any input that will continue to help us expand and improve the Guide. Please contact us by writing to Family Diversity Projects, P. O. Box 1246, Amherst, MA 01004-1246 or by email to info@familydiv.org.

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In Our Family Exhibit and Resource Guide Introduction

Peggy Gillespie, co-interviewer/editor of *In Our Family*, co-director of Family Diversity Projects

As we grow from infancy up through our teens, we view the world almost entirely through the lens of our own family. Whether our family is dysfunctional, unstable and abusive, or kind, stable and supportive—or anywhere on the continuum in between these extremes—our familial experiences contribute to the core of our development as human beings. Our families shape our understanding of what life is about and of what we believe about ourselves and others. Each family has its own unique configuration and environment, which is not precisely duplicated by any other family on earth.

By the time most children reach school age, they begin to visit the homes of their friends where they may get to know families vastly different from their own. In addition, literature and the media—especially television and movies—give many children the opportunity to get to know families around the globe whom they might never meet in person. Whether these families are fictional or real—in cases where they are accurately portrayed—it is possible to learn about different races, cultures, classes, and situations completely outside one's own familial experience. In these ways, children can begin to expand their perspectives beyond the very limited focal point of their own families. The exhibit, *In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families* is yet another way to help children and adults expand their knowledge of people beyond those in their immediate families and neighborhoods. Sadly, we are living in a world dominated by prejudice, intolerance, injustice, stereotyping, and oppression of people deemed to be “different” or “other” than socially-defined norms. Racism, homophobia, anti-feminism, and xenophobia seem to be on the rise in the current political and social climate in the United States. Intolerance, suspicion, and hatred of difference can lead to an increase in teasing, bullying, and, in the worst case scenarios, to violence in the schools. In many cases, prejudice developed at home can be perpetuated in a school environment that is not proactively committed to challenging bias. To help in the essential work of challenging stereotypes, dismantling prejudice, and fighting oppression, Family Diversity Projects in Amherst, Massachusetts conceived of creating *In Our Family*, a traveling photo-text exhibit. We envisioned this exhibit being used as an important tool in anti-bias education.

In Our Family, despite its subtitle, is not really about “all” kinds of families. It is about 25 different families—each unique. In our attempt to include a very diverse array of families, we interviewed and photographed people who were willing to speak openly about their lives and about some of their familial and individual challenges. Many of them spoke of feeling invisible because their families didn't fit the stereotypical image of an American nuclear family. Many spoke of being teased or isolated because of their family structure or situation.

In spite of the fact that the majority of children and adults in the United States no longer live in families that represent the stereotype of a “normal” family—i.e. a heterosexual, two-parent, two kids, dog, middle-class white family living in the suburbs, many people who have brought *In Our Family* to their schools have asked us, “Aren't there any normal families in this exhibit?” By asking this question, they are clearly reaffirming the stereotype of what is considered normal, and, in fact, they are pointing to the very reason this exhibit exists in the first place. Does a family such as the Rivera family who moved to the mainland of the United States from Puerto Rico not qualify as normal? Or does having a son with Down Syndrome, even if the family fits all the other stereotypes of a “normal” family, make a family “abnormal?” Does the fact that twelve-year-old Jake McDowell has obsessive-compulsive disorder, or that three members of the Ross family are visually-impaired, or that the Bellavance-Grace family consists of two mothers who adopted their children from the foster care system, make these families abnormal?

It is exactly this question that can lead the viewers of *In Our Family* to the very issues we had in mind when

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Family Diversity Projects is a non-profit arts organization devoted to educating the public about issues related to the diversity of family life in the twenty-first century. To accomplish our goal, we create photo-text exhibits, books, and related educational materials to distribute to schools, colleges, workplaces, libraries, faith houses, hospitals, mental health centers, community centers, museums, and other venues world-wide. Our mission is to use these tools to propel forward a world where all families are recognized, valued and fully supported.

Vision Statement

Family Diversity Projects recognizes, welcomes, and celebrates the strength and richness of a diverse landscape of families. We envision a time when the concept of otherness has been eliminated, when “normal” or “different” are not words used to describe family, and the right to define family is respectfully restored to individuals.

Family Diversity Projects currently distributes four photo-text exhibits: *Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families*; *Love Makes a Family: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People and their Families*; *Nothing to Hide: Mental Illness in the Family*; and *In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families*.

we created this exhibit. Our hope is that *In Our Family* will help teachers and their students answer this question — what is a normal family?—in a way that will reflect an inclusive, expansive view of what makes a family. With that expanded awareness, distrust and even hatred of people who are supposedly different from us, can diminish.

Another commonly asked question about *In Our Family* is: Why aren't there any families just like mine in the exhibit? If we attempted to include every possible family situation, the exhibit would be so large, it would never be able to tour. However, each of the families we did include in this exhibit does offer the opportunity to challenge stereotypes. We purposely chose to focus our lens on people who live in families that are not so commonly seen or heard, who may be less visible or respected in our culture. Some of them are not even acknowledged legally as families such as the families headed by gay or lesbian couples. Of course, there are many kinds of family situations we would like to see in the exhibit including families who have survived abuse or neglect, families who have dealt with the incarceration of a parent, and families who are homeless or facing extreme poverty. As time goes on, hopefully we will continue to expand this project to include images of more families who are marginalized by our society and kept outside the “norm.”

Our purpose in creating *In Our Family* was not simply to expand the definition of what makes a family, but to help fight oppression and move the viewers from intolerance to respect and understanding of differences. We are proud to present this new guide for schools (K–12) primarily created by teachers and edited by multicultural educator and activist, Phyllis Labanowski, as a resource for teachers and administrators who are bringing this exhibit to their school communities. We hope that this resource guide, along with the exhibit, will help teachers and students achieve these significant goals.

By working hard to make your schools safe and inclusive environments for learning, we know you will be helping all of your colleagues and students increase their sensitivity to these crucial issues in education. We hope that these activities, readings, and resources will help guide you to make the most of having the photo-text exhibit *In Our Family* at your school. We invite you to submit your ideas and activities so that this guide will continue to grow.

From the Editor

Phyllis Labanowski

Each of the educators who have contributed to this resource guide is committed to young people. But they are also committed to justice. They have graciously shared their curriculum ideas and activities with us. They have reflected upon their teaching experiences with the materials they submitted. All of the activities have been piloted, some for many years. So, we know they work.

The guide is designed so that you can pick and choose what will be most useful, given your audience, your school, and your own journey as a facilitator. I encourage you to experiment. Facilitating activities that expose privilege and oppression and explore hope and justice is an experiment. We are creating the road as we go. The road map for institutional change is complex; and the journey for each of us, given our own identities, is unique. I encourage you to find your way with this material.

The only way I have found to facilitate the “hard conversations” is to jump in and try. However, I have two critical supports in place. One is a circle of colleagues and friends who themselves possess the very identities I am nurturing as a facilitator. These relationships have been my greatest blessing.

The second support for this work is my belief that we must reserve the right to call a “do-over.” There are many times when an incident occurs or someone says something in a classroom and I do not know how to respond to it. After reflection on the situation (and calling

one of my supports) sometimes I realize that I didn’t handle it well. I go back to the group, share my reflections, and try again. Each time I have facilitated a “do-over,” it has been met with respect from young people and adults alike. Making mistakes, and learning from them, is an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Our work in schools, at the turn of the millennium, is full of challenges and full of joy; we’ve come a long way and have far to go. It is time to commit to “liberty and justice for all.” Imagine a young person coming to school, being embraced and loved, challenged and supported for being all of who they are. Imagine a school community that walks with deep respect for its members and lives the democratic principles upon which this nation was founded. This is our work. Whether we are in independent or public schools; whether we are adults or young people; we all have a responsibility in the transformation of our schools. It is time. I hope that the photo-text exhibit, *In Our Family*, and the accompanying activities and resources inspire you to grow, to contribute, and to shine in the light of justice!

Why Your School Should Not Create Its Own Version of *In Our Family*

By Peggy Gillespie

Many schools often think that it would be a wonderful idea for their students to create their own family exhibit, either to accompany a showing of *In Our Family*, or to replace it after *In Our Family* has left their school. As much as we, at Family Diversity Projects, wish that this idea would work to promote a safe school environment for all students, it actually is not a project we recommend doing at this point in time.

By asking students to bring in photos and write text about themselves and their families, such a project can backfire. It can make students either feel they have to “out” themselves and their families, even if they don’t feel safe doing so yet in their school; or they may feel they have to hide facts about their families when creating their family portraits. This activity can, just like the traditional family tree, be hurtful and painful for some students in your school. For example, a student who has a parent in jail, or a foster child who has been moving from home to home for many years, or a middle-schooler who is still afraid to tell his friends that his mother has a woman partner—they probably all would find this activity extremely anxiety-provoking and difficult. Even if the creation of a school exhibit is presented as a voluntary activity (i.e. not everyone is required to participate), it can be painful to students who feel that they can’t participate at all...or to those who choose to participate and then compare their family situation to their classmate’s families in such a public way.

This is, in fact, why *In Our Family* was created. By bringing in images and words of families that aren’t part of your school community, this exhibit allows for discussions about all kinds of families to happen in a safe way for all students. We hope that *In Our Family* will help bring about changes in your schools that will make all students feel safe and able to be open about their lives. In fact, we hope that the *In Our Family* exhibit becomes unnecessary and obsolete in the not too distant future. But for now, when safety is a crucial issue for all students—unless your school community has dealt extensively with all the potential issues that could be uncovered during such an activity—we hope that you will not create your own exhibit. (It is possible for teachers and staff to create an exhibit about their families, which could be an extraordinarily powerful complement to the *In Our Family* exhibit. A faculty/staff exhibit could be a way of modeling openness and tolerance to the student body.)



Hosting *In Our Family:* *Portraits of All Kinds of Families*

An independent school and
a public school reflect on their
experiences of hosting the exhibit



In Our Family Photo-Text Exhibit at Green Acres School (an independent school)

Marge Dimond, Director of Admissions, member of the Diversity Committee

Green Acres is a pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade independent school located in Rockville, Maryland, just north of Washington, D.C. From the school's outset in 1934, the valuing of diversity has been an integral part of its mission. We believe that all children, parents, and staff members at Green Acres should have the opportunity to share their gifts in a community that values and reflects them. Our current goals include continuing to increase the diversity in our student and staff population; heightening student, staff and parent sensitivity to diversity issues, promoting a curriculum that reflects all people and all histories; and fostering a sense of belonging among all families at Green Acres.

When we had the opportunity during the fall of 2000 to learn about the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit created by the Family Diversity Projects, we felt sure that it could be for us a valuable tool for furthering our school's diversity goals. We were pleased to be able to make a plan for hosting the exhibit at Green Acres the following spring.

During the months preceding the arrival of the *In Our Family* exhibit at Green Acres, we worked on setting the groundwork for using the exhibit productively during its time with us. We were fortunate at the same time to have available to us the video, *That's A Family*, produced by Women's Educational Media (see the bibliography in the Adoption section, page 107) which served as a valuable companion piece to the photo-text exhibit. We shared the video with staff, students, and members of our Board as a way of introducing our planned focus on the topic of family diversity. After the arrival of the photo-text exhibit, we hosted a "family night" for students and their families, during which we shared the *That's a Family* video, talked in small groups about our own families, and then created large multi-family banners portraying all of the families present at the family night event. These banners were then posted at school for the rest of the time that the *In Our Family* exhibit was with us.

Our staff preparation for *In Our Family* included regular communication about our plans starting at the point arrangements were first made. Staff members were

informed about the exhibit, including its history, its content, the time it would be with us, and our goals for its use at Green Acres. Several weeks before the arrival of the exhibit, we held a staff workshop focused on our planned use of the exhibit. We met both as a full staff group and then in grade group units to brainstorm ideas for sharing the exhibit with our students.

Teachers on all grade levels were expected to use the exhibit with their classes in an age-appropriate way. We found our staff members to be enthusiastic in their attitude and creative in their planning ideas. Following this staff meeting, teachers shared information about the *In Our Family* exhibit with their students.

Our parent community was also informed early on of our plans for hosting the *In Our Family* exhibit, mostly through our bi-weekly parent newsletter. Around a month before the arrival of the exhibit, the newsletter carried a full write-up about the exhibit and our plans for its use at Green Acres. We also posted flyers about the exhibit in various locations around the school. Parents were invited to come to view the exhibit during school hours and also during a number of special school events (e.g. our annual school auction and our annual international fair). In addition, we invited families we knew would be joining our school community for the following year, to come to view the exhibit.

Having the *In Our Family* exhibit at Green Acres was an inviting, affirming, and growth-producing experience for our whole school community. Children of all ages were

connected to the exhibit through teacher and student initiated projects of many kinds. During the time the exhibit was with us, we felt that we really got to know the families pictured and quoted on our walls. We decided to host the *In Our Family* exhibit again at Green Acres during the spring of 2003. We wanted to share this opportunity with students, staff and family members who were not yet with us during the exhibit's

first visit. For school community members who were with us last time around, we are looking forward to building on the positive experiences we had with the exhibit during its initial visit. For the families of our students, we believe that we can utilize the exhibit more extensively as a family resource; we are looking forward to working out some particular plans for doing this during the months ahead.

***In Our Family* Photo-Text Exhibit at Amherst Regional Middle School (a public school)**

Beth Wohlleb Adel, social studies teacher

We began as several teachers (a social studies teacher, an art teacher, and an English teacher) who are passionate about justice and wanted to create a meaningful multidisciplinary unit on the family, using the photo-text exhibit *In Our Family*. We embarked on the task of creating a unit that would help students understand their own lives, affirm the diversity of our culture and our community, empower students to discuss issues of discrimination and oppression, and inspire students to act against injustice in all forms. The photos from the exhibit *In Our Family* grabbed the students' interest, the interviews led them to deep questioning and discussion, and their own explorations brought them to new understandings of their family, their culture, and themselves. The unit also changed our classrooms: we became more like a family, more caring and deeply connected.

Multiple Views from the Beginning

During our first meeting, we looked around the room and realized that we, as a working group, were all white women. We knew that our curriculum would be stronger if we invited other members who could offer lenses from identities other than our own. We hired John Raible, an experienced teacher working full-time on a doctorate in multicultural education as a consultant. As an African American gay man who is an adoptive parent and an adoptee, his collaboration enriched our curriculum in multiple ways. John became an integral member of the curriculum development team, working intensely during the summer meetings and visiting as a guest speaker and classroom observer during the implementation of the unit. John's collaboration was essential for making the curriculum meet the needs of all students, and for implementing the unit with integrity.

Getting Adults On Board

As we began to plan a unit involving the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit, we knew that the support of adults in the community would make all the difference for the students, and that some adults in the community would have serious questions about the exhibit. Some adults would think that the photos of gay parents would be inappropriate, and some would wonder "where are all the normal families?" as if the stereotypical white heterosexual nuclear family was the only norm. If our students heard grumbling from teachers in the school, or went home to parents who denigrated the exhibit, their learning would suffer. We decided that the best way to gain support was to create open and honest discussions about the content of the unit and our reasons for teaching the unit. We did this with teachers, staff, administration and parents well in advance of teaching the unit.

Not Alone: Administrative Support

We were fortunate to have a very supportive principal from the beginning of our project. She agreed to field questions from other faculty, staff and parents. But we did not assume that she would have the detailed knowledge with which to field questions about our lessons. We had a series of meetings with her while developing the unit to keep her informed of our goals and focus questions so that she could address concerns in a way that supported our teaching. This support was key to the unit's success.

Cordial Invitations: Involving Other Faculty

We found the photo-text exhibit to be so rich, we wanted as many teachers to be involved as possible, but we knew that some teachers would feel overwhelmed by the exhibit, and some might be resistant. We decided that we would host the exhibit in the front lobby of the school, so that it would be accessible to all classrooms and visitors from the community. We approached our principal and requested that one faculty meeting be devoted to the family unit so that all faculty and staff would feel informed about the unit before it began. Teachers would have a chance to create their own lessons using *In Our Family* and we could address concerns. Our principal allowed us to make a presentation several months before the unit was to begin. We made a conscious effort to create an invitational atmosphere of collegial sharing. We described the photo-text exhibit and shared sample photographs and text. We described the content of our lessons. We invited other faculty and staff to share their ideas, and to use the photo-text exhibit in small or large ways in their lessons. Most importantly, we left plenty of time for questions and discussion, to make sure that we addressed all of their concerns. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Although most teachers on other teams did not end up using the exhibit in their lessons, we did not sense any opposition to the unit within the school. Students felt a sense of unity from the teachers that the exhibit was welcome and valuable.

Open Doors: Encouraging Family Participation

When we are harried and tired, it is sometimes tempting to close the doors of our classroom and focus only on our students. But we knew that creating a unit on the family without the participation of family would send a contradictory message. We flung our doors wide open, inviting family participation at many levels. Several weeks before the unit was to begin, we sent a bilingual letter to the families of our students describing the upcoming

unit on the family. (See page 14 for the version in English.) Our objective was to invite parents to become involved in the unit, not to present "our unit" to them. We carefully worded the letter to be inviting and celebratory, not to appear defensive or to invite controversy. We described the photo-text exhibit as a beautiful resource and our lessons as rigorous explorations of the family in the twenty-first century. We emphasized that our unit would affirm all families, so that parents would have a context for questions that students might bring home about gay parents, mental illness, or other facets of our diverse culture. We invited parents to join us by sharing family history and stories, favorite family recipes, and other gifts from past gener-



Dyton/Grogan family

ations with their children. We asked for volunteers to come into our classrooms. We invited them to a family potluck celebration during which the students would present their work at the conclusion of the unit. We acknowledged that families sometimes bring up difficult emotions, and encouraged parents to stay in contact with questions or concerns. When they did, we thanked them and addressed their concerns. Through seeing families as our resource, we enjoyed tremendous support from the community at large.

On the Same Page: Multidisciplinary Teaching

Our school is organized into multidisciplinary teams, each team including one math teacher, one English teacher, one social studies teacher, one science teacher, and one teacher from the arts. The teachers on our team are diverse in their passions; not all of the teachers on our team had the same level of enthusiasm about the unit. We first tried to inspire the reluctant teachers on our



Riga/Strazzero family

team, which was met with limited success. We then decided that it was better to allow teachers to decide on their own level of involvement, rather than force an uncomfortable fit. Some teachers on our team spent six weeks on the unit, some spent four days, some not at all. Some of our assignments dovetailed together, and some did not. We found that it was much more important to share a level of respect for the unit than to all spend the same exact number of lessons studying family. At the beginning of the school year, our team decided on a basis of cooperation: we agreed to all recognize the exhibit *In Our Family* when it was first displayed in the front lobby, and we agreed to all participate in a final celebration, and we agreed on the date of the celebration so that we could facilitate students to complete assignments that could be displayed for the guests. We all agreed to respect and affirm diversity, and to address any intolerant remarks from students or adults. And we agreed to devote team meeting time to prepare and facilitate the unit.

That's Personal: Modeling Disclosure

When first seeing the photographs, it seems an obvious assignment to have students display their own families in pictorial and verbal forms. For many students, this is an empowering, high interest learning experience. But for many others, this is terrifying. It means choosing whether to lie about your family or reveal details that are not safe to reveal, and suffer the teasing when the teachers are not around to protect you. We would never want a student to feel forced to display their gay parents or sister with a disability if they felt that they would then be harassed by classmates.

We discussed this issue before our family unit began: how could we create an atmosphere where students felt empowered to share their families on their terms, in a safe environment? We began to prepare our classrooms

from the very beginning of the year. We made sure that disrespect in any form was not tolerated, no matter what we were studying. We set a tone of personal sharing by including details about our personal lives to be integrated into our teaching. As the unit began, we committed to share pictures and stories about our own families, and to invite consultants, administrators and guidance counselors to come into our classrooms to share their families. Before the students were asked to produce a single assignment, they had already heard their teachers and counselors reveal their own struggles with discrimination, with cancer, and with homophobia. They learned that one teacher had recently adopted a child from foster care with her partner, one teacher had two birth sons who each had different fathers and one foster son, one teacher had stepchildren, one teacher was a single mother after her husband died, and only one teacher lived in a household with a mother, father and their birthchildren. John Raible, our consultant, visited to model a way of charting his family that included both birthparents and adoptive parents in a non-traditional family tree. Most importantly, the students heard their classmates ask intelligent, respectful questions and comments while their teacher was disclosing personal information.

As we asked students to create pictorial and verbal representations of their families, we ensured that each assignment made the student feel empowered to reveal only what they wanted. We showed diverse forms of charting a family, in addition to the traditional family tree activity (which should not be done as part of any school project because it can create discomfort and pain for many students), so that no one would feel that their family structure "didn't fit" or that they should leave out members not included by law, such as the birthparents of adopted children. We displayed family portraits by artists, some of which included deceased family members, or used symbols instead of faces. We allowed students a choice in final projects, ranging from family cookbooks—including family stories—to family histories. We closely monitored the classroom atmosphere throughout the unit, and remained responsive to individual requests for alternative assignments. For example, one assignment asked students to research the meanings of their names, and then to use this research to write poetry around their names. We received a phone call from the student's aunt and legal guardian. The student had been named after an abusive father, who now was not a part of his life. Obviously, this assignment would

bring the student more pain than academic achievement. We created an alternative assignment, and thanked the student's aunt for staying involved. We found that activities which gave students multiple ways of describing families, such as "Where I'm From" worked well for all students. (See Lesson Plans and Activities section.)

We Did It! Celebrating Our Achievements

Our final celebration was the best part of our unit. Our celebration gave students a reason to really care about their work, knowing that it would be displayed for the entire school in the cafeteria. It gave parents an opportunity to be involved, and to share a part of their heritage by bringing in a favorite dish. It gave the administration an opportunity to see the students at their best. Most importantly, it gave the students an opportunity to shine, displaying and performing their work in front of a large audience.

We planned the celebration months ahead of time and advertised it widely among students, their families, the faculty and staff, the local press, and the community at

large. We worked with the custodial staff to transform the school cafeteria into a celebratory but serious gallery atmosphere. We displayed all student work from our multidisciplinary family unit in an aesthetically pleasing manner. We prepared welcoming speeches, student performances, readings, and student-led tours. When the parents arrived there was an air of excitement, pride, and love. It was one of those rare times that school and family intersected, with mutual respect and admiration.

We were also sure to carve out time for the teachers on the team to celebrate with each other. Creating a unit as powerful as this one on the family is no small task, and it is easy to focus only on what we should have done differently. We needed a time to stand back and fill ourselves with pride.

On Their Own Terms: Empowering Adoptive and Foster Children

As we began our unit, I had no idea how much I didn't know about adoption. I knew that we had many students

Carlos' Story

Carlos was a student with a terrific smile, generous spirit, lots of energy, and learning disabilities. He rarely did his homework and his grades plummeted. He didn't seem to worry about his grades, and we worried that he didn't see himself as a "school type of guy" and that he would start focusing his energies elsewhere. At a parent-teacher conference, we met Carlos's grandmother and aunt, but we did not meet either of his parents. We never heard about his mother, but Carlos clearly loved his father, and would speak of him in glowing terms. We wished that we could find a way to meet him.

As the family unit began, we were aware that the unit might be hard on Carlos. We knew that he had experienced a great deal of loss in his family. We planned a family celebration to conclude the unit, and invited families to join us for a potluck and student presentations. We feared that Carlos's family would be unable to attend, and that this would dampen Carlos's efforts to complete his work. Instead, Carlos completed all of his assignments for the family unit. Several days before the end of the unit, Carlos bounced into class.

"I can't wait for you to meet my father!"

"I can't wait either. When are we going to meet him?"

"You know, at the thing...the time when all the parents come at the end of the family unit!"

When the family celebration came, we posted all of the student's work around the walls of the cafeteria. We organized students to lead tours of student work. We asked some students to read their poetry for the entire audience. We gathered in the cafeteria and parents began bringing their dishes and seeing their children's work. Carlos couldn't stay in his seat. We made an exception and allowed him to go to the front of the building to await his father. He returned, jubilant, dragging his father's hand. He brought his father to see all of his work, and we excitedly met the man Carlos had been praising since September. It was the first time Carlos had seemed proud of his work, his family, and his place as an academically successful student.



Margosian family

who were adopted, who seemed to be perfectly well-adjusted, happy and thriving teens. I knew that I should keep in mind that when I described family, I needed to be inclusive of adoptive families, and include examples of them in my unit. I knew to avoid language like “real parents” that imply biological families are better, and use terms such as “adoptive parents” and “birthparents” to affirm all of the people who took part in caring for the adopted child. I knew that we should think twice about doing a unit on genetics during the family unit, as this might implicitly place biological families as the “standard” and leave adopted kids feeling left out of the exciting discovery of hereditary traits. I knew that traditional family tree assignments often cause pain and confusion to children whose families include multiple caretakers including birthparents, foster parents, adoptive parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. I knew that children may not want to disclose their adoptive or foster care identities. I thought that if I was careful to hold up adoptive families as valuable that the family unit would be empowering to adoptive kids. I did not know, however, how deeply some adopted students would be feeling a sense of loss and confusion, and I did not know how freshly some adolescents would be feeling this pain, even if their adoption had taken place as infants.

When children reach puberty, they are often fascinated and confused by the rapid changes in their bodies and their identity. Children who are living with their biological families can ask their parents questions about how their bodies and interests changed, and they can observe the adult bodies their parents developed into. This provides a kind of a “road map” or orientation in a bewildering time of rapid change. Adopted kids, who had integrated their adoptive identity without problems, often feel new feelings of loss and of being lost. In addition, most adolescents are in the midst of creating an

identity separate from their parents. Many adolescents claim that they think they are adopted because they feel so different from their parents. As adopted adolescents go through this normal stage of development, they sometimes feel that their adoptive parents are so different from them that they shouldn't have been adopted. If they have no memories of their birthparents, they are free to fantasize about how perfect life would have been with these parents. Children who are living in foster care or were adopted as older children sometimes have even more anger and unresolved feelings about their families.

Of course, each adopted student is different, and many students freely talk about adoption without pain. But teachers of all ages should be aware that students who are adopted can have strong feelings of loss that can surface and resurface at any time, even if the student had previously integrated an adoptive identity without difficulty, and even if the teacher is careful to value adoptive families. I learned to listen and watch my children carefully. I kept communication lines open through parent contact, journaling, and private informal “check-ins.” At times when I did not foresee the pain involved in an assignment for a particular child, I confirmed feelings and provided alternative assignments that did not compromise academic rigor, but allowed the child a break from his/her pain.

What About the Hard Times? Recognizing Family Struggles

Seeing all of the engaging photographs and reading the captivating interviews from *In Our Family*, we found it very easy for us to celebrate diversity, and to pretend that all families are happy. It was too easy for us to forget that some aspects of family should not be celebrated, and should not be ignored, either. We went out of our way to point out that the families in the exhibit, as the diverse as they are, represented only a few of the many families that are currently struggling with difficult issues. We reminded the students that the families in the exhibit agreed to be displayed in front of thousands of strangers, so if they were not comfortable being portrayed in the exhibit, they would not likely agree to be photographed. In class we brainstormed the many issues that might cause a family to refuse to be interviewed: domestic abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, divorce, death, teenage pregnancy, and many more. Confirming that there are many, many families that confront difficult

issues, we introduced the students to the student assistance counselor and encouraged the students to seek her out if they knew of families facing difficult issues, or if they were having a hard time themselves. If we did not go out of our way to discuss this, students might come away with a feeling that most families are happy, except for theirs. They should not feel alone.



Rhodes family

Hope's Story: "How my life could have been, should have been, would have been"

"I hate the family unit. Please let me do an alternative assignment!" We had expected that we might get this reaction from children of conservative families who were offended by photographs of gay and lesbian parents and their children. But we did not expect this reaction from Hope. Hope was a strong, independent and articulate African American seventh grader who was adopted by two white lesbian women. As we prepared to teach the family unit, we thought a lot about Hope and how to create a unit that affirmed her family experience. Before the unit, we talked with Hope's two mothers, who were fully supportive of the unit. As we started the unit, we discussed examples of multiracial families and families headed by gay men and lesbians with an atmosphere of respect. However, within several days, we received a letter from Hope. In spite of our great intentions of empowerment, the unit was bringing her pain.

"When I look at portraits of other families, I think about how my life could have been, how my life should have been, would have been, and my life compared to their lives. This makes me feel uneasy, and feel regret, and I should not have to endure that emotional hurt... I do not like to think about family, especially mine... The questions about family history I cannot do. I will not do my adoptive parents' history, because although it is my family, it is not my history. At this time in life, along with many adopted kids, I do not wish to claim our adoptive parents. I sometimes like to imagine other lives. I sometimes pretend I am an orphan or a foster kid. These are the years that teenagers go through an identification crisis."

Hope went on to suggest alternative assignments and activities including writing about fictional families. We met with Hope and created alternative assignments, never forcing her to endure pain, but insisting on high academic standards. Her alternative learning contract included her own suggestions as well as some of our own: interviewing an African American man who was adopted by white parents (John Raible, who consulted with Family Diversity Projects on this curriculum project, volunteered to be interviewed by Hope). Hope was interested in our suggestions and had long conversations with John.

As we watched Hope struggle with her identity throughout the family unit, we noticed that she was drawn more and more to the photo-text exhibit. In art class she spent hours pouring over the photos, looking for models to use for her own drawings. In social studies she read through the exhibit text to get ideas for her own fictional families. We began to see that the photos and text were not hurtful when Hope felt empowered to use them in her own way. We learned that even though our lessons were created with the best intentions to empower families like Hope's, the most empowering situation for Hope was to create her own way of learning about families.

Below is the English version of the bilingual letter to the families of our students describing the upcoming unit on the family.

December, 2001

Dear Team A families,

Curriculum: We are excited to announce that Team A is embarking on an integrated unit which studies the concept of family. This curriculum is unique in that Team A teachers are using a community resource—Family Diversity Projects, Inc.—which provides the teachers with photographs and texts depicting a wide variety of families, as well as a photo-text exhibit in the ARMS lobby.

Goals: The objectives of this unit are integrated across art, English, math, science, and social studies, and aim to affirm every student's family. Our guiding questions across all content areas are broad, conceptual questions, which link this unit to other curricula throughout the school year: *Who am I? What is family? What is family?* Teachers in each content area will explore more specific questions through various classroom activities.

Privacy: We maintain heightened awareness that the topic of family may have very different meanings for each student and each family. We, by no means, expect to breach any privacy issues, and we stay on alert to make this a safe curriculum.

Dates: The unit will last from approximately January 2 through January 25, 2002, which is the last day of the quarter. There will be follow up curriculum in the new quarter in many classes, including health class which is Team A's integrated studies block during third quarter. The photo-text exhibit will be on display in the ARMS lobby from January 2 through January 18, 2002. We invite you to drop by to view the exhibit.

Family Involvement: As always, we encourage you to be involved in your youngster's learning experiences. Some ways that you can support your seventh grader include:

- Affirming diversity in our own families and in our community.
- Noticing the many ways that families change.
- Looking for schedules of events, assignments, and project to be sent home over the winter break and the first week of January.
- Checking homework calendars for each class.
- Helping students gain accurate information about their families through stories, photos, documents and more.
- Coming to our family celebration where we will exhibit our learning and our artwork, on **January 24** from **1:20–2:20** in the afternoon.

We will be sending home more information in January. If you have any questions or concerns, please call Mary Cavalier at 549-9850.

We hope you have a pleasant holiday and a peaceful New Year.

Sincerely

Team A Teachers: *Patty Bode, Dorry Gardner, Esther Haskell, Gale Kuhn, Rob Lord, Beth Wohlleb*



Preparing to Host the Exhibit in Your School: Staff Development

Guidelines

Administrative support is clearly the ideal situation for schools hosting *In Our Family*. When that support exists, the potential to provide staff development training is far more likely. Facilitated activities and dialogue about the identities raised by the families in the photo-text exhibit help to develop each educator's capacity to facilitate similar activities and discussions with students. A mixed facilitation team is recommended, representative of demographics in your school community.

If your school is just beginning to explore diversity or does not have a lot of time to dedicate to staff development, we'd suggest the following.

- Facilitate one of the activities designed for students in this guide. *Creating Families* (See Lesson Plans and Activities section, page 33) is an easy activity to facilitate, one that explores "family" and provokes powerful discussion.

If your school is willing to devote several staff meetings to explore more deeply the issues and identities raised by the photo-text exhibit, we'd suggest the following.

- Facilitate any of the activities designed for students.
- Facilitate either (or both) of the activities included in this section: *Respecting Our Human Differences: Creating Inclusive Language* and *Who's Got the Power?* Created for staff development, these activities inspire educators to move beyond a "holidays and heroes" approach to diversity and further develop the capacity for school communities to understand difference by exploring power, privilege, and discrimination.
- Facilitate any of the activities designed for students which explores an issue that is salient in your school at the time you are hosting the exhibit.

Respecting Our Human Differences: Creating Inclusive Language

created by Phyllis Labanowski

There is tremendous power implicit in the language we use. This activity offers school communities the opportunity to examine biased language that is used in daily communication and to identify and become accustomed to using a more inclusive vocabulary. This activity generates important discussion and can help to create a common vocabulary among educators, identified by many as essential to an inclusive school culture.

Learning Outcomes

Participating educators will:

- identify biased language commonly used in communication and teaching.
- identify and practice using language that is inclusive.
- understand the way in which the English language reinforces inequity.

Materials and Resources

Index cards with each of the biased words written on them. See attached word list.

Process

From the beginning, this activity needs to be framed as an activity that will challenge educators to think about the power of words.

Divide into small groups with 3–4 people in each group. Give each group a packet with at least 7 or 8 biased words. They will need about 20 minutes to discuss their packet of words. Use the following questions as a guide:

Why is the word biased? Who does it offend or target?

Obviously these words can offend everyone. However if a word is biased against an identity someone doesn't possess, they are generally unaware of the degree to which the word can be offensive. If the word targets an identity someone does possess, they are generally aware of it and are much more sensitive to its use.

What do you know about the origins of the word?

Sometimes educators know the history of a word and this can add depth to the discussion.

What word is currently/commonly used instead?

The majority of the words in this activity, identified as biased, have been replaced by other words which are not considered biased, i.e. *policeman* has become *police officer*. These "new" words are often created by people in the identity group that is targeted; they are the people who most often use the unbiased word. Let participants know that some words or phrases are so biased that we should consider eliminating them from our vocabulary, i.e. *the blind leading the blind*.

*Educators.
Also appropriate
for 10th–12th grade.
(1 to 1 1/2 hours)*

If a small group comes across a word that really stumps them, they should bring it back to the large group. Each packet of words should include at least one, particularly difficult, biased word. (I have placed an asterisk next to the words in the word list that have again and again stumped groups that I work with.)

After each small group has discussed the words in their packet, invite them to report back to the large group. Each small group should share the biased words and the "new" words they came up with, words that they agree are commonly used instead. Groups can be encouraged to share their discussion about biased words that were particularly challenging. They can also be invited to ask the large group to discuss any biased words that stumped them.

Discussion Questions:

Who benefits from the cumulative impact of these biased words?

Do you see a pattern with regards to which groups are targeted by these words and which groups are exempt?

What is the cumulative impact of biased language use on the different members of our school community?

What might the educational impact be if we committed ourselves as educators to unbiased language use?

Facilitator's Notes

Sometimes people think that this activity takes "political correctness" too far. However, I take seriously the task that educators face, that of creating inclusive school communities. How can students and adults feel welcomed and comfortable in our schools when commonly used language in the school's culture, is rife with biases, that generally targets already marginalized groups?

Language is not static. It changes over time (as does culture) and the language that we use in daily conversation will continue to transform. The unbiased words that I have suggested come from the many conversations I have had with educators and with people from the different identity groups. I have also read articles about unbiased language usage and have included some of these articles to make the facilitation of this activity easier.

Resources

Gordon, L. What do we say when we hear "faggot?" In *Rethinking Schools Ltd.* (1994). *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice.* Milwaukee, WI: Author.

Moore, R. Racism in the English language. In Lee, E., Menkart, D. and Okazawa-Rey, M. (1997). *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development.* Washington, D.C.: Networks of Educators on the Americas.

National Stigma Clearinghouse. Practical guide to non-sexist language. (source unknown)

Elsasser/Robinson family



THE WORD LIST

Feel free to add others words typically used in your community.

Biased vocabulary

Inclusive vocabulary

illegitimate child

child

Dear parents

Dear families

traditional families

There is no such thing as a traditional family in the United States. Less than 10% of all families fit the stereotype of "traditional," that is that they are straight, married couples living with their biological children; with a mother at home taking care of children and a father working outside of the home.

minority

people of color

This is a code-word intended to create an illusion of reality; people of color are actually the world's majority.

non-white

people of color

It is never a good practice to refer to someone or their group by what they are not. It's like calling a woman a "non-male."

foreign

international

*American

people from the United States

This is a particularly challenging word; people from the "Americas" take offense to the United States' ownership of the label. In addition, there is a long history of legal challenges that reserved American citizenship for white people of European descent.

*legal alien

immigrant/migrant/new citizens

*the projects

neighborhood

I include this word here since it is a code-word that refers to the neighborhoods where people who are poor and people of color live. Why is it that I live in a neighborhood and poor people and people of color live in the projects? Why is it that no one ever refers to my home as middle-income housing yet people refer to low-income housing in urban areas?

That's ghetto!

?

This phrase should be eliminated as a put down.

gypped

ripped off

*blackmail

extort

*blacklist

?

black sheep

?

This list of words that use "black" to describe something as negative, goes on and on. I've selected just a few. Compare these words to those that use white to describe, as in "white lie" often defined as a small lie that protects someone from being hurt.

slave

enslaved African

mulatto

a person of mixed race heritage/biracial/multiracial

This word should be eliminated from use since it equates being of mixed-race heritage with being like a mule (a sterile animal due to the cross-breeding of its parents).

*macho

?

Why do we take a word from Spanish to identify a male with stereotypical male attributes?

Do we assume that only Latinos have patriarchies?

Spanish

Latino/Latina/Hispanic

(referring to a Spanish-speaking person)

*Indian-giver

This is another word that should be eliminated from use. Historically, it is the Europeans who signed treaties with Native Americans and broke their word.

sit Indian style

sit cross-legged

Indian

Native American/American Indian/First Nations People/
indigenous/named by their tribe or nation

* Words in the word list that have stumped groups that I work with.

scalp (a ticket)	resell a ticket
low man on the totem pole	the lowest in the pecking order
Oriental	Asian, Asian American/a person of Asian descent/Asian Pacific American/name of one's nation of origin
Jew down (a price)	negotiate
JAP (Jewish American Princess)	a young Jewish woman
*the blind leading the blind <i>This phrase should be eliminated.</i>	
sped. kid	a student with special education needs
special ed. and regular ed. <i>Why do we create a distinction? We are responsible for the education of all students.</i>	general education
psycho or crazy	a person with mental illness
real parents or real children	birthparents/biological children
artificial insemination	alternative insemination
That's so gay. <i>This phrase should be eliminated as a put down.</i>	
you guys	people (not "you people"), y'all
*tomboy	an active girl
old wive's tale	superstitious folklore
woman's intuition <i>Everyone has intuition.</i>	intuition
suffragette <i>The people who fought for women's rights called themselves "suffragists" yet others called them "suffragettes" as a way to make little of their work; and when one considers that men were in the movement, this biased vocabulary seems silly.</i>	suffragist
heroine	hero
stewardess	flight attendant
manmade	synthetic, artificial
mankind	humanity, humankind
sportsmanship	fair play
freshman	first year student
bachelor's degree	undergraduate degree
master's degree	graduate degree
chairman	chair, chairperson
spokesman	spokesperson
congressman	member of Congress, representative
fireman	fire fighter
policeman	police officer
mailman	mail carrier
male nurse	nurse

Who's Got the Power? Understanding Our Group Level Identities and Institutional Oppression

adapted for schools by Phyllis Labanowski
(based on an activity taught by Dr. Guillermo Cuéllar of Elsie Y Cross Associates)

*"This activity had a profound effect on me. I had no idea that I had any power.
We should do this with everyone in my school."* —white, female teacher

This is one of the most powerful activities I have facilitated with educators. It is the foundational understanding needed for equity to exist; without understanding and addressing power inequities, multicultural education will be at best, a superficial intervention. It is also one of the most difficult concepts for dominating group members to understand. I use this activity and the discussions that it engenders over and over again with groups, since it is a never-ending source of exploration, investigation and understanding.

This activity is designed for educators and other adults. There are adaptations that need to be made when doing this activity with students. See: *In/Out/Ahead/Behind: Who's Got the Power* by Beth Wohlleb Adel, middle school social studies teacher in the section *In Our Family: Lesson Plans and Activities (K–12)*, page 58.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will

- explore the differences in perception that we bring to our experiences at the individual, group and institutional levels.
- understand that institutions discriminate against and privilege individuals based on group level identities.
- understand the complexity of identity development by exploring one's own multiple group memberships.

Target audience:
educators,
adults

(3 hours)

First we must acknowledge that anyone who lives in our society and works in schools, must function on three levels simultaneously:

Individual Level

We are all unique individuals. It is our work as educators to help each and every young person with whom we work, to reach their full human potential.

Group Level

We are simultaneously members of various groups (as a result of our race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, abilities, language, religion, age, etc.). These group level identities inform who we are and who others perceive us to be. We are born with many of these identities (skin color) and may choose others (religious affiliations). Some of our group level identities are visible (gender) and others are invisible (sexual orientation). And some are salient (age) at different times in our lives. Some of us are given unearned privileges (whites) and some of us are discriminated against (people of color, gay and lesbian individuals, etc.) as a result of our group level identities. Group level identities are differences among us upon which our

Materials and Resources

Name tags, flip chart paper and a space to hang two pages side-by-side. Large index cards with the dominating and excluded group identities written on each card (see list on page 24). Facilitators should make up the index cards in advance. There will be 18 index cards in all if you plan to explore each of the nine identities that I suggest.

Process

Explain to participants that this activity is designed to develop the capacity of educators to help students navigate the complexity of identity development by examining power and the impact it has on our lives.

society places tremendous importance. These distinctions are used to privilege some and to discriminate against others.

Which groups memberships are salient to students in our school? (People often name: gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, sports-related identities, etc.)

Institutional Level

It is a political reality that our institutions privilege some of us and discriminate against others. Answering the following questions as a school community can be useful in making this clear.

What groups tend to be successful in our school?

Which groups tend not to be?

What policies, practices and social norms benefit the groups that tend to be successful and disadvantage those who tend not to be?

The group level and institutional level are critical for educators to understand if we are to address issues of equity and social justice in schools. It is also difficult for some educators "to get." (I have noticed that it is often difficult for privileged group members to get. Those who are discriminated against are often forced to understand each of these levels and how they function, in order to survive.) I begin exploring power relationships through a group membership that most educators will agree is not difficult to discuss, one that is no longer discriminated against: handedness. **Ask:**

How many of you are right-handed?

Left-handed?

Is anyone truly ambidextrous?

Hang two flip charts side-by-side where participants can see the information that is generated and captured. Record responses to the following questions on the two separate flip charts. Translate what participants offer into general statements that could be applied to other identities that you will be exploring later on in this activity. **Ask:**

Right-handed people, what is it like to be in a right-handed world?

Record the responses on a flip chart.

Left-handed people, what is it like to be in a right-handed world?

Record the responses on the other flip chart.

Facilitator's Note: Make sure people use authentic voice: right-handed people speak about their right-handed experience and left-handed people speak about their left-handed experience. If, in the rare instance, there are no left-handed people in the room, note their invisibility and ask people who have relationships with left-handed people to share what they have observed about their children, partners, siblings, etc. There are rarely participants who are ambidextrous.

The lists usually included things like:

LEFT HANDED

Very aware of it

Frustrating

Limited access

Stereotyped, often negatively

Requests we make are ignored by "others"

Can be dangerous

RIGHT HANDED

Don't notice it

Life is good; it's easy

The world is designed with us as "norm"

Can do whatever we want

Ignore "others"

Ask:

Does being right-handed or left-handed really make a difference in how one is treated in our society?

Some identities powerfully impact our lives, how we are treated by others, our access to resources, our freedom to determine where we live and what we will do for a living. Other identities are merely differences among us that may at times pose only minor impositions on our lives. Handedness is a difference that most people will agree is not a difficult identity to possess, navigate or negotiate.



Balsley family

Ask:

What identities do make a difference in our society?

Either the participants can generate or the facilitator can provide, the following list of identities. (Groups will usually generate a list that includes most or all of these.)

Gender	Ability (mental/physical/social)
Religion	Language
Race	Sexual orientation
Ethnicity	Age
socioeconomic class	Size/appearance

Ask:

How do we know that these identities make a difference in how someone is treated?

Does anyone have a story to illustrate a time when possessing one of these identities affected how you or someone you know was treated?

Ask for a few people to share their stories in the large group. Then have everyone share a story in dyads or triads. (Most people will share stories about being discriminated against; a few people may have stories about the ways in which they were privileged. The latter rarely occurs and this can be noted when the large group reconvenes.)

It is now time to explore the group level identities that are either privileged or discriminated against by institutions. This is not an easy conversation for school staff to have, but it is essential if we are to create inclusive school communities where each student can reach their full academic potential. For the next part of this activity, you will be using pairs of index cards, which will be placed around each of the flip chart papers. Within each identity i.e. race, one group of people, whites, are privileged in our society and the rest of our human family will generally be excluded or discriminated against, people of color. Whites are given unearned privileges and power by our institutions; whites possess a **dominating** identity. So the index card that says "whites" will be placed over the flip chart with information generated by right-handed people. And, since people of color are **excluded** and often **subordinated** by our institutions, the index card that says "people of color" will be placed over the flip chart with the information generated by left-handed people.

Now read the lists out loud as if they were generated to explore "race" instead of "handedness." The data that was generated by right-handed people is very similar to the experience of whites in our society and the experience of people of color is similar to the data that was generated by left-handed people. This is often shocking to the group you are facilitating, but it brilliantly reveals the fundamental power relationship between us as people, based on race as a group level identity.

Take each pair of index cards that name another group level identity and place them near the flip chart on the right or left depending on whether the identity is **dominating** or **excluded**. For example, ethnicity: the index card that says "European Americans" will be placed next to the index card that says "whites" since they too are a **dominating** identity. And, the index card that says "African American, Native American, Asian American, Latinos" will be placed next to the index card that says "people of color" since they too are **excluded** identities. Explain to participants that the full depth and breath of our humanity is ignored and that we are forced into categories and asked to check boxes that identify us for being privileged or for discrimination. We live in a society that creates and maintains categories that are unnatural to our shared human condition. We are likely to internalize the dominance, believing that we are superior. We may also be likely to internalize the exclusion, believing that we are inferior. In our society our human identities are not merely full of differences; the differences are categorized by institutions which privilege some and discriminate against others.

Go through as many of the identities listed on page 24 as time allows, placing the index cards with their correct flip chart list. Read the entire list that participants initially generated to explore "handedness" the first few times you introduce a new group level identity. It is uncanny how the experiences listed for "handedness" reveal some degree of truth for each of the other identities. After a while participants get the hang of this part of the activity and you can spend more time trying to understand which groups are privileged and which groups are excluded. You can also begin to explore vocabulary that staff can use to talk about each of the group memberships, respectfully. For example, I never name a group by what they are not, such as "non-native English speakers" or by a term used to maintain the false superiority of one group, for example, "minorities"

Here is the list of identities that I usually include when I am working in schools. These are the identities that are most often identified by educators as being salient to students in schools.

Identity	Dominating Group	Excluded Group	Oppression
1. race	whites	people of color	racism
2. ethnicity	European Americans	African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos/as, etc.	Eurocentrism
3. gender	male	female	sexism
4. sexual orientation	straight	gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning	heterosexism
5. socioeconomic class	people with more than enough or enough	people with less than enough	classism
6. ability	typical	people with disabilities	ableism
7. language	native English speakers	bilingual/multilingual speakers	linguicism
8. religion	Christian	Jewish, Muslim, Atheist, etc.	Anti-Semitism (Note that we only have a name for institutionalized oppression against Jews.)
9. age	adults	young people	adulthood
optional... 10. size <i>Appearance (define what is beautiful)</i>	<i>thin, beautiful</i>	<i>heavy, etc.</i>	<i>sizeism</i>

instead of people of color. The conversations around the construction of respectful vocabulary is rich but often intense. **Ask:**

How did we get here?

And why are we still here?

Discuss with participants that each of us is socialized to play out the roles we are taught in our dominating and excluded identities. We actually perpetuate these power relationships, often unconsciously. Do note that these power relationships are consciously manipulated as well. The power relationship of one group to the other is based on the belief that dominating group members have institutionalized; that is that some of us are **innately superior** and others of us are **innately inferior**. Those in power get to determine which groups get placed in which categories. It is also important to acknowledge the power of education; multicultural education seeks to transform the power structures that have created these systems of oppression and their presence in schools.

Explain that the oppression created by institutionalized discrimination, against whole groups of people, is often referred to as "the isms." **Ask:**

What are the "isms?"

Go back over the identities that you are exploring and name the systems of oppression that are created by wide-spread discrimination. These systems of oppression categorize one group as innately superior and therefore, deserving of policies, practices, laws etc., that create access, benefits and privileges and categorize everybody else as innately inferior, in order to deny these groups access, benefits and privileges. (See chart above.)

Many young people in school cannot develop into their full human potential because society and in fact, school systems, perpetuate these oppressions. **Ask:**

How does the institutional experience of being privileged or discriminated against affect students at our school?

The final part of this activity explores the complexity of identity development by examining the multiple group

memberships that each of us possesses. Our challenge as educators is to be clear about who we are, how we are perceived by others, and how we interpret and respond to our students, their parents, and our colleagues, based on our group level identities.

Figure a ratio of their dominating identities to their excluded identities. Ask participants to write this as a numeric ratio on a name tag that you hand out. Model for participants how to count up their identities using your own identities.

My dominating identities:

race = I am white.

ethnicity = I am of European descent.

sexual orientation = I am straight.
(I don't ask anyone to come out publicly because it may not be safe in some school settings, although I reveal my sexual orientation as I demonstrate this.)

socioeconomic class = Although I am from a working class background I am now middle class.

abilities = I do not have any disabilities.

language = I am a native English-speaker.

religion = I was raised Catholic.

age = I am an adult
(which is really the issue in schools for students who experience adulthood).

My excluded identities:

gender = I am female.

My ratio is 8/1. I have eight dominating identities and one excluded identity. Although I only possess one excluded identity, I have spent most of my life tracking transgressions against females. Before completing this activity as a participant, I had very little understanding about the impact of my dominating identities on my perceptions of the world and more importantly on my perceptions of my students and their families.

I fit into the boxes fairly easily because these categories were designed to privilege most of my group memberships. This part of the activity is often difficult for people who possess excluded identities, since the categories were designed to discriminate against them. Because of this, excluded group members are made to choose boxes that don't fit because the excluded groups are "everybody else" grouped together because they are "not dominant," i.e. gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender

and questioning. Sometimes the categories for "others" don't really make sense. In some cases people who possess excluded identities may need to use fractions or decimals to capture their real identities, as in the case of people who are multiracial. If a person is born of parents who are both dominating and excluded, the child's identity is difficult to locate in an either/or system. They are both.

Facilitator's Note: Let's face it, it is not a pleasant experience, to categorize ourselves into the very boxes that education tries to dismantle. Yet, this part of the activity is where educators with multiple dominating identities, may for the first time, realize just how much power they have access to. Many people with multiple dominating identities have never thought about power in this way before and they may be reluctant to accept the information presented. It will take time for participants to understand these dynamics. The best way to address your colleagues reluctance to believe that these power relationships exist is to suggest that we already have collected "data" about our excluded identities, in fact most of us are extremely knowledgeable about the transgressions against these identities. After all we have been keeping track of power dynamics all our lives around gender if we are women, around religion if we are Muslim, around race if we are people of color, around sexual orientation if we are gay or lesbian, etc. You can also ask participants to collect "data" on other identities, making observations about how groups interact. I encourage educators to observe behaviors, to withhold judgment, and to notice the impact of group interactions and group level identities. Eventually patterns will emerge if participants collect enough "data." These patterns at the group level will help inform the power dynamics present in interactions in classrooms, hallways, meetings, events, etc.

It is also important to caution educators against the dangers of **group-level stereotyping**; believing and acting on the assumption that all members of a group are "x" just because they are members of that group. **Group level generalizations** on the other hand are useful observations that allow educators to see and respectfully discuss patterns that do exist for identity groups without stereotyping all members of that group. It is an important distinction to make.



Akamatsu/Gatsik family

Discussion questions:

- Talk about your **excluded** identities.
- Talk about your **dominating** identities.
- Which are salient for you? Which are not? Why?
- How can this knowledge inform your work as an educator?
- How do power relationships play out in your classroom?
- Think about how you work with/relate to a student, parent or colleague with similar identities to your own. How do the similarities between you impact your working together/relationship?
- Think about how you work with/relate to a student, parent or colleague with different identities. How do the differences impact your working together/relationship?
- How might power relationships affect our dynamics as a group of adult educators?

Resources

- Howard, G. (1999). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. New York: Teachers College Press. Gary Howard reflects on his personal journey and what it means to be a culturally competent white teacher in racially diverse schools. His understanding of the construction of dominance provides a chance for white teachers to deeply explore their own dominating identities.
- Johnson, A. (1997). *Privilege, power and difference*. Boston: McGraw Hill. A quick read for an in-depth understanding of just what the title identifies, focusing on race, gender and to a lesser extent, socioeconomic class and sexual orientation. Although Johnson is a college professor and uses examples from higher education, the information is applicable to each of us and the institutions in which we work.
- Tatum, B. D. (1997). *"Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race*. New York: Harper Collins. The author has contributed a great deal to our understanding of racial identity development. Her book helps educators to make meaning of racial identity for people of color and for whites.

Understanding and Teaching the Complexities of Diversity

compiled by Phyllis Labanowski

BOOKS

Banks, J. A. (1997). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society*. New York: Teachers College Press.

James Banks is a leader in the field of multicultural education. He identifies the challenges and presents strategies addressing the complexities of achieving equity in a democracy.

Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2nd ed.). New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.

This book has provided the foundation for understanding the creation and the maintenance of dominant ideology and with it the "culture of silence." Freire is an educational and political leader from Brazil.

Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

This book explains the implications for classroom practice of Freire's last ideas and theories found in his earlier works challenging all who teach to reflect critically on the meaning of teaching and the meaning of learning.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Although bell hooks teaches in higher ed. classrooms, the critical analysis that she brings to her own teaching in the age of multiculturalism is refreshing. Like most of us, she struggles with teaching students to "transgress" against racial, sexual, and class boundaries.

Howard, G. (1999). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gary Howard reflects on his personal journey and what it means to be a culturally competent white teacher in racially diverse schools. His understanding of the construction of dominance provides a chance for white teachers to deeply explore their own dominant identities.

Johnson, A. (1997). *Privilege, power and difference*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

A quick read for an in-depth understanding of just what the title identifies. Although Johnson is a college professor and uses examples from higher education, the understanding is applicable to each of us and the educational institutions in which we work.

Kohl, H. (1994). *"I won't learn from you" and other thoughts on creative maladjustment*. New York: The New Press.

An examination of resistance in students told from Kohl's years of experience with all ages, through personal stories. Easy-to-read and extremely provocative, this begins to unravel the benefits of resistance which motivate young people.

Nieto, S. (1999). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

A comprehensive understanding of the social and political issues which face students, teachers, parents and communities and the implications for teaching and learning. She includes case studies of teenagers who discuss their experiences in schools.

Nieto, S. (1999). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Dr. Nieto's most recent book further develops key concepts, broadening the definitions of culture and multicultural education, which is more reflective of the complexities that educators are asked to address in their classrooms.

ORGANIZATIONS

Anti-Defamation League, New York, New York
212-885-6951

For a catalogue: 800-343-5540

www.adl.org

ADL offers training and materials for schools. Their catalogue includes resources to teach about the Jewish experience and pages of resources for teaching about all kinds of diversity issues pre-K through staff development.

Educators for Social Responsibility, Cambridge, Massachusetts

617-492-1764

A resource for training and materials for use with students.

National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ)

To locate the nearest regional office: 800-352-6225

Formerly known as the National Conference for Christians and Jews, the NCCJ has expanded their training to include all forms of prejudice and discrimination, developed for middle/high school students and educators.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHING IDEAS

Adams, M. et al. (1997). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Theory and classroom activities for understanding racism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism, and classism. Suitable for older high school students and adults.

Lee, E., Menkart, D., and Okazawa-Rey, M. (Eds.). (1998). *Beyond holidays and heroes: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development*. Washington, D.C.: Network of Educators on the Americas.

An interdisciplinary guide for teachers, administrators, and parents offering lessons and readings developed by teachers that show how to transform the curriculum rather than simply add to the current curriculum

Schniedewind, N., and Davidson, N. (1998). *Open minds to equality: A sourcebook of learning activities to affirm diversity and promote equity* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

An educator's sourcebook of activities to help students understand and change inequalities based on race, gender, class, age, language, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability and religion.

Rethinking Schools, Ltd. (1994). *Rethinking our classrooms* (vol. 1). Milwaukee, WI: Author.

Rethinking Schools, Ltd. (2000). *Rethinking our classrooms* (vol. 2). Milwaukee, WI: Author.

Each provide a wealth of "best teaching" practices, ideas, and resources.

Rethinking Schools (\$12.50 for 1 year)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

800-669-4192

An independent, quarterly journal written by teachers, parents and activists, analyzing educational policies and offering alternative teaching techniques and resources.

Teaching For Change, Washington, DC

800-763-9131

www.teachingforchange.org

My favorite catalogue, full of teaching materials, created mostly by educators for educators, at very reasonable prices.

Teaching Tolerance (Free to teachers)

ATTN: Order Department

400 Washington Avenue

Montgomery, AL 36104

Fax: 334-264-7310

The Southern Poverty Law Center, a non-profit legal and education center, publishes this bi-annual magazine which includes free teaching resources, student perspectives and in-depth reporting on current civil rights and equity issues. Write to them on school letterhead to request a free subscription. Also available is a wide variety of free teaching resources.

THE ARTS

Bowles, N. Ed. (2001). *Cootie shots: Theatrical inoculations against bigotry for kids, parents and teachers*. New York: Theatre Communications, Inc.

Based on the work of Fringe Benefits, an educational theatre company based in L.A., Cootie Shots makes available their plays, poetry and performance art which addresses racism, cultural differences, sexual orientation, adoption, different family structure, etc. Appropriate for K-6th grade.

Cahan, S., and Kocur, Z. (1996). *Contemporary art and multicultural education*. New York, NY: The New Museum of Contemporary Art.

A resource for art instruction in middle and high school which examines theoretical foundations and the practical applications which includes: fifty contemporary artists, lesson plans, and additional resources.

Ewald, W. and Lightfoot, A. (2001). *I wanna take me a picture: Teaching photography and writing to children*. Boston: Beacon Press.

A guide to using photography with students: from teaching them how to "read" photographs and capture their own stories, to the process of development.

MEDIA LITERACY

Media Education Foundation, Northampton, MA

800-897-0089

www.mediaed.org

An excellent resource for cutting edge critique of the impact of media on our lives. The videos produced by MEF are great for staff development. Preview copies of videos are available.



Kelley/Jones family

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

Braus, N. and Geidel, M. (2002). *Everyone's kids books*. Brattleboro, VT: Everyone's Books.

An extensive annotated bibliography of children's literature categorized by identity and issue (strong women, Latin America, adoption, etc.) and coded by grade level.

Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing and rising up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking School Ltd.

A resource for high school English teachers written by a high school teacher who, over the last 24 years has been trying to reach disenfranchised students. Her ideas can easily be adapted for younger students.

Day, F. A. (1999). *Multicultural Voices in Contemporary Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Another sourcebook for literature for middle and high school.

Children's Book Press, San Francisco, California
415-821-3080

www.childrensbookpress.org

A great collection of literature for children that includes: Native Americans, African Americans, European Americans and Latinas/os.

Shen's Books, Auburn, California

800-456-6660

www.shens.com

A fantastic catalogue of fiction and nonfiction books for pre-school and elementary children including: multiple versions of traditional fairy tales, special issues (adoption, biracial families, special needs) and the best collection of literature about people of Asian descent.

Multicultural Review (Pre-K-College): Dedicated to a Better Understanding of Ethnic, Racial and Religious Diversity
Westport, Connecticut

203-226-3571

www.mcreview.com

A journal that reviews the latest multicultural literature that is published.

SOCIAL STUDIES/U.S. HISTORY

Bigelow, B. and Peterson, B. (Eds.) (2002). *Rethinking globalization: Teaching for justice in an unjust world*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools Ltd.

An inspiring collection of K-12 lesson plans, poetry and essays focusing on globalization and activism.

Kullen, A. (1996). *The peopling of America: A timeline of events that helped shape our nation*. Beltsville, MD: Americans All.

Finally, a resource that weaves all of our histories together.

Lowen, J.W. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

The author surveyed twelve of the most frequently used high school American history textbooks which revealed the misinformation that is presented to students as fact and historic truth. Lowen then re-examines major historic events using multiple primary sources to correct the misinformation.

Facing History and Ourselves, Inc., Brookline, MA
617-735-1618

This organization offers trainings and resources.

MATH AND SCIENCE

Gross, F., Morton, P. and Poliner, R. (1993). *The power of numbers: A teacher's guide to mathematics in a social studies context*. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility. A middle school curriculum that uses census and polling data to help students explore social issues.

Moses, R. (2001). *Math literacy and civil rights*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Founder of the *Algebra Project*, Moses explores the crisis in math literacy in poor communities as a civil rights issue through personal narrative and impassioned argument.

Strutchens, M., Johnson, M. and Tate, W. (Eds). (2000). *Changing faces of mathematics: Perspectives on African Americans*. Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Edwards, C. (Ed). (1999). *Changing faces of mathematics: Perspectives on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*. Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Jacobs, J., Becker, J. and Gilmer, G. (2001). *Changing faces of mathematics: Perspectives on gender*. Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Ortiz-Franco, L., Hernandez, N. and De la Cruz, Y. (Eds). (1999). *Changing faces of mathematics: Perspectives on Latinos*. Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

A useful series to help educators address math learning issues for specific groups, written by members of those groups.

National Science Teachers Association. (2001). *Science learning for all: Celebrating cultural diversity*. Arlington, VA: Author.

A collection of articles from the NSTA's journal for high school teachers, which addresses three areas of multicultural science education: curriculum reform, teaching strategies, and science and language.

Secada, W., Fennema, E. and Adajian, L. (Eds). (1995). *New directions for equity in mathematics education*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

As the title suggests, this book has chapters on the most current and best thinking about math and multicultural education.



Park family



In Our Family:
Lesson Plans
and Activities
(K-12)

On the section cover: Bellavance-Grace family

Creating Families

Robin Cooley, Grade Four Teacher
Burr Elementary School Newton, Massachusetts

This activity begins the exploration of family diversity, assessing student ideas about family before viewing the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit. Students group photographs of people creating families from Family Diversity Project's exhibits. They discuss the families they have created and how families can include people of different races, how parents can have the same gender, how a family can exist if they do not have children, etc. This activity can be done right before the *In Our Family* exhibit arrives.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- develop new understandings of the diversity of families
- explore stereotypes they hold about families

Materials and Resources

- envelopes with a complete set of photographs of selected individuals (from exhibit photos), one envelope per working group
- large pieces of paper, one per working group
- glue sticks

Copy the photographs of individuals included with this lesson plan. Cut apart each photograph and slip the sets of photographs into envelopes. Each working group should receive one envelope holding a full set of photographs.

Process (1 hour)

Invite the students to begin thinking about families and who is included in a family. Then invite students to create families from the envelope of photographs. Explain that each group of students will be given a variety of photographs of people, their task is to use these photographs to create five families. Every photo must be used. When they are done, they should glue the photographs to a large piece of paper, grouped according to the families they have created, drawing a circle around each family. Older students should also label each photograph with the role that person plays in the family, for example: mother, son, aunt, etc.

Divide the class into small working groups. Give each group one large piece of paper and an envelope containing the photographs. Allow them to work for about twenty to thirty minutes.

The packets of photographs selected make it impossible to create five "traditional" families; that is families that include a mother, a father and children. Students will

find that they must create some families with adults of the same gender and make decisions about whether to label the adults as two mothers, a mother and an aunt, or other possible family members. They also need to decide whether to create multiracial families or monoracial families. Reinforce for students that there are no "right answers" as students will inevitably ask this question. This activity forces them to think deeply

about the people in the photos, about families, and about the stories they generate, to explain the family constellations they have created. Allow students to make these decisions on their own, but ensure that students are listening and respecting each member of their working group.

When each group is done, invite students to share their families with the rest of the class. Since all of the groups used the same photographs, students will be interested to see the different families each group of students created.

Discussion Questions

Did each group create the same families?

What similarities do you notice between the families that each of your groups created?

What differences do you notice?

Grade range of target audience: K-3; applicable to any age group including educators
(1 hour with 1/2 hour follow-up)

Facilitator's note: Students may need help noticing aspects that they might take for granted. For example, students may have come to believe that all families share the same race. A Family Diversity Checklist is included in this lesson plan for teachers to use so that you can determine what types of families your students need to be introduced to. For example, many students haven't ever met families with two moms and/or two dads, so it is helpful for young children if you use your own set of photos to create a family with two moms and/or two dads.

Follow-up Process (1/2 hour)

When students view the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit, they will see some of the same individuals, but this time with their actual families. After viewing the exhibit, ask students to review the families they created. Facilitate another discussion. **Ask:**

Were there types of families in the exhibit that you didn't create using your photo sets?

Why do you think you didn't create those families?

If you did this activity again, would you do anything differently?

Remind students that most people, including adults, would create what we think of as "traditional" families if given the same assignment. If they made certain assumptions about family structure, it is understandable. But it is important to recognize that most families no longer consist of a mother, father, and two birthchildren.

Extension

Follow this lesson with another opportunity to create families, to use as a post-assessment tool. This time you can use photographs cut from magazines.

Facilitator's Notes

The purpose of this lesson is to learn about the diversity of families in the twenty-first century. Students need to understand that many types of families exist in their communities. It is important to emphasize that there are no "wrong" families, and that we are not making value judgments on any families. We are simply exploring the nature of family. If students from monoracial families with a mother and a father feel that their family is left out, be sure to show the students that the exhibit includes families similar to theirs, too.

FAMILY DIVERSITY CHECKLIST

Teachers: To assess student awareness of family diversity, complete this checklist after students create their own families, before seeing the exhibit.

How many families did the students create in total? _____

How many families are monoracial? _____

How many families are multiracial? _____

How many families have a single parent? _____

How many families have a mother and a father? _____

How many families have parents who are gay/lesbian? _____

How many families are blended? (stepparents, stepsiblings) _____

How many families have children? _____

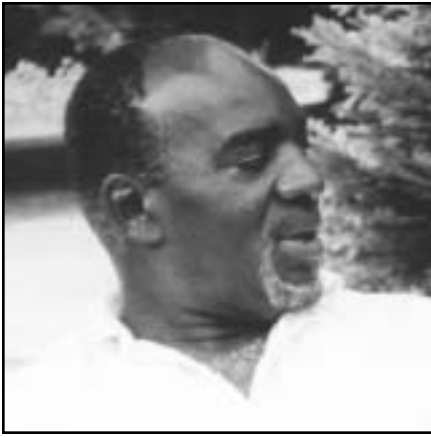
How many families do not have children? _____

How many families have three or more generations? _____

How many families have between three and five people? _____

How many families have more than five people? _____

How many families have fewer than three people? _____





Stereotypes & Prejudices: Feelings & Actions

Allan Arnaboldi, Director of Support Programs
Men's Resource Center of Western Massachusetts
(formerly a 1st and 3rd grade public school teacher)

Students will explore the differences between facts and their opinions, and, as a result, begin to understand how stereotypes are constructed. By carefully listening to students as they talk about their thinking, teachers can identify stereotypes that may be developing in their 1st–3rd graders.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- recognize the difference between **facts** and **opinions**.
- begin to understand what a **stereotype** is and why it is important to check the **assumptions** they make about people.
- explore whom they would choose for friends and whether or not their decisions are based on stereotypes.
- begin to explore the concepts of **prejudice** and **privilege**.

Materials and Resources

- overhead projector
- transparencies of selected families from the photo-text exhibit, a “frame” that can cover the entire photo except for a child in that photo
- flip chart paper to record the information that students generate

Process (1 hour)

Have each child share one thing about herself/himself that makes her/him feel good or special. The teacher can model something like, “I feel good when I sing because I love music and people tell me I have a good singing voice.”

Using transparencies of selected photos, show a variety of children from *In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families*. Each photo

should have an overlaid frame that focuses on a child in the picture and covers other family members and environmental clues. (See example on the next page.) For each photo have students share things that they “think” about each child. Record their thoughts on a chart like the one below. Ask the volunteer if s/he thinks her/his

idea is a **fact** (definitely true) or an **opinion** (may be true but not necessarily) and the reason for her/his belief. Then ask if anyone agrees or disagrees and why. Come to a consensus and record that information in the fact or opinion column.

After ideas are generated and discussed for each child pictured, remove the frame to reveal the rest of the family members and the environment in which they have been photographed. Ask if their ideas

were correct, incorrect, unclear, and/or have changed. Record that information in the last column. Repeat the process for each child now that your students can see the entire photograph of the family. Using this information, clarify if any of the facts were really opinions and discuss how judgments and incorrect opinions are often based on **stereotypes** about groups of people. (It is useful to be familiar with the text that accompanies each of the family photos you have selected so that you

**Grade range of
target audience:
grades 1–3**

**(Two or three
30–45 minute
sessions)**

Child in Photo #	Observation or Impression	Info is		Basis of Judgment	Correct, Incorrect, or Unclear
		Fact	Opinion		
1	Black	F		Skin color	Unclear
1	Dreadlocks	F		Hair	Correct
1	Girl		O	Length and style of hair	Oops! Boy



Cropped child-focused photo.



Uncropped photo of child in the context of her family environment.

can answer some of the questions that may come up.) This is a good time to discuss how judgments, based on appearances, may be incorrect, e.g. not all people with dark skin are African American, not all people with long hair are females, not all people who wear glasses have difficulty seeing (fashion, sunglasses), etc.

Depending on your group of students, you can do this activity in one or two sessions. One session can focus on discussing the child-centered photos and the other session can focus on the unframed family photos.

Next ask the children in your class, who of the children in the photos they would choose to get to know and why. Also ask, who they would not choose to get to know and why. Avoid making judgments about their decisions, instead tell them “not getting to know someone better is not the same as not liking them.” Point out that different people are drawn to different friends for different reasons, e.g. you may have similar family experiences, similar likes and dislikes, live in the same neighborhood. However, sometimes we make our decisions based on an **assumption** or an opinion that may be incorrect because we don’t know someone well and are afraid of how s/he is different from us. Sometimes when we make the effort to know someone better, we find out we have other things in common that can lead to a valuable friendship. As an example, you might pick a child from a photo whom a few children have said they would not choose to get to know and see if they can brainstorm some things that they might have in common and might actually enjoy doing together.

At this point, have the children tell or write about a time when someone made an incorrect assumption about her/him, a family member, or a close friend; this does not have to necessarily be a bad assumption. They

can share how it felt, how it affected the ways people treated them, and what they did about it, if anything (e.g. it made them angry and they called them names; it made them afraid and want to run away; it made them want to play by themselves; it made them feel stupid; it made them feel good and special). It can also be useful to ask why they think the people made the assumptions and how these might reinforce stereotypes. You can introduce the concept of **prejudice**, i.e. someone judges you unfairly without knowing you personally. Explain how they base their assumptions about you on their ideas about a group of people who have something in common with you, like your race, your gender, your family’s country of origin. Some stereotypes and prejudices can help some people out in ways that are unfair to others, e.g. in the past in the South all white people could have seats in the front of the bus while black people had to sit or stand in the back. When some people automatically get something good without having to work for it, e.g. because of their race or gender or ability, we say they have **privilege**.

Facilitator’s Notes

You may want to analyze the information that your students have generated, in particular, the basis upon which they made their judgments about the children in the photos. It is important for teachers to understand the characteristics young children use when they talk about race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, ethnicity, body size, religion, etc. It is generally wise to focus only on those characteristics and identities generated by the children in your class; following their lead. Help to clarify the terms they use and provide respectful vocabulary to discuss differences. You may need to create activities that challenge the stereotypes students are beginning to form.

How Are Stereotypes of Families Reinforced?

Michael Feldstein, Grade Four Teacher
Horace Mann Elementary School, Newton, Massachusetts

“Only moms make beds.” —elementary school student

In this introductory lesson students brainstorm their ideas about families. They view the photo-text exhibit *In Our Family* and return to their list, deciding which ideas were stereotypes and in what ways the exhibit challenged those stereotypes. Students then discuss how the stereotypes they hold about families are learned and reinforced.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- recognize their own stereotypes about families
- develop a greater understanding of family diversity
- understand how stereotypes are learned and reinforced

Materials and Resources

- *Family Scavenger Hunt* worksheet
- *Stereotype Reinforcement* worksheet, one per student or transparency with projector

Process

Invite students to brainstorm a list of qualities that are true of all families. On the board, record their ideas, without editing or commenting. They will offer ideas such as “they have a mother and a father.”

Invite the students to view the photo-text exhibit, *In Our Family*. The *Family Scavenger Hunt* worksheet can be used to guide their viewing.

Return to the classroom and facilitate a discussion based on the exhibit and the list written on the board. Ask students: Which qualities on the board do you still agree with, and which are really stereotypes about families? Circle the stereotypes on the board, asking students for specific examples of families that challenge the stereotype, either from the exhibit or from their own lives. The list may be considerably shorter after this discussion, with perhaps only one or two qualities remaining, such as “they do things together” or “they love each other.” Reassure students that most adults doing this activity would probably generate a similar list, with many stereotypes. We all have learned these stereotypes.

Ask students where people learn these stereotypes about families. Brainstorm another list on the board, including TV, movies and videos, cereal boxes, etc. Offer a framework for understanding the reinforcement of stereotypes. Either distribute copies of the *Stereotype Reinforcement* worksheet, or project a transparency of the same worksheet onto a screen.

Review the worksheet, asking students to offer examples from their own lives that fit each box. Help students understand that it is not bad to see one family as unusual but that it can be damaging to make a **value judgment** about a family based on stereotypes; whether or not they fit “the stereotype.”

Extension

For homework, ask students to think about gender, race or sexual orientation and how we learn stereotypes about these identities. One way to do this is to distribute copies of the *Stereotype Reinforcement* worksheet and ask students to write examples in each box for the identity they have selected to explore.

Facilitator’s Notes

When students begin to recognize their own stereotypes, they probably will experience guilt, which can cause resistance and immobilization. To minimize this guilt, it is important to emphasize to students that we have all learned stereotypes, and that it is part of human nature to categorize people and things. Everyone makes mistakes with these categories. It is particularly effective when a teacher owns his/her own stereotypes in front of the class. When a teacher catches themselves falling into stereotypical thinking, and then realizing their mistake and they correct their thinking, students then have a model for a healthy response.

**Grade range of
target audience:
grades 4–8**

(2 hours)

Family Scavenger Hunt

1. What family is different from yours?

List the differences:

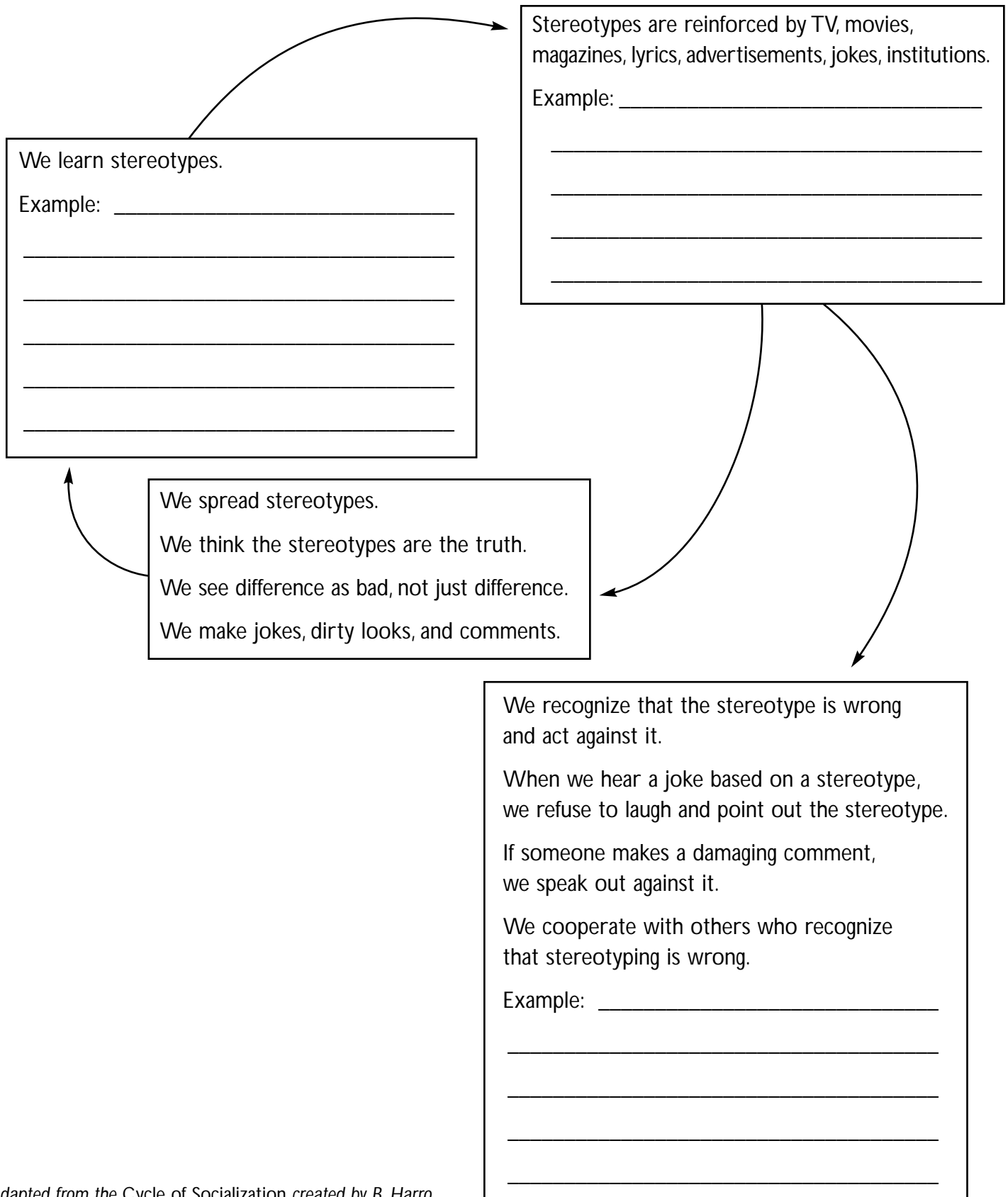
2. What family is similar to yours?

List the similarities:

3. What family makes you wonder something?

What do you wonder about them?

Stereotype Reinforcement



Adapted from the Cycle of Socialization created by B. Harro

Finding Your Voice

Peggy Gillespie, Co-Founder/Co-Director
Family Diversity Projects, Amherst, Massachusetts
Co-Interviewer/Editor, *In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families*

*"We tell stories, build
From fragments of our lives
Maps to guide us to each other..."*

—Pat Schneider, from her poem *Going the Longest Way Around*

This activity uses the perspectives of both an investigative journalist and an oral historian. It teaches students how to give voice to another's perspective and how to deeply respect a voice, which is not their own.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- learn interviewing skills
- learn to edit an interview from two perspectives: as an investigative journalist and as an oral historian
- discover how news articles and/or TV interviews can be **slanted** by the journalist in the editing process

Materials and Resources

- tape recorders and blank tapes
- one of the family interview texts from *In Our Family*

Process

Ask students to find an article (in *Sports Illustrated*, *New Yorker*, *Essence*, *People Magazine*, etc.) or watch a TV show (like *60 Minutes* or *Oprah*) that profiles a local or nationally known person who has done something that they consider to be helpful to life on this planet.

They are to create a written or an oral presentation about that person that includes a brief summary of the main points of the article or TV show. They will also consider their responses to the following questions, based on the article or TV show.

Did the interview allow you to know this person well?

Was it gossip-focused, or did it investigate the person in some depth? If so, describe what perspective the interviewer had about her/his subject. How did they reveal their point of view?

If you think the journalist stayed neutral, describe why you think that and how s/he was able to do that.

If you read an article, find two quotes by the person being profiled and explain why you think the journalist decided to use quotations instead of summarizing the interviewee's thoughts.

The next step is to interview someone in their family, neighborhood or one of their friends about a specific topic. For example, they might want to know what the person believes about animal rights or racism, or what that person has done to help the environment. Students should prepare at least 5–10 questions for the interview. If they are conducting the interview in person, they should get

permission to tape the conversation. Students may also e-mail their questions to the interviewee in advance, or consider conducting the entire interview via e-mail. If they tape the interview, they will need to transcribe it once they are done. Suggest that they keep the interview to under 15 minutes. If the conversation leads in different directions, they can spontaneously ask questions and not use all of the prepared ones.

Their next assignment is to edit the interview into a one page introduction to this person's life. They should write a catchy first paragraph to draw the reader in and make them want to read about this person's life. Encourage students to consider the following. What ways can they make their reading audience want to know about their subject's story? Will they write as an investigative journalist or as a neutral reporter?

**Grade range of
target audience:
grades 5–12**

**(2–4 hours in class
plus homework)**

With the same interview, students create an oral history piece similar to the *In Our Family* text. (It will be helpful to students if you read out loud or xerox one of the families' interview texts from the exhibit.) Each student will need to edit their interview so that the one-page piece is entirely in the words of their interviewee, without changing anything except grammar and the order in which the story gets told. Remind students to edit their material so that the focus of the story is clear, easy-to-read and conversational. (You may want to read *Reflections on Voice* in the sidebar below to your class so they have a sense of what I consider as I edit interviews.)

Finally, students can write another piece that has a **slant** or point of view. They can use their interviewee or a public figure. For example, if they were profiling an animal rights activist, like Jane Goodall, they could write a profile that shows her to be passionate in her work to save chimpanzees from lives in laboratories. Or they can write the same story from the point of view of a journalist who believes animals are invaluable to scientific research.

Reflections On Voice

by Peggy Gillespie

As the editor/interviewer of *In Our Family* and three other photo-text exhibits, I've had to learn to edit one or two hour interviews into short texts that are completely comprised of quotes from the interviewees. I want the text to sound like the individuals I have interviewed, which is what I call "giving them voice."

Unlike investigative journalism, where my purpose might be to expose something that the interviewee doesn't want known, I want the families that I interview to feel safe and protected. I tell them that I will edit their interviews and that I will send them the edited version. They have to approve their text before it goes up on a wall or into a book. They have the right to eliminate anything, change anything and they can suggest additions, which I will consider if there is space. Journalists rarely, if ever, show an article to the person they've interviewed before it is published. This can result in a piece that is slanted from the point of view of the reporter. In my

Discussion Questions

What is voice?

What is the difference between an investigative journalist and an oral historian? How would you write an interview as a journalist? How would you give your subject voice?

How would you write an interview as an oral historian? How would you give your subject voice?

How does an investigative journalist slant a story to give her/his own point of view? Can an oral historian do the same thing? If so, how?

Facilitator's Notes and Resources

This exercise can be simplified by conducting interviews in the classroom, with each other or with staff members in the school community.



Peggy Gillespie

own experience of being interviewed for newspaper articles about my work, the reporters often get basic facts wrong and I've never fully understood why they don't let the subject read the piece to at least correct the facts and make sure that the quotes are accurate. Why do you think they won't let people see the article in advance of publication?

By reassuring my subjects that they will be able to see their text, I feel that it makes them much more open during the interview. They don't have to worry about saying the "wrong" thing, or revealing too much. This results in very good interviews and the subjects rarely change very much in the edited text.

An Introduction to *In Our Family* Photo-Text Exhibit and Families in the 21st Century

Beth Wohlleb Adel, Social Studies Teacher and Patty Bode, Art Teacher
Amherst Regional Middle School, Amherst, Massachusetts

"I knew there were different kinds of families, but I never thought about two moms before!" —7th grade student

This activity is designed to introduce students first to the photos and then to the text of *In Our Family*. A class discussion follows exploring the demographics of families today and the assumptions that are made about families based on stereotypes.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- learn to engage in photos and text-based information in a photo-text exhibit
- become aware of and examine their own prejudgments about families

Materials and Resources

- *Family Photos* worksheet packets, one per student
- clipboard
- a fact sheet on family demographics (We suggest the following websites: www.contemporaryfamilies.org or www.census.gov [data on the 2000 census])

It may be helpful to students if you put numbers up next to the photos, to make it easier for students to locate a family throughout this process.

Process

Viewing the Photos (one hour)

In our school, the photo-text exhibit was displayed in the front lobby. The students had noticed it, but had not looked at it deeply. During this introduction to the exhibit, students immerse themselves in the photos, using a worksheet to guide them. (See *Family Photos* worksheets.) Instruct students that the key to being an effective art viewer is to look deeply and to ask questions: notice details, not just the people, but how they are interacting, who they are looking at, what is in their hands, and even what is missing. Model what you mean, by selecting one photograph, looking deeply at it and asking, "What do you notice? What do you wonder?"

Remind students that they will probably make some assumptions about the people in the photographs. Give the students permission to listen to their assumptions and first impressions. Simultaneously teach students that in order to resist reinforcing stereotypes we may hold, it is important to be aware of the assumptions that we are making. We will have a chance to learn more about each family; to see if our first impressions were correct or incorrect.

Guide students through the worksheet packet. First they will identify a family that is similar to theirs in some way (it can be something simple like they have a dog) and answer some questions. The packet then guides students to find a family that is different from theirs. Emphasize that students should only fill out side A of each sheet; side B is for reading the text about the same family at

another time. Invite students to the exhibit, bringing the worksheet packet, a pencil, a clipboard, and an open mind. Allow about 25 minutes for students to explore the photos. Remind students that the exhibit may bring up strong feelings. These feelings are natural. Point out that some of their feelings are based on limited information, misinformation or stereotypes.

Reading the Text (one hour)

Invite students to engage in the text that accompanies the photos of the families they selected from the exhibit. They will learn more about the families they saw in the photos and will try to answer some of their questions about these families. Explain that the text is made of interviews with each family member. Under each name are excerpts from that person's interview. Read aloud an example to demonstrate how to determine which interview text goes with which family

**Grade range of
target audience:
grades 5–12**

**(Three
1 hour sessions)**

member in the photo. Explain that effective readers try to look for answers *and* ask new questions.

Students will use their *Family Photos* packet they began the previous day and finish side B of each worksheet. Remind students that the information in the text may also provoke feelings. Again, model appropriate ways of handling these feelings.

The Discussion (one hour)

In a show-and-tell format, we invite students to tell the class which family they are referring to, so everyone can look at that family's photo (and text). Then each student describes something that interests them or surprises them.

Discussion questions:

What interested you about one of the families?

Did you find similarities between your life and any of the lives of the families in the exhibit?

Did you make assumptions about any of the families? Were you able to confirm or correct your assumption? What did you learn about making assumptions?

What surprised you about the exhibit overall?

Often, students will comment on the fact that the families are so diverse. Comments like, "Where are the normal families?" or "Why are there so many lesbians?" are common. It is important to confirm that families are much more diverse than most of us think. We have come to believe that most families include a married man and woman and their biological children, but in fact this kind of family, often referred to as the "traditional" family, constitutes less than 25% of today's families.

Introduce an article that addresses the changing demographics of families. These statistics can be a powerful "reality check" for students.

Facilitator's Notes

In our classrooms, the discussions are powerful. We suggest that students disclose only what they are comfortable disclosing about their own families. Yet, it is

during class discussions that some students choose to share sensitive information about their own families. If they do risk disclosing personal information, it is imperative that they feel respected. We remind students about respectful language and open listening. We model appropriate language (gay and lesbian, not fag, etc.). If someone is unsure of or does not use respectful language, we offer respectful alternatives and suggest that they use them. For example, if a student says "I saw this weird family", we gently interrupt and remind them that the word "weird" carries a connotation of being bad. The word "unusual" or "different" is more respectful of all families. We never let disrespect go unchecked. We also explain why some words are more respectful than others. For example, most students don't know that the word "handicapped" originated from the phrase "hand and cap" evoking an image of a beggar on the street. Since most people with disabilities support themselves, a more respectful phrase is "people with disabilities" or a more specific phrase, such as "Nancy has a hearing impairment."

It will also be important to remind the students that this exhibit does not represent a cross-section of families; they are families who are willing to appear in a public art display. There are many families who are struggling with domestic abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, a difficult divorce, and other issues that don't get mentioned in this exhibit. At this point I write the name of the student assistance counselor in our school on the board and encourage students to see her if they are struggling with these kinds of issues.



Burning Cloud/Sison family

Family Photos

Find a family that has something in common with your family.

1. What number is this photo? _____

2. Describe the family. How is everyone related? Guess!

3. What do you notice? Describe the photo. (What other things are in the photo besides the family?)

4. What do you think this family likes to do? How do you think they get along? Make some guesses.

5. What do you wonder about this family?

Read the text next to the same photo.

1. Were any of your questions answered? What were the answers?

2. Write down three important things you learned about this family by reading the text.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. What do you wonder now?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Now find a family that is different from yours.

1. What number is this photo? _____

2. Describe the family. How is everyone related? Guess!

3. What do you notice? Describe the photo. (What other things are in the photo besides the family?)

4. What do you think this family likes to do? How do you think they get along? Make some guesses.

5. What do you wonder about this family?

Read the text next to the same photo.

1. Were any of your questions answered? What were the answers?

2. Write down three important things you learned about this family by reading the text.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. What do you wonder now?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Find a family that makes you think “some people wouldn’t think this is a family.”

1. What number is this photo? _____

2. Describe the family. How is everyone related? Guess!

3. What do you notice? Describe the photo. (What other things are in the photo besides the family?)

4. What do you think this family likes to do? How do you think they get along? Make some guesses.

5. What do you wonder about this family?

Read the text next to the same photo.

1. Were any of your questions answered? What were the answers?

2. Write down three important things you learned about this family by reading the text.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. What do you wonder now?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Find a family that might make you feel awkward, or that you have a lot of questions about.

1. What number is this photo? _____

2. Describe the family. How is everyone related? Guess!

3. What do you notice? Describe the photo. (What other things are in the photo besides the family?)

4. What do you think this family likes to do? How do you think they get along? Make some guesses.

5. What do you wonder about this family?

Read the text next to the same photo.

1. Were any of your questions answered? What were the answers?

2. Write down three important things you learned about this family by reading the text.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. What do you wonder now?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Are Families Portrayed Realistically in the Media?

Beth Wohlleb Adel Social Studies Teacher
Amherst Regional Middle School, Amherst, Massachusetts

“How are real families different from ones on TV? In real life some kids have gay parents, some kids have disabilities, some kids are adopted, and some kids have more than one race in them. I don’t see any of those families on TV.”

—excerpt from seventh grade essay

This activity is designed to have students analyze how families are portrayed in the media, by comparing and contrasting them with real families from the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit and with interviews of people in their community.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- begin to develop media literacy skills
- compare real life families with the media’s portrayal of families, using the data collected in response to a focus question

Materials and Resources

- segments of popular television shows, recorded onto video tape
- VCR and monitor
- *Family Analysis Assignment and Plan*, one per student
- *Family Analysis Notes*, six per student

Preparation: record several popular television shows onto videotape, selecting short segments that focus on a question about family life, i.e. “Who has the power to make decisions in the family?” (Shows that are popular with your students will be more likely to engage them in the activity, so ask your students which programs they watch.)

Process

Introduction to Media Analysis (one hour)

Discuss the impact of media on our society. Ask students to estimate the number of hours that they watch television, see movies, and log on to a computer each week. As a result of the time people spend interacting with the media, media literacy has become an important skill to develop. Explain that some researchers study the media. Decide on a focus question such as, “Who has the power to make decisions in the family?”

Invite students to analyze the television segments. Play

several of the short clips collected from popular television shows about families, segments that demonstrate who makes decisions in the family.

Distribute *Family Analysis Notes* to each student.

Explain that good researchers take notes, and that these notes are called data. Model how to answer each part of the worksheet for the short video clips.

Explain that each student will fill out at least six of these worksheets on their own (two from television, two from interviews, and two from the photo-text exhibit). Point out that a good researcher includes specific details and that these details will provide the data for their presentation. (Note: Students may have to watch several TV shows to get one that answers their specific focus question. Not all shows will provide useful data.)

**Grade range of
target audience:
grades 5–12**

**(Four
1 hour sessions)**

Distribute *Family Analysis Assignment and Plan*. Have students fill it out. Also distribute several copies of *Family Analysis Notes* to each student. For homework, students will watch TV with their own question in mind and take notes.

Analyzing Text (one hour)

Invite students to continue gathering data about their focus question, by reading about real families in the photo-text exhibit. (Note: Students may have to read about several families in order to get data that answers their question. They may also have to make inferences because the text may imply an answer to their question, but not directly state the answer.)

Demonstrate how to choose several families to focus on that are likely to address their question. For example, if their question is, “do siblings get along?” choose to read about families with siblings in the photo. Discuss

how to fill out the worksheet for that family.

Students will be given time to select families to read about so they can complete their *Family Analysis Notes* for at least two families from the photo-text exhibit.

Distribute several more copies of *Family Analysis Notes* to each student. For homework, students will interview at least two people from different families, exploring their focus question and taking notes.

Analyzing Data (one hour)

When students have gathered their data, demonstrate how to look for themes and how to draw conclusions. I do this by choosing the focus question, "How do families deal with discrimination?" I have the "answers" that I found to this question written on a sheets of paper that I hang in the front of the room so that they can be moved around during the discussion. I note which are the real families and which are the TV families so they can be contrasted. My data includes:

Families from the photo-text exhibit

Sarah Akamatsu-Gatsik tells an adult that a kid refused to play.

Shaina Bousquet started to cry when she was teased.

Consuelo Burning Cloud took drugs and alcohol.

Andrew McDowell taught others about his brother's disability.

Ashley O'Connell refused to hide her cancer.

Daniel Ross ignores teasing.

TV families

The Simpsons never deal with discrimination.

Seventh Heaven doesn't deal with discrimination.

I have the entire class read the answers that I found and ask them to categorize the data. For example, one category might be "educate others" and another might be "unhealthy responses."

Then ask the students to draw conclusions about real life families and TV families based on the data that we have categorized, comparing and contrasting real families with TV families. I encourage the students to make a simple sentence like, "In real life, families deal with discrimination in healthy and unhealthy ways. In TV series, families rarely deal with discrimination in a serious way." This is a difficult task for many students, so it is essential

for the class grapple with this process together.

Invite students to analyze and categorize their own data. Support them as they analyze their data to draw their own conclusions. Help them to prepare an oral presentation based on their findings and conclusions.

Oral Presentations (one hour)

Students are encouraged to present their focus question, to discuss the data that they collected and to present the conclusions they were able to draw. Five



McDowell family

minute presentations are sufficient.

A discussion is a good way to end this activity. Here are some questions to consider:

What have we learned about the media's portrayal of families given what we know about real families?

What does this tell us about the importance of critiquing the media we consume?

How does the media influence what we believe about the world?

Are we shaped by the media we consume?

Can we separate the media from the message? (i.e. if we play video games that are violent or

Family Analysis Assignment

You will be collecting data on families by: watching TV shows about families, reading about families in the photo-text exhibit *In Our Family* and interviewing families you know. After careful analysis you will prepare an oral presentation comparing TV families with real life families.

Step One: Choose a focus question. You can choose from the following or create your own question.

What is a typical family like?

What is difficult for families?

Do siblings get along?

What gets families through hard times?

How do families face discrimination?

Create your own: _____

Step Two: Gather data. Get as many answers to your question as possible, at least six answers from six different families (two from watching TV, two from interviewing real families, and two from reading the photo-text exhibit).

Step Three: Analyze your data by looking through all the answers. What are some common answers for real families? For TV families? Are TV families similar or different from real life?

Step Four: Create an oral presentation, presenting your focus question, your findings and your conclusions.

Family Analysis Plan

1. What is your focus question: _____

2. Which TV shows will you watch and analyze?

a. _____

b. _____

3. Which families in the photo-text exhibit will you read about?

a. _____

b. _____

4. Which families will you interview?

a. _____

b. _____

Family Analysis Notes

State your focus question: _____

The notes on this sheet are from (circle one)

watching a TV show

reading about a family

interviewing a family

Name of family/TV show: _____

Who is in the family and how are they related?

What is important to know about this family?

Answer to focus question for this family:

Include two specific examples or quotes that support the answer to your focus question.

1.

2.

In/Out/Ahead/Behind

Who's Got the Power?

Adapted for middle school students by Beth Wohlleb Adel, Social Studies Teacher
Amherst Regional Middle School, Amherst, Massachusetts

"It makes me feel guilty sometimes, about being white, and how we're still dominating. I actually enjoy talking about these things. It feels important and appropriate. I like looking at things from both sides too. It gives me a better perspective on how other people look at their lives."—seventh grade student

By middle school, most young people have experienced some form of discrimination and are trying to make meaning of the systems that privilege some and discriminate against others. This series of activities is designed to help middle school students explore their identities and the privileges and/or discrimination that they may have experienced as a result.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore the nature of group memberships and how one learns and internalizes their role
- explore privileging and discrimination that occurs at the group and institutional levels in our society
- begin to understand the complexity of oppression in a nation that promotes "justice for all."

Materials and Resources

- a copy of the plans for *Who's Got the Power? Understanding Our Group Level Identities and Institutional Oppression*, page 21.
- a ten dollar bill

Process

In/Out (one hour)

Based on an activity, "Can I Get In?" from *Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity* by Nancy Schneidewind and Ellen Davidson.

Invite the class to participate in an experiential activity to explore how groups create and maintain "insiders" and "outsiders."

Ask the students to form a tight circle. (Students who do not wish to participate can be observers.) Ask someone to volunteer to be IT. Take IT out of the room and explain to them that their task is simple: try to get into the circle. The only rule they have to follow is that they cannot use physical force, however touching is allowed.

Return to the classroom and explain to the members of the circle that there are only two rules:

- Don't let IT into the circle.
- No one can use physical force (because someone could get hurt), although physical contact is allowed.

Invite IT back into the room. Allow about 5–10 minutes to play, depending on the ingenuity of the insiders and outsider. Students who are observing can record the rules and "culture" that emerges among the insiders and anything else that will be useful to the debriefing.

When the game comes to a natural end or when the facilitator calls the simulation

to end, the following questions can help the group debrief. It is generally a good idea to process the actual simulation first and then to compare the simulated experience to real life.

Ask the outsider:

How did it feel to be kept out? If you got in, how did it feel once you were in?

Ask the insiders:

How did the people in the circle keep IT out? Since there were only two rules, what other rules emerged among the insiders in the circle to keep IT out? How did you communicate these rules to each other? How did it feel to keep IT out?

Ask the observers:

What did you notice?

**Grade range of
target audience:
grades 5–12**

**(Three
1 hour sessions)**

Ask the whole class to reconvene and to consider the following questions:

Have you ever experienced being an insider or an outsider?

Who are the insiders/outsideers in our school?

Why do people create insiders and outsiders?

How might it be reinforced and maintained? Does race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, language, or age have anything to do with it?

What could insiders come to believe about themselves? What behaviors might insiders demonstrate toward other insiders? Toward outsiders?

What could outsiders come to believe about themselves? What behaviors might outsiders demonstrate toward other outsiders?

Toward insiders?

Is there ever a good reason to have a group of insiders? When?

How could we create a culture which demonstrates our respect for each member of our community?

Facilitator's Note: This simulated experience can be used to contextualize and discuss the more complex issues that will arise as your students talk about power and privilege, discrimination and difference.



Kiley family

Who's Got the Power? (one hour)

Drawing on the lessons learned from the simulation *In/Out*, students explore group memberships and the power of systemic oppression. Many students have witnessed and/or experienced discrimination and have strong feelings about their experiences. Since we pos-

sess different identities, we belong to different groups. Students may have noticed that some groups are privileged and other groups are discriminated against. (It is generally the case that identities that are discriminated against tend to be far more salient to an individual than their identities that are privileged. Privilege is difficult to notice, admit and own in the process of identity development.)

I use the basic format of the activity, *Who's Got the Power? Understanding Our Group Level Identities and Institutional Oppression* on page 21 to explore power with students. However, I use student-friendly language throughout the process when I am working with middle schoolers. I begin by exploring handedness in order to generate lists that capture the differences in our experiences. I introduce the concept of dominating and excluded group memberships and the systems of oppression that create privileges for dominant group members and discriminate against excluded group members. We talk about the ten identities that are the targets of oppression: age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, ability, language, religion and size/appearance. (When working with students it is important to begin an exploration of power by exploring age, since all young people share this identity. This allows for a smoother transition to the discussion about the other identities which divide students into dominating or excluded groups.) I remind young people that they are subjected to the systems that have been created by adults. They have had no say in the creation of the systems that privilege some and oppress others. This series of activities is intended to help them understand the world they have been born into.

Next, I explore the complexity of identity. I use myself as an example and go down the list of identities we have been discussing. "I am white, so I'm in the dominating group when it comes to race. I'm a woman, so I'm in the excluded group in terms of gender. I'm upper middle class, so I'm in the dominating group..." Have students choose one identity that they possess which is an excluded identity and one identity that is dominating. A white boy may choose "age" as his excluded group and race or gender as his dominating group. An African American, Christian girl may choose religion as her dominating group and race or gender as her excluded group. Have them discuss or reflect on what it feels

like to be in these groups, and how they feel they've been treated because of these identities.

Ahead/Behind (one hour)

Review the concepts of the last several lessons. Invite students to participate in another activity that demonstrates what it's like when your identities affect the opportunities you are given in life.

Explain that students are going to be answering questions by moving forward or backward. So that the students are not forced to reveal identities that they possess that are private, they may choose to represent a family member, a friend, or someone from the photo exhibit, as long as they know a lot about the person they represent.

Prepare students by explaining that this activity demonstrates just how unfair the systems in the United States are and that it may bring up strong feelings. Remind them that their feelings are the sources from which people find the strength and courage to engage in activism to dismantle unjust systems. Offer students tips for how to handle the feelings while remaining respectful. (I draw on my own life experiences and offer suggestions that have worked for me or for people I know.)

Ask students to form a line next to each other, facing the front of the room. They should have space in front of them and behind them. Read aloud the following instructions, pausing after each. (There are many versions of this activity and you should feel free to create your own list of statements for students to respond to.)

If you (or the person you're representing) is white, systems are set up for you. Take one step forward.

If one of your parents went to college, they have more access to power. Take one step forward.

If one of your parents didn't graduate from high school, take one step back.

If you are gay or close to someone who is gay, take one step back.

If you are Christian, take one step forward.

If you are Jewish or Muslim, take one step back.

If you are a girl, take one step back.

If you were born into an English-speaking family, take one step forward.

If you can walk comfortably down the aisle on the bus, take a step forward.



Bousquet/Suprenant/Pedraza family

Now hold up a ten dollar bill and say "whoever can reach this first can have it." Allow students to grab for the money (as long as they don't hurt each other). It is obvious to students that those who are closer to the front of the room, those who have continued to move forward in this activity, have the advantage. It is important to spend time to debrief after doing this activity, since this activity often brings up a lot of feelings for participants.

Discussion Questions

How did this simulation feel?

Why did I hold up ten dollars at the end?

Do you think this activity represents real life?

Can you think of specific real life examples of times that people have been discriminated against because of their identity?

Can you think of specific real life examples of times that people have been privileged because of their identity?

How can we work towards justice in a system that is designed to discriminate against some people and privilege others?

It is very important that young people leave this activity with a sense of hope. You may want to tell stories of people who have fought for justice. I include stories of young activists and local stories of success.

Facilitator's Notes and Resources

Recognizing the unearned power and privileges as a member of a dominating group can be painful and difficult for young people. Several white, anti-racist activists have written articles identifying these privileges. See: *White Privilege in Schools* by Ruth Ann Olsen, page 97. In addition, see the bibliography *Recommended Reading for Educators Interested in Understanding and Dismantling White Supremacy*, page 101. These have been powerful resources for my own identity development. Students have strong feelings about injustice in their lives and in the world and need to be given tools to think about and discuss how to respond to systemic oppression in healthy ways. Students need to be made aware of people who are working to actively resist systemic privileging and discrimination. They may also need you to confirm that many adults have not explored these issues of power and privilege, discrimination, and difference.

Everyone deserves respect. Students who feel wronged by oppression may demonstrate their anger in inappropriate ways. I always confirm the anger and try to channel it in healthy ways. Others think that the discussions are further evidence of reverse discrimination. I have found that white boys in particular might start to act up or disengage. I find ways to pull them in—asking for their opinion and affirming their participation. I emphasize that no one is “bad,” and that dominating groups aren’t made up of horrible people. They just happen to be in groups that the systems are set up to privilege. I point out that some dominant group members use this very privilege to challenge systemic oppression.

I think it is important to have students keep journals. I read their entries every night to keep abreast of strong feelings and misconceptions that may be in the process of being created. Journals can be an important place for students to raise concerns or questions that they feel too timid to share in class.

Chris' Story

Chris was a difficult kid to get along with, for students and teachers alike. He isolated himself by contorting his face to show his distaste for other student's ideas and making sarcastic or insulting remarks. I suspected that he did these things to try to avoid rejection, since I knew his parents had been through a painful divorce. I had my eyes on him when we started the lessons on discrimination, because I was afraid his remarks would cause others to shut down.

As we started the lessons, Chris was quiet in class and he didn't do the journaling homework. I had a hard time knowing what he was thinking, but it seemed like something was shifting. During one of our discussions, I asked my students if they thought it was appropriate for them to see pictures of gay parents and their children. His hand stretched up taller than I had seen it all year.

“I think it's really important for kids to see pictures of gay families. My Dad is gay, and kids used to make fun of me, but now they don't anymore. They just see that it's a regular family.”

I was amazed that Chris had found the courage to share this with a class that he had previously worked so hard to push away. I thanked him for his contribution, and waited for the other students to respond. I feared that the temptation for other students to retaliate with sarcastic remarks or contorted faces might be too strong to pass up.

“I agree with Chris.” Student after student confirmed that not only was his family normal, but that it was brave to speak up about it.

What Can We Do? Responding to Discrimination

Beth Wohlleb Adel, Social Studies Teacher
Amherst Regional Middle School, Amherst, Massachusetts

“When I heard that joke, I knew it was wrong, but I laughed anyway. I didn’t know what else to do.” —seventh grade student

It is important for students to see themselves and their families as capable of responding to discrimination, instead of as powerless witnesses or victims. It isn’t easy to know what to do or say when someone says something that sounds discriminatory. It helps to hear what other people have done and to practice responding in effective ways. In these activities, students read about members of different families in the photo-text exhibit and their responses to discrimination, they meet with guest speakers who share their own stories, and they create responses to situations in which they themselves have been involved.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore realistic, healthy and effective responses to discrimination
- practice responses so that they are better able to respond when confronted by prejudice and discrimination in the future.

Materials and Resources

- several young guest speakers willing to share their stories and their responses to discrimination
- copies of interviews with the following families from the photo-text exhibit: the Akamatsu-Gatsik family, the Burning Cloud-Sison family, the Kelley-Jones family, the McDowell family, the Park family, the Ross family, and the Andrews family

Process

How do people in the *In Our Family* exhibit respond to discrimination? (one hour)

Invite students to reflect on the importance of actively working against discrimination.

Divide the class into seven groups. Give each group the entire interview from a family, that includes the excerpt from the family member identified below. Students will read how one of the people in the photo-text exhibit responded to discrimination. I recommend including

the following family members because they represent different responses to discrimination:

Sarah Akamatsu-Gatsik
Andrew McDowell
Brandi Andrews
Consuelo Burning Cloud
Christopher Park
Sol Kelley-Jones
Daniel Ross

Allow groups 15 minutes to read the entire family interview and to discuss the excerpt from the family member who responds to discrimination. Ask each

group to share with the rest of the class: a brief description of the family and the response to discrimination taken by the family member. After each story, allow for comments. Students usually have important comments about Consuelo Burning Cloud, who took drugs and alcohol as a response to discrimination. Highlight that although this is an unhealthy way to deal with discrimination, it does happen when people are deeply hurt by discrimination.

Ask students to categorize the responses they heard. Introduce an acronym that some people use to categorize four healthy ways to respond to discrimination: WITS (Keep your WITS about you!)

Walk away from taunts or refuse to answer a question.

Inquire (Are you saying that you have a problem with... ?)

Grade range of target audience: grades 5–12

(Three 1 hour sessions)

Atlanta's Story

Atlanta was a funny, engaging seventh grade student who lost the use of her legs in a car accident when she was eight years old. Like most of her peers, Atlanta wanted to minimize anything that made her different, and therefore didn't often talk about the fact that she uses a wheelchair. She didn't share the pain of being separated from her peers while riding her wheelchair accessible school bus, using the elevator instead of the stairs, and having an aide push open doors for her and change her catheter every three hours. During the unit on discrimination, she was not very outspoken, but she knew what it was like to be mistreated.

On the day that we created skits about responding to discrimination, many students were slow to start, but Atlanta knew just what to do. She became a leader in her group, telling them about how people had mistreated her. The group decided to act out a true story of how Atlanta had been ignored by people who were so uncomfortable with her disability that they acted as if she couldn't speak or decide anything for herself.

"What's wrong with her?" she instructed one of her group members to say without looking at her.

"Are you talking about me?" she demanded during the skit. "My legs don't work, but my head does. You can talk to me."

Her classmates applauded wildly.

Team up with other people who care about your issue and respond together.

Share something and/or educate people about a situation or an injustice.

As a class, discuss possible situations in which each of these responses would be appropriate.

How do people in our community respond to discrimination? (one hour)

Invite members of the community who are willing to share their stories about how they responded to discrimination, into your classroom. Make sure each speaker has time to share their stories and that students have time for questions and answers.

Facilitator's Note: Students are often more compelled by young people describing their experiences than older people. Other teachers may know of student leaders who have responded to discrimination in positive ways. If you are stumped, many high schools and nearby colleges and universities have clubs that can provide guest speakers: a Gay-Straight Alliance, people of color for Excellence, or a diversity club. In addition, many communities have speakers bureaus that provide guest speakers free of charge.

How can we respond to discrimination? (one hour)

Ask students to write about a time when they experienced or witnessed prejudice, discrimination or privileging.

What happened?

How did it feel?

How did you react?

How did others react?

Divide students into groups of four or five. Ask students to share their stories with each other. (If a student feels that their story is too private to share, they should not be forced to.) As a group, pick one of the stories to act out. Brainstorm healthy, effective, and realistic ways to respond. Encourage the students to think about the many different ways that people respond to discrimination. The group should select one of the responses to incorporate into their skit; the one that they feel is the best response given the situation.

Each group should then present their skits. After each presentation, the class will have a short discussion based on these three questions:

Was the response realistic?

Was the response healthy?

Was the response effective?

Ensure that each group receives positive responses as well as constructive responses. Allow students to discuss other possible responses or further actions.

Facilitator's Note: This exercise is based on Augusto Boal's work with oppressed communities. I highly recommend his book, Theater of the Oppressed.

In My Family: A Family Portrait Art Lesson

developed by
Patty Bode, art teacher
Amherst Regional Middle School, Amherst, Massachusetts

Students receive many visual and verbal messages regarding what a family may or may not look like. To consciously draw a self portrait in the context of a family portrait requires many decisions in a safe, respectful classroom environment. Art-making in such a context may open up dialogue, unleash imagination and make room for expression that other learning activities may inhibit. This lesson encourages discussion about diverse portraiture and diverse families while developing confidence in art-making skills.

Middle school students are at a unique stage of blossoming identity development. This stage overlaps with their cognitive, artistic and fine motor development which may, for some students cause a great deal of negative self criticism regarding drawing skills. The ground is fertile for critical understanding of facial features in the context of a visual arts drawing lesson.

Naming specific facial features, while actually constructing those features in a drawing, creates a metacognitive process. Students have been introduced to the concepts surrounding physical anthropology in social studies and art earlier in the school year. They studied skin color and other various human traits and why specific groups in specific geographic locations developed unique adaptations which we see today in the diversity of the human form, most obvious in facial features. When students revisit these concepts in a context which involves their own identity in a hands-on learning experience, their understanding grows deeper and their perceptions become more critical.

Students will develop a self portrait to near completion while contemplating their identity in the context of their family. Observing other artists' self portraits, family portraits and the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit will support this self discovery through the drawing process. Then students will expand their portraits from "self-portraits" to "family portraits."

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- participate in art-making through self portraiture and family portraiture in the context of the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit.
- understand portraiture as an art form.
- gain skill in drawing the human faces by applying the concept of facial proportions as a universal trait in the human species.
- study examples from art history and contemporary art which deal with family portrait and an expanding definition of family.

- deepen their visual literacy and broader social consciousness of family diversity.

Materials and Resources

- Drawing paper and drawing materials: pencils, colored pencils, oil pastels, crayons, paint and other available art media.
- Mirrors.
- Diagram/illustration of human face proportions.
- Tracing paper for teacher to make suggestions. (Using tracing paper to make suggestions for students' drawing avoids the pitfalls of teacher drawing directly on student art work, which strips student of ownership and impedes self confidence.)
- Book: *Honoring Our Ancestors, Stories and Pictures by Fourteen Artists* edited by Harriet Rohmer. San Francisco. Children's Book Press, 1999.

Grade range of target audience: middle school, may be adapted for grades 1–12

(10 art classes, 50–60 minutes per period)



Student self-portrait with family portrait in background.

Process

Day 1

Teacher will: Elicit prior knowledge of portraiture definitions from students, facilitate discussion to understand terminology: portrait, self-portrait, group-portrait, family-portrait.

Demonstrate the universal facial feature proportions through a step-by-drawing method, which invites hesitant artists into a more comfortable activity level.

Students will: Participate in discussion. Notice the art examples. Watch, listen and question during drawing demonstration. All students will begin drawing self portrait on paper large enough to accommodate a family portrait which will be added later in the week. Students will be motivated to dive into the art activity. Hesitant artists will utilize the diagram method as a starting point to find success.

Day 2

Teacher will: Elaborate on yesterday's drawing lesson with additional attention to detail. Specifically discuss different ways to draw lips, eyes, noses. Point out the difference between my nose, eyes and mouth, my spouse's and sons' nose and eyes. This will demonstrate the similarities and differences **within one** ethnic and/or racial group as well as the similarities and differences **among** diverse ethnic and/or racial groups.

Students will: Concentrate on student's self-portrait drawing. Begin branching out from yesterday's generic template by adding specific detail. Students need time to develop their self portrait before embarking on the family portrait.

Day 3

Teacher will: Demonstrate drawing details of facial features focusing on eyes and nose. Discuss the anthropological development of human features which cause the diversity of human development in various world regions.

Students will: Find a person in the *In Our Family* photo-text exhibit who may have a quality similar to their own, or similar to someone in their family. Isolate that feature and practice drawing it on sketch paper. For example, I may find an individual with a similarly shaped eye to mine, even though that individual may be different from me in age, race, ethnicity and gender. I may find a girl who has hair texture similar to my son's, etc. Utilize the photo as a model to practice drawing certain features. Develop their details in eyes and noses in their self-portraits.

Day 4

Teacher will: Demonstrate drawing details of mouth, ears and hair. Continue discussion of anthropological development of human features. Give pointers on specific drawing skills.

Students will: Continue to draw self-portraits by focusing on details of mouth, ears and hair.

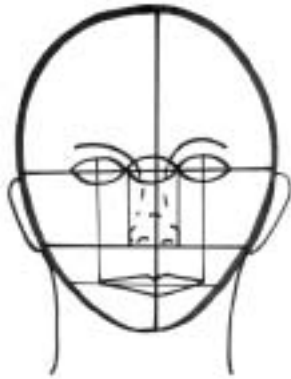
Day 5

Teacher will: Demonstrate finishing touches on self portrait, utilizing sketches from yesterday's activity. Model the metacognitive process of why I choose certain facial expressions, why I emphasize certain features as I draw. Demonstrate techniques for displaying various expressions. Visit each drawing table, troubleshooting technical drawing problems.

Students will: Engage in the drawing process, and formulate a sense of self through the drawing. Experiment with various expressions in drawings.

Day 6 Moving beyond Self into the Family: self-portrait to family-portrait

Teacher will: Show art work from the book: *Honoring Our Ancestors* edited by Harriet Rohmer (Children's Book Press, 1999). Ask students, "What do you notice? What do you wonder?" Point out how different artists have varying definitions and expressions of what is an *ancestor* and by extension what is *family*. Demonstrate drawing methods for composing a family portrait. Give brief figure-drawing instructions. View and discuss many examples. Give students the option of expanding their original drawing by adding family members in the background, or of creating a separate piece of art so the self-portrait remains separate from the family portrait. Keep a flexible classroom decorum with many choices of art media available and a sliding schedule for different artists to finish at different paces. (Students do not need to use their own family—it could be friends, sports teams or any group.)



Developing our drawings as we develop our identities. Expanding our definition of self and our definition of family.



Students will: Brainstorm and make choices about their composition: Will the self-portrait be expanded to include family? Will it remain separate? Who will be in the family portrait? Has my new definition of family changed my choices about who will be in the picture? Will there be some dominant individuals? Will it be an action scene with full figures or will it focus on faces? Sketch a rough draft.

Day 7 Using the photo exhibit as a model

Teacher will: Bring class to revisit photo exhibit. Point out various composition techniques in the photos. How did the photographer fit lots of people on one page? Does the photo emphasize one person, or does it bring your eye to each family member? In which photos do people overlap within the picture? How can we use “overlap” in our drawings? Invite students to find compositions which may be useful in their family portrait drawings.

Students will: Study the photographs with a new eye and new motivation. Now they are looking at shapes and numbers of people and sizes of people. Yet they continue to look at content and find family traits to which they identify.

Day 8, 9, 10

Teacher will: Hold a brief classroom meeting to remind us of our guiding questions. Who Am I? What is Family? Look at one or two examples from the book, *Honoring Our Ancestors*, each day. Look at one or two examples from photo exhibit each day to spur imaginative interpretation and expression in student family portraits. Ask students to think about how their art work is answering the guiding questions of our unit: Who Am I? What is Family?

Present mini-lessons on various art media which may be used to complete portrait: colored pencils, oil pastels, watercolor, tempera paint, etc.

Students will: Continue to work on their family portraits. Dialogue in groups about their art work, their art media, tools, technique, their decision-making process, and about their families.

Completing the Portraits

Students will choose a color of construction paper on which to mount their artwork to create a “frame of color” around it. My students had written “I am From Poems” (see Linda Christensen’s article and activity at the end of this section) in English class, so we mounted the poems with the art work and created a beautiful art exhibit which was attended by many of the families!

A surprise in the art room

After this activity, one student approached me and asked if she could trace the shape of some of the people in the photograph to create an outline for the figures in her family portrait.

“Even though I have to change the face and skin color and the clothes...well, like, this is like my family, cuz of the grandparents...and I think I’ll add the baby here, from this photo and trace it and add it here in my family portrait.”

I quickly agreed with the student and encouraged her to utilize the photos as a tracing model. Even though, as an art teacher, I am trained to have an aversion to tracing—I saw this as an opportunity for this student to truly engage with the photo exhibit. I was not concerned about the act of tracing as an inhibitor to my students’ drawing skills, since we had spent the entire first week in a very intensive drawing unit with the self portrait, and all my students were completely engaged and encouraged in their drawings by this point in the unit.

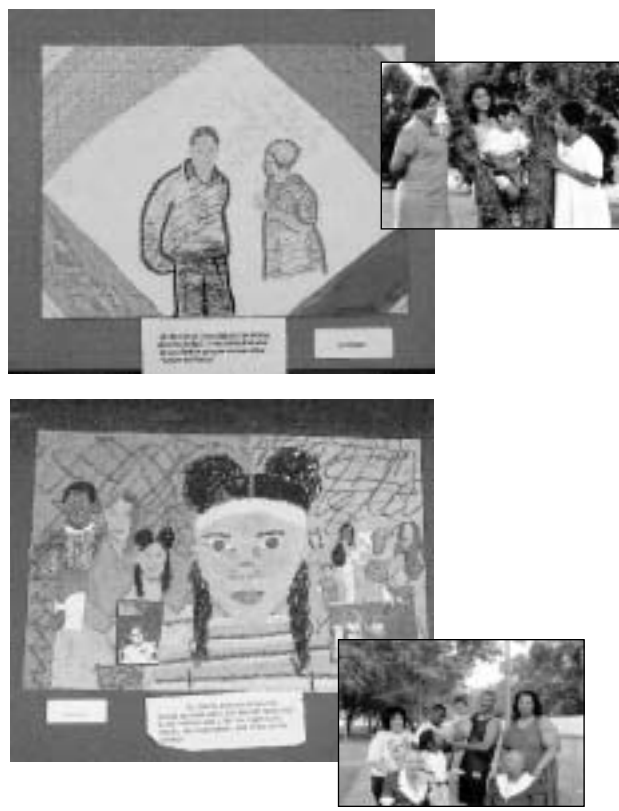
Then a magical thing happened. Other students started to approach me with requests to trace images from the exhibit with comments such as:

“Since my mom is a single mom with just me for a kid, I want to trace Burning Cloud and her son—I’ll just change her hair.”

Or another student said, “I think the way those two dads are looking at their kids is the same way my dads looked at me when I was little, so I’m gonna trace their faces, but add glasses and a baseball hat on my dads.”

“We have a porch step that we like to sit on, too, in our family. I think I’ll trace that part of their house.”

The students were identifying with the photos—and the text they had read—and claiming this identity in their drawings. This practice developed momentum throughout the week, with more and more students expressing what was similar or different about their own families and the families in the exhibit through their words and through their drawings. Whether or not students chose to use the tracing technique, the “visual dialogue” with the exhibit resulted in rich, expressive family portraits for every student.



Examples of two students' work and the photos from the exhibit that they used as tracing models.

Facilitator's Resources

Baumbusch, Brigitte. *The Many Faces of the Face*, Art for Children Series. New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1999.

Bell, Julian. *Five Hundred Self-Portraits*. London: Phaidon, 2000.

Cahan, Susan, and Zoya Kocur. *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Christensen, Linda. *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, 2000.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *Family Pictures Cuadros De Familia*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1990.

—. *In My Family En Mi Familia*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1996.

Kissinger, Katie. *All the Colors We Are, Todos Los Colores De Nuestra Piel*. St. Paul: Red Leaf Press, 1994.

Raolf, Peggy. *Families*. Looking at Paintings. Ed. Jacques Lowe. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1992.

Raolf, Peggy. *Self-Portraits*. Looking at Paintings. Ed. Jacques Lowe. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1993.

Rohmer, Harriet. *Honoring Our Ancestors, Stories and Pictures by Fourteen Artists*. Ed. Harriet Rohmer. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1999.

—. *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*. Ed. Harriet Rohmer. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1997.

www.sanford-artedventures.com/teach/lp_portrait2_complete.html

This web site contains step-by-step instructions for teaching how to draw a face in proportion for students in grade 3 through adult. (This particular drawing lesson is not developmentally appropriate for early childhood development.)

Books on Family Diversity for Elementary Students

Compiled by Allan Arnaboldi and Elizabeth Devlin,
Teachers in the Amherst Elementary Schools, Amherst, Massachusetts

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Who are the people who make up a family? Families come in every size, shape and color and these books represent many of the possible configurations. In this context, family is defined as the people who love and nurture each other.

Adoff, Arnold, *Black Is Brown Is Tan*

An interracial family (white father, black mother, and biracial children) explores how each of the family members feel about themselves.

Blume, Judy, *The Pain and the Great One*

An older sister and a younger brother complain about unfair treatment and privileges, but they find that they miss certain things about a sibling when circumstances change.

Brown, Forman, *The Generous Jefferson Bartleby Jones*

A boy with two dads “loans” them out to friends who are envious of so much positive parental attention. The story portrays a gay-parent family in a positive light.

Burstein, Fred, *The Dancer/La Bailarina*

A little girl and her father walk through the city on the way to ballet class. Everyday words and phrases are given in Spanish, Japanese and English.

Caines, Jeannette, *Just Us Women*

The child narrator and her aunt embark on a car trip and do exactly as they please.

Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergarten, *We Are All Alike... We Are All Different*

A book written by a Kindergarten class that appreciates similarities and differences from children's perspectives. (Available in Big Book format.)

Cummings, Pat, *Jimmy Lee Did It*

Artie keeps telling his sister that the messes all over the house are the work of the elusive Jimmy Lee.

Drescher, Joan, *Your Family, My Family*

Non-fictional description of different kinds of families helps children to recognize that all sorts of families exist.

Elwen, Rosamund, *Asha's Mums*

A story about a young girl who has to deal with a school problem that arises, because she has two mothers.

Jenness, Aylette, *Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment, and Love*

“Your family is the people who take care of you, who care about you.” Seventeen young people describe in their own words a rich variety of families—different in composition but all alike in their caring for each other.

Johnson, Angela, *One of Three*

The youngest of three likes being with her sisters, when she is left out, her parents help her feel special as a part of a different threesome.

Lindsay, Jeanne Warren, *Do I Have a Daddy?*

A story about a small boy whose mother helps him to understand why she is not married and why his father is not in his life.

MacLachlan, Patricia and Borenstein, Ruth, *Mama One, Mama Two*

Maudie lives with a foster-family until her birth mother is well enough to care for her. Maudie and her foster-mother share the story of how she came to be a foster-child.

Morris, Ann, *Loving*

This photographic look at loving, provides a glimpse into a rich variety of cultures, reminding us that our ability to care for each other is essential.

Pelligrini, Nina, *Families Are Different*

An adopted Korean girl discovers that her classmates have different types of families.

Severence, Jane, *Lots of Mommies*

A story about a little girl who lives in a household of four women. At first she is teased because she has lots of mommies, until a minor accident shows how much love and caring she gets from so many mommies.

Steptoe, John, *Baby Says*

A baby begins to learn to talk by trying to get his big brother's attention.

Super, Gretchen, *What Is a Family?*

This book examines the concept of families, different kinds of families, and the interpersonal relationships that make families function.

Super, Gretchen, *What Kind of Family Do You Have?*

A book with vignettes describing different kinds of families.

Valentine, Johnny, *The Duke Who Outlawed Jellybeans and Other Stories*

Five original fairy tales about the adventures of kids, several of who happen to have gay or lesbian parents. The title story is particularly valuable demonstrating the wisdom of children who accept parental love as the important ingredient in families.

Wilhoite, Michael, *Daddy's Roommate*

A story about a boy's everyday life with his two dads; shows gay parents as loving, caring people.

Wilhoite, Michael, *Families: A Coloring Book*

Many kinds of families, representing a diversity of races, generations, and cultural backgrounds, including gay and lesbian parents, are depicted in a coloring book format with simple text.

INTERDEPENDENCE

Families depend on one another. All of the contributions made by family members are important. At times, families need to depend on the generosity of others as well.

Bunting, Eve, *The Wednesday Surprise*

On Wednesday nights when Grandma stays with Anna, Anna teaches Grandma to read.

Bunting, Eve, *Fly Away Home*

A sensitive story about a young boy and his father who are homeless and live in an airport. This book gives insight into homelessness without being judgmental.

Caines, Jeannette, *I Need a Lunchbox*

A little boy yearns for a lunchbox, even though he hasn't started school yet.

Flournoy, Valerie and Pinkney, Jerry, *The Patchwork Quilt*

Using scraps cut from the family's old clothing, Tanya helps her grandmother make a beautiful quilt that tells the story of her family's life.

Golden, Barbara, *Just Enough Is Plenty: A Hannukah Tale*

With Hanukkah about to begin, Rivkeh is worried because her family is poor, but when a stranger comes to the door, her family cannot turn him away.

Hill, Elizabeth, *Evan's Corner*

A little boy in a large family is overjoyed to be allotted a corner he can "fix up" in his very own way.

Johnson, Dolores, *Papa's Stories*

Kari loves the stories that Papa "reads" every night, until she learns that he has not really been reading.

Pogrebin, Letty, ed., in *Stories for Free Children*,

"A Few Cents More", by Sara D.

A story that deals with the inequity of pay between women and men for the same work in a way that children can understand and discuss.

Quinlan, Patricia, *My Dad Takes Care of Me*

A boy tells about his feelings about his dad's unemployment.

Scott, Ann Hebert and Shimin, Symeon, *Sam*

Sam is too small to share many things with his family, but his mother finds a job in the kitchen for which he is just right.

Stanek, Muriel, *I Speak English for My Mom*

Lupe translates for her mother until Mrs. Gomez decides to learn English.

Williams, Vera, *Music, Music for Everyone*

Rosa plays her accordion with her friends in the Oak Street Band and earns money to help her mother with expenses while her grandmother is sick.

CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

Conflict is a part of family life. Learning to resolve conflicts within the family context can help family members to develop strategies for resolving conflicts in other parts of their lives. Some of these books explore a child's sense of personal safety which may be compromised if s/he experiences abusive treatment (physical, sexual, emotional, verbal abuse) within the family, whether as a recipient or as an observer.

Blume, Judy, *The Pain and the Great One*

An older sister and a younger brother complain about unfair treatment and privileges, but they find that they miss certain things about a sibling when circumstances change.

Cosgrove, Stephen, *Squeakers*

A story, which uses animals to teach children how to handle confusing situations and feelings about abusive treatment.

Cummings, Pat, *Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon*

Harvey Moon's room is a mess! There won't be any cartoons until his room is absolutely spotless. But just when Harvey thinks he's finally done, he discovers that his idea of clean is not the same as his mother's!

MacLachlan, Patricia, and Borenstein, Ruth, *Mama One, Mama Two*

Maudie lives with a foster-family until her birth mother is well enough to care for her. Maudie and her foster-mother share the story of how she came to be a foster-child.

Newman, Leslea, *Belinda's Bouquet*

Upon hearing a cruel comment about her weight, young Belinda decides she wants to go on a diet. As a result of some advice from her friend's mom, Belinda realizes she's fine just the way she is.

Otto, Mary Leach, *Never, No Matter What*

This story focuses on a child whose mother chooses to leave an abusive family situation and to take her child to a women's shelter. Included is a question and answer page for adults and children.

Step toe, John, *Stevie*

Robert experiences pangs of sibling rivalry over Stevie, a young boy who stays at Robert's house.

Williams, Vera, *A Chair for My Mother*

After a fire destroys all of their belongings, other family members and friends come to help Grandma, Mama, and daughter set up a new home.

SOCIALIZATION

Children learn many skills and behaviors within the family context and then help to teach those same skills and behaviors to other younger family members.

Blume, Judy, *The Pain and the Great One*

An older sister and a younger brother complain about unfair treatment and privileges, but they find that they miss certain things about a sibling when circumstances change.

Browne, Anthony, *Piggybook*

One day, after cooking and cleaning for her husband and two sons, Mrs. Piggott disappears, and the three remaining family members turn into pigs until they change their "swinish" ways.

Caines, Jeannette, *Just Us Women*

The child narrator and her aunt embark on a car trip and do exactly as they please.

DePaola, Tomie, *Oliver Button Is a Sissy!*

A story that deals with gender stereotyping; a boy is teased about his talent as a dancer and his father is concerned about his image. In the end Oliver is respected as a star by parents, teacher, and classmates. (There is a video, *Oliver Button Is a Star!* that is based upon this book.)

Lloyd, David, *Duck*

When Tim was very little, he called all animals "duck." Granny understands him perfectly. She knows that in his own way Tim is learning the right names for the things in his world.

Step toe, John, *Baby Says*

A baby begins to learn to talk by trying to get his big brother's attention.

Wickens, Elaine, *Anna Day and the O-Ring*

A boy, his two moms, and his dog, Anna Day, prepare for his fourth birthday and solve the mystery of the missing O-ring.

Williams, Vera, *More, More, Said the Baby*

This book includes three brief "love" stories about a baby and his/her family.

Zolotow, Charlotte, *William's Doll*

William's father is concerned and his brother and friends tease him about wanting to have a doll.

CHANGE

Families go through changes over time as a result of births, deaths, jobs, moves, divorces, illnesses, etc. These books explore the impact of these changes on the lives of the family members.

Blaine, Marge, *The Terrible Thing That Happened at Our House*
A youngster relates the problems that occurred after her mother went to work and how the family solved them.

Browne, Anthony, *Changes*

As he waits at home for his parents to return, a young boy ponders his father's remark "Things are going to change around here" and begins to imagine all kinds of changes.

Clifton, Lucille, *Everett Anderson's Nine Month Long*

A small boy and his family anticipate the birth of their newest member.

dePaola, Tomie, *Nana Upstairs, Nana Downstairs*

Great-grandma, who is bed-ridden, lives upstairs and Grandma, who cares for her, lives downstairs. This story tells of a child's special relationships with these two people and how loss is dealt with when the great-grandmother dies.

Eisenberg, Phyllis, *You're My Nikki*

Nikki needs reassurance that her mother will not forget her when she goes off to start a new job. She also learns that mothers need to know they are not forgotten.

Munsch, Robert, *Love You Forever*

The story tells how a little boy goes through the stages of childhood and becomes a man.

Simon, Norma, *The Saddest Time*

Three anecdotes deal sensitively with death: of a young uncle with a terminal illness, of a classmate killed in an auto accident, and of a grandparent.

CULTURAL ROOTS AND FAMILY TRADITIONS

Families have ancestral roots in many different locations. As a result, we speak different languages and celebrate different holidays, traditions and rituals.

Chocolate, Deborah, *My First Kwanzaa Book*

This book teaches about the African American cultural celebration.

Dorros, Arthur, *Abuela*

Riding on a bus with her grandmother, a girl imagines they are carried up into the sky and fly over the sights of New York City and the grandmother's homeland.

Golden, Barbara, *Just Enough Is Plenty: A Hannukah Tale*

With Hanukkah about to begin, Rivkeh is worried because her family is poor, but when a poor stranger comes to the door, her family cannot turn him away.

Kuklin, Susan, *How My Family Lives in America.*

African-American, Asian American, and Hispanic American children describe their families' cultural traditions.

Levine, Ellen, *I Hate English*

When her family moves to New York from Hong Kong, Mei Mei finds it difficult to adjust to school and to speak English.

Lundgren, Astrid, *Of Course Polly Can Do Almost Anything*

At Christmas time a father is not able to get a Christmas tree which is important to the family's holiday traditions. Polly, the youngest child, saves the day.

Morninghouse, S., *Habari Gani? What's the News?*

A seven year-old girl of African descent describes her family's desire to celebrate Kwanzaa to honor their ancestral heritage.

Polacco, Patricia, *The Keeping Quilt*

A homemade quilt ties together the lives of four generations of an immigrant Jewish family, remaining a symbol of their enduring love and faith.

Rylant, Cynthia, *Birthday Presents*

A girl, about to turn six, listens as her mother and father describe her previous birthday celebrations.

Rylant, Cynthia, *The Relatives Came*

Relatives come to visit from Virginia and everyone has a wonderful time.

Say, Allen, *Grandfather's Journey*

Through compelling reminiscences of his grandfather's life in the U.S. and in Japan, Allen Say delivers a poignant account of his family's unique cross-cultural experiences.

Stanek, Muriel, *I Speak English for My Mom*

Lupe translates for her mother until Mrs. Gomez decides to learn English.

Waters, Kate, *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year*

A story of the most important day of Ernie Wan's life; this Chinese New Year he will perform his first Lion Dance on the streets of New York City!

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

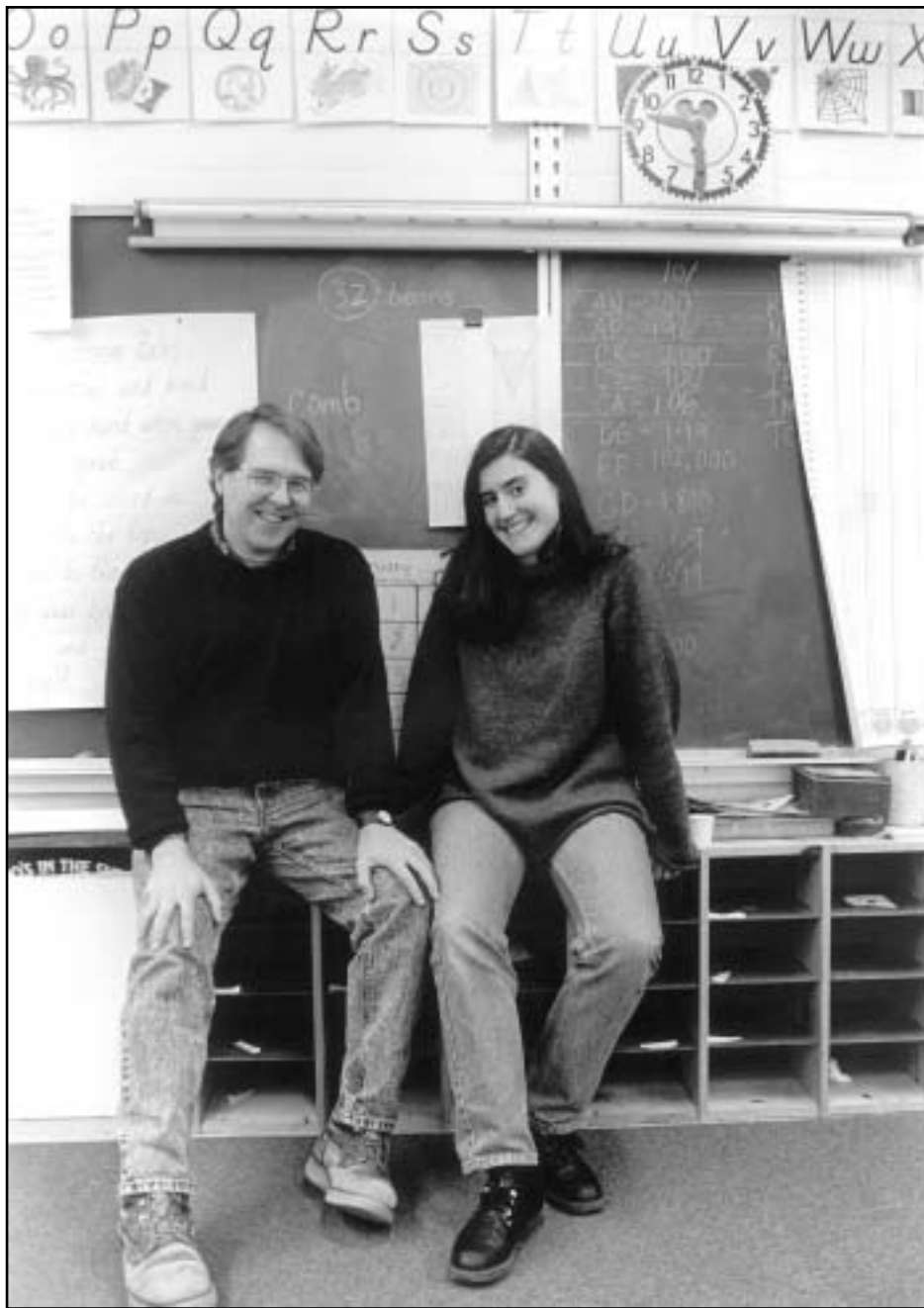
The following are useful in locating other books to complement a family unit.

Braus, N. & Geidel, M. (2000). *Everyone's kids books: A guide to multicultural, socially conscious books for children.* Brattleboro, VT: Everyone's Books.

An extensive annotated bibliography of children's literature, categorized by identity and issues and coded by grade and reading level.

Muse, D. (1997). *The New Press guide to multicultural resources for young readers.* New York: New Press.

A comprehensive guide to over 1,000 books that explore identity, family, cross-cultural relationship, social justice issues, etc. Included are critical reviews by well-known educational leaders.



Engaging Students in Activism

On the section cover: Arnaboldi family

Supporting Student Activism

Compiled by Phyllis Labanowski

BOOKS AND ORGANIZING MANUALS

American Friends Service Committee (Producer). (1999). *One Million Postcards* (Videotape). Philadelphia: AFSC. Two elementary-age sisters, angry about the U.S. sanctions against Iraq, decide to send the President (President Clinton at the time), one million postcards. This short 15 minute video is a "how-to visual manual" of their campaign.

Boyd, A. (1999). *The activist cookbook: Creative actions for a fair economy*. Boston: United for a Fair Economy. A great resource to inspire creative social action in people of all ages. It provides "recipes" for a wide range of actions created by the organization, encouraging readers to create their own actions.

Dingerson, L. & Hay, S. (1998). *The co/motion guide to youth led social change*. Washington, DC: Alliance For Justice. One of the most thorough, hands-on training manuals for young people interested in organizing.

Hoose, P. (1993). *It's our world, too! Young people who are making a difference*. Boston: Straws and Giroux. A handbook for youth activists which includes stories about activism, conceived and organized by young people.

Lewis, B. (1998). *Kid's guide to social action*. St. Paul, MN: Free Spirit Press. A book that provides step-by-step directions for taking action; including letter writing, fundraising, speechmaking and media coverage. In addition, there are petitions, proclamations and news releases to copy and use. Geared toward elementary and middle school students.

National Association of Independent Schools, Office of Diversity and Multicultural Services. (1999). *Diversity in action: Creating change in independent schools*. Washington, DC: Author. A manual written by and for students which came out of the NAIS Summer Institute on Diversity and Multicultural Education in 1998. It is an invaluable tool for students in independent schools. (Contact: NAIS at 202-973-9700 or www.nais.org)

Pelo, A. & Davidson, F. (2000). *That's not fair: A teacher's guide to activism with young children*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

A wonderful resource for educators, which helps to draw out children's natural sense of what, is fair and what's not.

School of Unity and Liberation. (2001). *A school to build a movement: Political education workshop manual*. Oakland, CA: Author.

A cutting-edge workshop manual that helps prepare high school-age, youth activists to explore and address issues of power and identity, through active and engaging activities. (Contact SOUL at 510-451-5466 or www.youthec.org/soul)

ORGANIZATIONS AND WEB SUPPORT

Activism 2000

Kensington, MD

800 Kid-Power

www.youthactivism.com

A private, non-profit "democracy dropout" prevention clearing-house. The project offers publications, workshops and other services to encourage youth to speak up.

WireTap (Youth in Pursuit of the Dirty Truth)

www.AlterNet.org/wiretapmag/

A magazine web site, which provides young people with reporting and analysis, much of it done by young people themselves, on national and local issues. In addition, the Youth Network page connects people through issues and has a list of existing youth activism and youth media resources.

www.mixitup.org

This site is a youth-oriented offshoot of www.tolerance.org created by the Southern Poverty Law Center's educational branch, Teaching Tolerance. The site also provides resources for teachers and other adult allies.



Socioeconomic Class

On the section cover: Ross family

The Mobile Activity: An Experiential Activity to Explore Classism

expanded and revised by Phyllis Labanowski based on the activity *Blaming the Victim* in Schneidewind, N. & Davidson, E. (1998). Open minds to equality: a sourcebook of learning activities to affirm diversity and promote equity (Vol. 2). Boston: Allyn and Bacon

This activity is designed to challenge beliefs about socioeconomic class. Groups of students are given materials that simulate different “class” resources. They work together to build a mobile using only the materials in their bags. When the groups reconvene they see for the first time that they did not have the same resources. If this is not evident, then it is eventually revealed during the follow-up discussion where participants come face-to-face with the judgments they may have made about their peers based on the end products they produced.

Learning Outcomes

Students will explore the assumptions they make about the distribution of resources.

Materials and Resources

This activity works best when there are three separate spaces to work in, one for representing each “class” group; more than one group for a particular “class” can work in the same space.

Distribute materials for each group into bags:

Group 1: People with more than enough

An abundance of great materials, more than enough for everyone in the group and materials that are expensive (i.e. hand-made papers, ribbons, etc.). For obvious reasons, make sure other groups cannot see the materials that this group has.

Group(s) 2 (and 3): People with enough

Good name-brand materials, just enough for everyone

Group(s) 4 (and 5): People with less than enough

Limited materials, not enough for everyone and what is available may have been purchased at a “penny-saver” type store.

Process (1 hour)

Explain the task. As a group, they are going to make a mobile, as a visual metaphor. It can represent one of the issues that has been discussed in this unit on family. Make sure each group is aware of the time-frame in which they are working.

Participants will be divided into 3–5 groups with at least 4–5 people in each group. Given that this appears to be an art activity, ask which students feel that they are strong in visual-spatial intelligence and divide them up so that each group has the same advantage. Identify the following roles so that the process

goes more smoothly in each group: **the artistic director** (the person possessing strong visual-spatial intelligence), **the facilitator** (the person with strong verbal-linguistic intelligence), **the recorder** (for the brainstorm), **the time-keeper**, **the coach** (provides motivation and acknowledges and names the specific ways in which the group is working well together). Make it clear that although each student has a specific job, they equally share the responsibility of creating the mobile.

Before any group gets their materials, each group should spend some time (15 minutes) taking about and brainstorming the key components that will become a part of their mobile. When they have figured this out and have a plan, they should send a representative to get their bag of supplies.

Grade range of target audience: upper elementary, middle, high school, and staff development
(1 1/2 to 2 hours)



Velleman family

Each group will have about 45 minutes to 1 hour to construct their mobile. (It usually takes the group with **more than enough** at least an hour to complete their mobile. Often the groups with **less than enough** are finished first, usually in 45 minutes.) Hang up the mobiles as they are completed in the classroom. Groups will reconvene back in the classroom to share their mobiles and to explain their visual metaphors. Facilitators should encourage each group to take these presentations seriously.

Whole Group Discussion (20–30 minutes)

Here is a sample of some of the discussion questions I use:

When you look around the room at the mobiles, how do you feel about yourself right now and the mobile your group created?

How would we grade these final projects? Who would get an A?

Do the mobiles just represent the intelligence of their group? Or do they just represent the resources available to the group members?

How might young people from middle and upper middle class families come to feel entitled as a result of their “success” in school?

How might young people from working class and working poor families come to feel ashamed?

In schools what happens to the people from families that do not have access to the kinds of experiences and resources middle and upper middle class students have?

What can we learn from this experience?

Facilitator’s Notes and Resources

It is not easy to talk about socioeconomic class in our country. We do not share a common vocabulary. With young people I use the language created by Sherri Brown and the National Coalition Building Institute: **people with more than enough** (upper middle class, owning class), **people with enough** (middle class, some would include working class), and **people with less than enough** (working class, working poor, people living in poverty). It’s important to make the distinction between a person’s earning capacity and their wealth (assets, access to family money, investments, etc.). People may earn the same wages but have vastly different amounts of wealth i.e., people of color and whites may earn the same amount of money, yet because of institutionalized racism, white people have accumulated and/or inherited wealth. Class is a complex social identity, and like many identities, the discussion often focuses on those who are excluded and targeted, rather than on those who benefit from the system. If this happens, keep bringing the discussion back to those who are privileged by classism.

I have found the following two resources to be very useful to my own understanding of socioeconomic class:

United for a Fair Economy

Boston, Massachusetts

277-564-6833

“...brings people together to close the growing economic divide through grassroots education, research, art, and organizing; believing that economic inequality hurts everyone...” Their publication, *Teaching Economics As If People Mattered* by Tamara Sober Giecek (\$15.00), for math teachers by a high school math teacher, is fantastic.

The National Priorities Project

www.nationalpriorities.org

413-584-9556

“...is a community education, research and training organization that for more than 17 years has dedicated itself to making our nation’s budget priorities something that ordinary citizens can help shape and understand.” They have a variety of publications and resources that examine the distribution of public money.

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Some Novels About Class

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Harriet Arnow, *The Dollmaker* (Bantam)

Russell Banks, *Continental Drift* (Ballentine)

Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (Harper Perennial)

Denise Giardina, *The Unquiet Earth* (Ivy)

Ernest Herbert, *The Dogs of March* (New England Press)

John Irving, *The Cider House Rules* (Bantam)

William Kennedy, *Ironweed* (Penguin)

Barbara Kingsolver, *The Bean Trees*

John Nichols, *The Milagro Beanfield Wars* (Ballentine)

Tillie Olson, *Yonmondio* (Laul)

Kurt Vonnegut, *Jailbird* (Dell)



Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

On the section cover: Sal, Hope, and Wayne

Act Like a Man! Act Like a Lady!

By Phyllis Labanowski
Based on an activity developed by Paul Kivel

This activity explores the narrow definitions currently used in our society to define what it means to be male and what it means to be female when, in fact, a gender continuum could better describe the reality of our gender differences. Because of the intensity of the issues raised, it is critical to end with a discussion about the courage it takes for anyone to be himself or herself in a society where sexism and heterosexism exists.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore the gender roles we are taught and the messages we receive about being female or male.
- understand why it is difficult to break out of one's narrowly defined gender role.
- become more sensitive to the impact of narrowly-defined gender roles on our human potential.

Materials and Resources

- Markers for each group.
- Two large pieces of newsprint, which have been divided into thirds and set up as illustrated below.

Process

Divide participants into two small groups. If your group is larger than 12, divide them into four groups. (There should be an even number of groups so that equal numbers are exploring male gender roles and female gender roles.) Give each group a large piece of newsprint, which has either **ACT LIKE A MAN!** or **ACT LIKE A LADY!** written on the top. Ask each group to select a record-keeper.

The first task is to make a list of all of the messages that participants have heard about what it means to act like a man or to act like a lady. (The second paper

doesn't say **ACT LIKE A WOMAN!** because females are supposed to act lady-like, a message females hear over and over.) Assure participants that they do not need to believe the messages they record, they just need to have heard them. Tell the groups that they will only have five minutes to generate the lists. (This is so that they don't think too much about the lists; the most useful data is what is generated off the tops of their heads.)

After the five minutes are up and each group has completed their lists, ask the record-keeper to draw a box around all of the messages that they have generated. Explain that narrowly defined gender roles box people in.

After the facilitator has explained the next task, ask each group to select a new record-keeper. (Not everyone in the

group will feel comfortable recording the words that are generated in the next part.) On the left third of the paper, write down all the things either **boys/men** or **girls/women are called when they don't act the way they are supposed to**. This list is intended to capture the put-downs that are used in a school or community to keep people in their narrowly defined gender roles. Let the groups know that they will only have five minutes to complete this list. (Again, the activity's analysis depends on capturing what comes to mind first. The more that groups think about their responses

Grade range of target audience: high school students and staff development

(1 to 1 1/2 hours)

what are boys/men called when they don't act the way they are supposed to

ACT LIKE A MAN!

what do people do to boys/men who don't act the way they are supposed to

what are girls/women called when they don't act the way they are supposed to

ACT LIKE A LADY!

what do people do to girls/women who don't act the way they are supposed to

the more likely they are to avoid the put-downs commonly used in their community.) **Facilitator's Note:** *Many of the words that young people include are vulgar. Responses generally include: bitch, pendeja, ho/whore/puta/slut, dyke, and fag/pato/maricón, asshole, pussy, pussy-whipped, cabrón, etc) When facilitating this activity in schools, I mention school policy which prohibits swearing. Yet, since everyone knows that people use these kinds of words to put people down, this activity bends the rules so that we can break the cycle of their use. It is also important to acknowledge that some people are uncomfortable using these words or even seeing them written. Suggest to groups that they record their responses in the following way if it makes them more comfortable: b——, or p——. When working with students, I let them know that we do not always know which words are offensive to others. Explain that the goal is to analyze the put-downs in order to help students to eliminate their widespread use. I have never had students who could not participate in this part of the activity when it is framed this way.*

After the five minutes are up, ask the groups to select a final record-keeper. On the right third of the paper each group will now generate a list of **what people do to either boys/men or girls/women if they don't act the way they are supposed to.** They will have five more minutes to complete this list.

In order to analyze the information that has been recorded, I ask each group to hang their lists side-by-side in front of the room. Participants may have to move their seats closer so that they can actually read the lists. First ask participants to look at the lists in the center of the paper. Explain that we are going to color-code the messages to compare what boys/men are told and what girls/women are told. Participants are invited to find messages, one on each list, that are the same, that is messages that both males and females are given, i.e. look good (on the boys/men's list) and dress well (on the girls/women's list). These messages are to be circled in green. Simultaneously, participants are asked to look for messages, one from each list, that are the opposite, i.e. don't cry (on the boy/men's list) and cry to get your way (on the girl/women's list). These pairs

will be circled in red. After about 15 minutes of analyzing the lists in this way, it will become evident that the lists are full of opposites and that males and females are receiving very different messages about their gender roles.

Next ask participants to examine lists of put-downs. This is best done one list at a time. **Facilitator's Note:** *Upon analysis of these lists, which are amazingly similar from school to school (and I have done this activity at least 30 or 40 times), I have found the following. The most common put-downs for females calls them out for being overly, sexually active (whether or not they are). In addition, the put-downs question their sexual orientation, often identifying them as lesbian. The most common put-downs for boys calls into question their "manhood," calling them a "fag" or comparing them to females ("You throw like a girl!"). Obviously, these put-downs and the messages they deliver make schools unsafe for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students and contribute to creating a hostile environment for girls. It is also clear that males suffer from these narrow definitions of gender, too.*

Finally, ask participants to examine both lists that record what people do boys/men and girls/women when they don't act the way they are supposed to. The lists are practically the same.

Discussion Questions

What conclusions can you draw from analyzing these lists?

Where do we learn these roles?

How are we limited by these roles?

What purpose do such narrow definitions of maleness and femaleness serve?

What does it take to step out of the box or cross a gender line? Is this easier for one gender over the other? Why or why not?

How can we support each other to be courageous enough to be ourselves?

What can we do as a community to stop the cycle of gender violence?

Identity and Culture Exercise

Adapted for use by Leslie J. Hoffman, Safe Schools Consultant
and With ALL Due Respect, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

Based on materials provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education's former
Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students

Though it may certainly be adapted and used in other appropriate contexts, this *Identity and Culture* exercise is often used in workshops designed to create safer, more supportive educational environments for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth. It could be one of the first activities in the formation of a gay/straight alliance; it was originally designed for this purpose. The exercise can bring to awareness the fact that no member of a given school community is an island. Every student is intimately connected to an intricate network of friends, classmates, teachers, school support staff, administrators, parents or guardians, siblings, and extended family members (a significant portion of whom may also be GLBTQ). Because of this connection, harm to one is harm to all. The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate, in a very personal way, *how* we are all connected and, therefore, how homophobia and other forms of prejudice hurt everyone.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will

- understand, in a very personal way, how we are all connected and, therefore, how homophobia and other forms of prejudice hurt everyone.
- explore the ways in which school communities can become more inclusive of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students, families and colleagues.

Materials

- Sufficient chalkboard/white board/flip chart space to record *Identity and Culture* table
- Chalk/dry markers/regular markers
- 3" x 5" index cards or scraps of paper (enough for five per participant)
- Pens/pencils

Provide each participant with five index cards and a writing instrument. Draw a series of four columns on the board. Label the first column, Identity; the second, Culture; the third, Do; and the fourth, Feel. (See sample *Identity and Culture Table*.)

Process

The following instructions are written like a script so that others can facilitate this activity as I do. It is an activity that

powerfully reveals itself over the course of the hour, as participants get deeper into the activity. My facilitator's notes are included in the script.

We're going to do an exercise entitled *Identity and Culture* which is designed to help us explore a little bit about who we are and how who we are (or who other people perceive us to be) can affect our behaviors and beliefs. I encourage you to "trust the process."

First, I'd like some help from you in making a list of some of the features, attributes, and/or labels we tend to use to identify who we are. **Ask:**

If someone came up to me in this moment and asked me who I am or what I am, how might I respond?

*(Participants often respond with some variation on the fact that the facilitator is a teacher/trainer.) Affirm this and write the terms **occupation** and/or **profession** in the "Identity" column.*

**Grade range of
target audience:
high school
and staff
development

(1+ hour)**

Ask:

Just by looking at me, what are some other ways in which you think I might identify?

What are some of the ways in which I might define myself in the world that seem fairly obvious to you?

*(Participants often respond with observable and apparent characteristics such as **gender**, approximate **age**, skin color or assumed **race**, and **body type**—large/small/short/tall, etc.) Record these general identity characteristics in the “Identity” column.*

There are many different ways that we can answer the questions “Who are you?” or “What are you?” that are not necessarily obvious to the casual observer. **Ask:**

What are some of those other ways in which we might identify or describe ourselves to others?

*Guide participants through making and recording a complete list of identifiers. (Participants often begin listing their relationships—mother/husband/sibling/aunt /etc. It can be helpful to name some of these relationships (including less obvious relationships like friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc.) and then summarize them under the term **relationships to others** in the “Identity” column. Participants seem to fairly readily suggest identifiers such as **marital status**, **religion**, **political affiliation**, **educational level**, **nationality**, and **socioeconomic class**. To expand and insure greater awareness and visibility, the facilitator can suggest other identifiers such as **ability/disability**, **health status**, or **regional affiliation**. More often than you might think, participants neglect to include **sexual orientation** as an identifier. This may stem from the fact that most people tend to assume that other people are heterosexual. This is a helpful point to bring up, especially if participants do NOT suggest this identifier.)*

Let’s talk about “culture” and how it relates to identity. Just about any form of identity I can think of has a culture associated with it. I like to think of culture as the “evidence” that suggests that a person embraces a particular identity. For example, if I invited you to come to my home and informed you that I am an organic gardener, what evidence might you find that would support my claim that I am an organic gardener?”

(In response to this query, participants tend to list more obvious “cultural evidence” such as the presence of gardens and gardening tools and equipment. As facilitator, it is helpful

*to greatly expand upon the list of evidence in order to illustrate both how overt and how subtle evidence of culture can be. For example, in an organic gardener’s home, you might find such evidence as **clothing** (overalls, dirty boots, and a straw hat hanging in the entry alcove), **literature** (books on companion planting, composting, and vegetarian cooking on the bookshelves and the newest Organic Gardening magazine lying on the end table next to the couch), **art** (the Victory Garden photo calendar hanging on the refrigerator), **food** (a gathering basket filled with freshly harvested vegetables sitting on the kitchen counter), **possessions** (liquid soap for gardeners sitting on the counter next to the kitchen sink), **symbols** (a Be a Local Hero campaign sticker—encouraging consumers to buy locally grown produce—on his/her car bumper), **affiliations** (the NOFA—Northeast Organic Farmers Association—letter lying on top of a pile of mail, etc.)*

Let’s say that, all of a sudden, in a mere five seconds, we were transported to Japan and were plunked down in the middle of Tokyo. How might we begin to figure out we weren’t “in Kansas” anymore? **Ask:**

Looking around us, beginning to explore our surroundings, and paying attention to what was happening around us, what might we notice was different from our current circumstances?

*(Participants often begin by listing such things as **language**, **race**, **food**, **architecture**, etc. The facilitator can help participants expand their awareness of culture and how it supports identity by including such things as **art**, **music**, **dance**, **religious/spiritual practices**, **values and beliefs**, **form of government**, **political practices**, **history**, **heroes and heroines**, **holidays and rituals**, **gender roles and expectations**, **rites of passage**, **educational access**, **occupational options**, and **modes of transportation**.) Tell the group to write as many of these examples under the “Culture” column. Then, to summarize, review the list.*

Let’s take some time now to explore some of our own identities and to uncover some of the cultural evidence of these identities in our lives. On the three index cards I handed out, take some time to list three of the identities you hold that mean the most to you in your life—three identities that speak to the heart of who you are in the world. Write one on each card. It’s a good idea to include only those identities you would feel comfortable sharing with other people. *(This last*

statement is designed to help participants refrain from revealing identities that might put them at some risk to share with others.) Give participants 3–5 minutes to come up with their three identities.

Now, for each of these three different identities, see if you can come up with a list of 5–10 pieces of “evidence” or culture that would clue an observer into the fact that you might hold these identities. We’ll take about 10 minutes to complete this step of the exercise. (Wait until it appears that most participants have completed the task, offering a time check or two if needed.)

Pair up with two other people in the room. Then, take a few minutes each to share the identities you have come up with and the cultural evidence you have uncovered to support each identity. (Once it gets rolling, participants really seem to enjoy this sharing process. The facilitator can help the process along by offering periodic time checks. This will assure that everyone gets a chance to share.)

Before we move on to the next step, I’d like to check in with you about something. How did it feel to share some of your identities with other people? (Participants often express good feelings about this last step and are energized by it. They’ve had the opportunity to share some positive information about themselves and their identities that may not be obvious to others. And, in the process, they have likely revealed parts of their identity that will lead to a growing sense of self-awareness and pride.) **Ask:**

Would anyone be willing to share with the group an identity you chose and what cultural clues or evidence you came up with to support that identity?

(It can be helpful to have two to four people volunteer to share this information. With adult groups, the identities most often shared are those of **parent** [i.e.—relationships to others] and **profession**. Participants are sometimes able to list only a few items of cultural evidence [versus the 5–10 suggested] and seem a little stumped as to the breadth of evidence that can signal and support their identities. The intensity of the participants’ experiences of this exercise can be greatly enhanced by, at this step, helping them to uncover less obvious cultural evidence. For example, parents may live in a larger dwelling with more bedrooms than non-parents, may drive larger vehicles with car seats in the back and stale Cheerios scattered on the floor, may have a wall of family photographs in their home featuring children depicted at various ages and/or carry photos in their wallets, or may do laundry four times a week rather

than once a week. Helping participants understand both the subtleties of a given identity and the intricacies of its cultural evidence will strengthen the impact of this exercise.)



Jang/Otto family

TRANSITION: At this point in this exercise, participants tend to be in a pretty good place. They are thinking about, experiencing at a deeper level, and appreciating some aspects of their identities that many of us tend to take for granted. The next step in the exercise will likely result in a shift towards a much more sober tone. The exercise will be most effective if the facilitator refrains from “rescuing” participants too quickly from what may become some uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. The next step of this exercise is characterized by some pretty stark manipulation of participants’ emotions. As indicated earlier, the purpose of this exercise is to create greater personal awareness of the effects of homophobia and prejudice on everyone.)

Take a moment to yourself now and decide which one of your many identities is the most precious one to you—the one identity that defines you, perhaps, more than any other. You will not be asked to share this identity with anyone. So, you can select an identity from the three you just shared with others, or you can choose one that is even more private and precious. Spend a couple of minutes putting yourself into the frame of mind of that identity. If you like, jot down a few of the cultural clues that surround you in life and that confirm that you hold this identity. Think about it—as this person, who are you, how do you relate to others, what evidence reflects this identity? We’ll give you a few minutes to “get into character.”

(Allow several minutes for participants to settle into thoughts of the identity they chose for this portion of the exercise and to make notes if they wish. As you introduce the next step, it can be helpful to invoke the “power” of



Kuzmanic/Nugent family

some relevant “authority figure” to help reinforce the instructions you will be providing. The instructions start out in a somewhat light-hearted way but then take a rapid and sober turn.)

I wanted to let you know that I had a call from the Governor this morning. S/he said she heard I was doing another workshop today and asked me if I was planning to do this *Identity and Culture* exercise. I told him/her, yes. S/he said she was pleased because she thought it was a really helpful exercise, and s/he asked me to relay the following Executive Order to you:

The Governor has ordered that, for the next 18 years*, you may not—in any way, shape, or form—reveal to anyone that you hold this identity. If anyone—anyone in your family, any friends, any co-workers, any neighbors, ANYONE—discovers that you hold this identity; you will be immediately subjected to the death penalty. The Governor made two things very clear. First, you have no choice but to comply with this order. And, second, absolutely

no one can know or find out about your selected identity. If you fail to comply with this order and/or if anyone finds out about your identity, you will be put to death.

(Momentary pause.)

Now, quietly, alone, and—most importantly—without speaking to anyone else, please take out another index card and write down your responses to the following: Given the Governor’s order and the certainty of dire punishment, what can you *do* in response to his/her order? What will you need to do to protect yourself from death? What will you need to do in order to survive? I’m going to give you five minutes to complete this step.

(This is a crucial point in the Identity and Culture exercise. It is important for the facilitator to make sure that participants do not speak to or confer with other partici-

pants. It is also important that participants be required to sit with this question for a full five minutes. This will be very uncomfortable for some participants, and evidence of emotion may become apparent with some. As a facilitator, I try to make reassuring eye contact with those who appear to be struggling, but I do not comment. However, I do remind participants that they have been asked to remain silent when I notice that some are attempting to talk with others.)

The Governor said that if anyone finds out about the identity you chose, you will be put to death. What were

* Eighteen years is used here as a way of representing the age at which a person achieves independent adult status and is presumed to be on their own. This point becomes important later in the exercise.)

some of the things you decided you would have to do in response to her Executive Order?"

Begin to list participant responses under the "Do" column. Because of the painful thoughts and emotions often evoked by the previous instructions, participants are sometimes slow to respond to this step. Skillful facilitation will likely be necessary to help participants take a good close look at both the need for and the complicated nature of true-to-life survival strategies.

Following are some typical participant responses to this step and some important points for the facilitator to make along the way:

1. Some participants will have a "knee-jerk" response to this step. Their first reaction is to either decide to move or **run away** from the area and/or to rebel against and refuse to comply with the order. As facilitator, it works best to try to not "let participants off" so easily. Remind them that they were told in the instructions that, for the next 18 years*, they had no choice but to comply with the order. Help them understand that, as adults, they may personally have the resources needed to move away (assuming they are willing to leave their whole life and all their relationships behind), but that a sixteen year old faced with the same dilemma, would not have the same resources. Nor would many adults consider a young teen mature enough to choose to refuse to comply with the order thereby assuring his/her death. Remind these participants that our ultimate hope is to create safer schools. Encourage participants who chose an "easy out" to "go back to the drawing board" and come up with other viable survival strategies. This struggle to figure out how to survive and the growing understanding of the emotional and material costs of such survival are key to the success of this exercise.
2. It can be quite helpful to illustrate the struggle for survival and the costs thereof by using a sample identity offered by one of the participants who shared with the group earlier (with their permission). Because so many people can identify with this role, one of the most effective identities to use in this illustration is that of being a **parent**. Walking the parent (and thus, the remaining participants) through the process of what it would really mean to have to hide that identity from everyone, can be very powerful. For example, a parent would have to completely sever relationships with anyone and everyone who ever knew or suspected they were a parent—

including their child(ren)—for eighteen years. If their child ran up to them on the street exclaiming, "Mommy!" they would have to brush the child off, reject them, and deny that they were the child's parent. A parent would have to hide, sell, give away, or destroy all possessions that could possibly even begin to suggest that they were a parent. This could include such things as having to destroy photographs, mementos, and birth certificates; change their income tax status; live in a smaller dwelling; drive a smaller car, etc. To deflect the suspicions of others, a parent hiding her identity would likely even need to resort to showing a dislike for all children—to behave in a way totally opposite from her true nature and feelings. As the facilitator walks participants through this example, he/she can begin to list the various strategies for survival under the "Do" column. These strategies should include **hiding; severing all relationships; denying your identity; betraying** those who know you; **behaving in ways** that are completely **opposite** from your true identity; **destroying possessions; playing word games or using semantics** to hide your true identity; and, despite the great risk in doing so, trying to **find and seek out the support of other people sharing the same circumstances**.

3. Some participants, when faced with this staged struggle, admit that they would likely react with avoidance, denial, and/or anger. As a way of avoiding the pain and shame of and/or acting out their rage against what they would have to do to survive, participants note that they might resort to **drinking, drugging**, and other forms of **risky behavior**. Add these to the "Do" column.
4. It can also be extremely useful to ask, via a show of hands, how many participants chose and/or considered suicide as an optional response to the Governor's Executive Order. It is common for at least one person (if not many) to admit that they considered this option. This step gives the facilitator the opportunity to emphasize the fact that, when faced with the choice between having to give up a fundamental and precious part of their identity, some consider death/suicide to be the only alternative. Add **suicide** to the "Do" column.

I know this is difficult to talk about. Your very life is threatened and you are having to do many difficult, distasteful, unpleasant, unnatural, and counter-intuitive things just in order to survive. **Ask:**

How does this make you feel?

What are some of the feelings that have come up inside you as you have contemplated ways to survive?

(Participants, especially with the facilitator's support, tend to provide a broad range of feelings and metaphors in response to this question. Typical responses include feeling fear, anger/rage, shame, hurt, sadness, despair, hopelessness, helpless, resentment, invisible, unworthy, desperate, bad/wrong/evil, endangered/unsafe, wary/cautious/guarded, depressed, like a criminal, like a fake, like a liar, etc.) Record each of these feelings under the "Feel" column.

Looking at the "Do" column, I am reminded that some of you contemplated suicide as an option. When you take a look at all the painful feelings evoked by the need to survive, you can see why some might consider this to be their only option. I don't think it's too much of a stretch to suggest that some of you may also have had homicidal thoughts—a "get them before they get me" sort of reaction. Is this true? Perhaps feelings like these have been behind some the school-based killings we have seen in recent years.

*Add the terms **suicidal** and **homicidal** to the "Feel" column and then pose the following question:*

Ask: Thinking back to our reason for being here today (i.e. understanding the impact of homophobia on our peers, working to create safer, more supportive school environments for GLBTQ students)

What might this exercise have to do with being a gay student?

(More often than not, this question is met with a period of silence that the facilitator should resist breaking. Non-GLBTQ participants (especially...) have been asked to and are beginning to comprehend—often for the first time—the premise of this exercise, that we are all connected. The anguish and torment they would have to experience in hiding and/or giving up a precious and essential aspect of their identity is the same as the anguish and torment experienced by many GLBTQ people every day. All of a sudden, it begins to become clear to many participants that "they" or "those

people" are, in fact, "us." In the silence, both "closeted" and "out" GLBTQ participants may be recalling painful experiences. In the silence, participants who knowingly have GLBTQ friends, co-workers, and/or loved ones (i.e.—99.9% of us!), may suddenly be finding themselves going through some pretty uncomfortable reevaluation of their past behaviors and assumptions and even a sudden questioning of their values and beliefs. Eventually, one or two participants will respond with statements like, "That's what they feel," or "That's what they have to do.")

Yes, that's what "they" have to do and how "they" must feel. In fact, that's what we ALL might do—what we ALL might feel—if faced with dire consequences for revealing and expressing a part of our identity that powerful members of our families, our communities, and/or our society have deemed unacceptable. I asked you to sit in the pain of loss and the discomfort of thinking about survival strategies for only five minutes. It's helpful to recognize that "they" have to sit in that situation every single moment of their lives. So, may I suggest that school communities which refuse or fail to acknowledge the existence, value, and integrity of their GLBTQ members and who fail to include GLBTQ culture in the school settings at all grade levels, do immense and sometimes irreparable damage to many, many people. And the damage is not just limited to the community's GLBTQ members. Everyone connected to each of those members—whether student, teacher, administrator, school support staff, classmate, co-worker, friend, spouse, child, or other loved one—suffers harmful consequences. Considering the alarming rate of suicide and other risky behaviors exhibited by unsupported and, therefore, troubled GLBTQ youth, these same school communities, all too often, also have blood on their hands.

Discussion Questions

- What have you learned from this activity?
- How can we, as individuals respond to homophobia and heterosexism?
- What can we do together?

Sample *Identity and Culture* Table

IDENTITY	CULTURE	DO	FEEL
Profession/occupation	Food	REBEL OR REFUSE**	Fear
Gender	Clothing	MOVE OR RUN AWAY***	Loneliness
Race/skin color	Art	Hide	Shame
Ethnic origin	Music	Sever ALL relationships	Anger/rage
Age	Dance	Deny	Hopelessness
Relationships to others <i>(i.e.—"I'm a mother/ co-worker/uncle, etc.")</i>	Language	Destroy possessions	Sadness/despair
Nationality	Symbols/logos	Do/behave the opposite	Hurt
Religion/spiritual practice	Holidays/rituals	Betray	Helplessness
Political affiliation	Rites of passage	Avoid others/keep distance	Resentment
Economic "class" <i>(i.e.—"I grew up poor.")</i>	Values/beliefs	Drink/drug	Rebellious
Educational level <i>(i.e.—"I'm a high school graduate.")</i>	Gender roles/ expectations	Exhibit other risky behavior	Endangered/unsafe
Personality/demeanor <i>(i.e.—"I'm an optimist.")</i>	Heroes/heroines	Play word games/semantics	Invisible
Marital status	Educational options /access	Try to find like-minded/ people in same situation	Unworthy
Body type	History	SUICIDE****	Bad/wrong/evil
Ability/disability	Literature		Desperate
Regional affiliation <i>(i.e.—"I'm a Southerner.")</i>	Choice of occupations		Wary/cautious/ guarded
Health status <i>(i.e.—"I'm a cancer survivor.")</i>	Jargon/slang		Depressed
Hobbies/pastimes <i>(i.e.—"I'm an organic gardener/ NASCAR enthusiast/pilot, etc.")</i>	Religious/spiritual principles and practices		Dishonest
SEXUAL ORIENTATION*	Architecture		Like a criminal
	Possessions		Like a fake
	Modes of transportation		Like a liar
	Climate/flora/fauna		SUICIDAL*****
	Who you "hang out" with/who your friends are/affiliations		HOMICIDAL*****

Leslie's Story

I am lesbian. I have a younger brother who is gay. I also have two school-aged nieces and a nephew (another brother's children) who also have a gay uncle on their mother's side. A year or so after I began doing advocacy work on behalf of GLBTQ youth, I visited my sister-in-law (Regina) and the kids. One day, Regina and I were sitting around talking and the topic of our work came up. She is an elementary school music teacher, so, in the course of our conversation, I asked her what she thought about gay teachers. Regina paused, took a deep breath, and told me that she felt comfortable having me around her children. She knew I loved them and that I was a "safe" person for her children to interact with. "But, Leslie," she said, "I'm not sure how I feel about having my children exposed to gay or lesbian teachers." "Regina," I replied kindly, "Your children have a lesbian aunt and two gay uncles. If sexual orientation is all or in part hereditary, at what point would you want your children to be exposed to healthy, happy, GLBTQ teachers? If one or more of your children turn out to be gay, at what point do they have the right to healthy role models?" We were quiet together for a long time.



Riggs/Selleck family

Resources for Exploring Sexual Identity and Gender Orientation

by Beth Wohlleb Adel and Phyllis Labanowski

BOOKS

Blumenfeld, W. J. (1992). *Homophobia: How we all pay the price*. Boston: Beacon.

A collection of essays offering personal stories and cultural analysis exploring how we all can work against homophobia. Included is a section on conducting anti-homophobia workshops for adults.

Gillespie, P., & Kaeser, G. (1987) *Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Parents and Their Families*. Amherst: UMass Press

Forty-two families with GLBT parents speak candidly in their own voices about their experiences in communities, in families, and in their schools. Accompanied by black and white photographs of each family by Gigi Kaeser. (The same authors also created *In Our Family*)

Faderman, L. (1999). *To believe in women: What lesbians have done for America—A history*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. This book highlights late nineteenth and early twentieth century lesbians, who have for civil rights, many of which US citizens currently enjoy.

Feinberg, L. (1998). *Transliberation: Beyond pink or blue*. Boston: Beacon.

A collection of political speeches and portraits of transgendered people from one of the transgender movement's most eloquent, impassioned leaders.

Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia (2000). *Challenging homophobia in schools: A K-12 resource*.

A packet including lesson plans and resources for teachers and counselors. (Available through GLSEN.)

Hutchins, L. and Kaahumanu, L. (1991). *Bi any other name: Bisexual people speak out*. Boston: Alyson.

Activists and academics contribute to this collection of essays about bisexual life, including politics, spirituality, psychology and community.

Jennings, K. (1994). *One teacher in ten*. Los Angeles: Alyson.

A compilation of "coming out" stories written by teachers. The struggles and victories of gay and lesbian teachers highlight the importance of honest relationships between teachers and students. Included is an appendix of the legal rights of gay and lesbian teachers.

Mitchell, L. (1999). *Tackling gay issues in school*.

Connecticut: GLSEN CT and Planned Parenthood of CT. A comprehensive resource including curriculum and staff development activities for teachers, administrators, and counselors. Available in English and Spanish.

Sadker, M., & Sadker, D. (1994). *Failing at fairness: How America's schools cheat girls*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.

This book documents 20 years of research by the Sadkers, recording gender bias in our nation's pre-K through college classrooms.

Singer, B. L. & Deschamps, D. (1994). *Gay and lesbian stats*. New York: The New Press.

A pocket guide, which provides an overview of surveys and studies about gay and lesbian people providing compelling reasons to combat stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.

Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. (1992). *The AAUW report: How schools shortchange girls*. Wellesley, MA: Author.

The American Association of University women commissioned this report to examine and summarize over 1,200 research studies on girls in education. Included is a discussion about the academic achievement of girls/boys and young women/young men, the academic areas where gender bias exists, and gender bias in testing, curriculum, and instructional practices.

Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. (1998). *Gender gaps: Where schools still fail our children*. Wellesley, MA: Author.

Gender Gaps assesses the progress toward equity since the 1992 study, identifying new gender equity issues.

Woog, D. (1995). *School's Out*. Boston: Alyson Publications. A comprehensive book exploring gay and lesbian issues in public schools, including gay-straight alliances, safe sex and legal rights.

VIDEOS

Chasnoff, D. (1995). *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School*. San Francisco: Women's Educational Media.

This video includes footage of 1st-8th grade teachers facilitating activities and discussions about lesbian and gay issues, as well as interviews with educators reflecting on the importance of teaching about sexual orientation. (Available in 78 minute or 37 minute versions; staff development)

de Paola, T., Scagliotti, J. & Usher, J. (Producers). (2001). *Oliver Button is a star*. Harcourt Brace and Company.

Drawing on the book, *Oliver Button is a Sissy* this video explores gender roles through interviews with author/illustrator Tomie de Paola, Arctic explorer, Ann Bancroft; dancer/choreographer, Bill T. Jones and makeup artist, Kevyn Aucoin. Also featured are the Twin City Gay Men's Chorus and teacher and Mary Cowhey who demonstrates a lesson on gender stereotyping and name calling with her 1st grade class. (56 minutes; pre-K-4)

Dupre, J. (1998). *Out of the Past*.

Kelli Peterson, a high school student who faced statewide opposition when she organized a gay-straight alliance at their school, tells her own story as well as other struggles for human rights throughout history. Included is a teacher's guide. (65 minutes; high school and staff development)

Jhally, S. (Director). (1999). *Tough guise*. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation.

A cutting edge analysis of masculinity in an effort to explore the crisis of violence as expressed by boys and men. Included are discussions of the impact of the media on masculinity, the recent school shootings and images of invulnerability and vulnerability. (85 minutes; high school and staff development)

Media Education Foundation (Producers). (2000). *Killing us softly: Advertising's image of women*. Northampton, MA: Producers.

Jean Kilbourne critiques 160 ads and TV commercials exploring the depiction of women. (34 minutes; high school and staff development)

Media Education Foundation (Producers). (2000). *Speak up! Improving the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth*. Northampton, MA: Producers.

This video explores what students and their allies are doing to transform their schools into safer and more welcoming environments. The specific challenges to communities of color are included. (30 minutes; high school and staff development)

ORGANIZATIONS & WEB SITES

Advocates for Youth

www.youthresource.com

Advocates for Youth, an organization dedicated to helping young people make informed decisions about their sexual health, created this youth-friendly web site. It includes pages for young lesbians of color, bisexual youth, transgendered youth, and young gay men. It offers support, community, resources and peer-to-peer education.

Family Diversity Projects

Amherst, MA

413-256-0502

www.familydiv.org

info@familydiv.org

This non-profit organization creates and distributes photo-text exhibits and books on family diversity issues including *In Our Family* and *Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People and Their Families*.

Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educator's Network (GLSEN)

New York, NY

212-727-0135

www.glsen.org

This organization provides trainings and the best catalogue of resources available on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender identities pre-K through college for use in and out of school settings.

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

www.pflag.org

This nationwide organization offers support groups to help heterosexual people become allies through advocacy and social change. Local chapters exist in over 460 communities across the U. S. The web site includes a search mechanism to find local chapters, as well as updates on current political issues. Some chapters offer speakers trained for school classrooms.

Project 10 East

www.project10east.org

Founded first as a gay-straight alliance in Cambridge, Massachusetts, this organization works with school systems to create gay-straight alliances and other safe and affirming spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender youth and their allies.

ALTERNATIVE MAGAZINES

hip Mama

Oakland, CA

800-585-MAMA

www.hipmama.com

A quarterly zine written by and for pregnant and parenting teens and young women.

HUES (Hear Us Emerging Sisters)

Duluth, MN

800-HUES-4U2

www.hues.net

An alternative and cutting-edge zine written by and for high school and college-age women.

New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams

Duluth, MN

800-381-4743

A magazine written by and for girls ages 8–12. (Also available is *New Moon Network: For Adults Who Care About Girls*.)

REP magazine

www.mencanstoprape.org

A zine for young men (ages 13–18) which focuses on gender issues, inner strength and self-esteem.

Teen Voices

Boston, MA

888-882-TEEN

www.teenvoices.com

Another zine written by and for young women.



Multiracial and White Identities

On the section cover: Bellavance-Grace family

Understanding White Privilege in Schools and the False Belief in White Superiority

Revised by Phyllis Labanowski

Based on an activity originally created by Dr. Sarah Lawrence, Mount Holyoke College

Students and educators engaged in an exploration of racism are often unaware of the degree to which white privilege and the legacy of white superiority continues. This activity is designed to make evident many of the ways in which racism exists in schools. This activity is most useful for groups who have an understanding of racism and are interested in moving toward its dismantling.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- explore the ways in which racism impacts white people and people of color at a group level.
- understand the potential cumulative impact of white privilege on white people by reinforcing a false sense of white superiority.
- understand the potential cumulative impact of exclusion and discrimination on people of color and people of mixed race heritages.

Materials and Resources

Photo copy the list of white privileges on card stock paper. (See list on page 99) Cut statements apart so that one statement appears on its own card. Sort through the statements and pull out any which are not applicable to your school setting.

Process

Explain that this activity is not necessarily about each person's unique experience in school, but that it is designed to capture the collective experience for whites as a group and for people of color as a group. This can be a difficult concept for participants to understand. Whites often prefer to view the world through an individual lens without fully embracing the impact of our groups' experience on our individual perceptions. People of color and people of mixed race heritages are often more aware of their group's experience, although they may not be aware of the depth and breadth of racism in schools today.

Invite students to feel the feelings that arise as a result of this activity. I believe that our commitment to the

hard work of dismantling racism comes, in part, as a result of connecting our heads and our hearts; allowing what we think to be informed by what we feel.

Hand out the cards with the statements to participants. Make sure all of the cards are handed out; some participants will have more than one.

**Grade range of
target audience:
high school and
staff development**

(3/4 to 1 hour)

Ask each person to read the statement on their card in a way that will make it true for their group. If the person is white, they will read the card as it is written. If they are a person of color they will change the italicized verb to make the statement true. For example, if the card reads: "I *do*

not worry that my colleagues suspect that I got my job because of affirmative action;" a white person would read the statement as it is written, since it is true for them. A person of color would change the verb and read: "I *do* worry that my colleagues suspect that I got my job because of affirmative action." This statement is true for many of the teachers and administrators of color in most schools. For people who are of mixed race heritages, they will need to decide how to make the statements true for people in their group. Jewish people will also need to consider which are true for their group and which are not. This activity can be challenging for Jews since many in the U.S. are white and have white skin privilege, yet they may also be culturally Jewish and must negotiate anti-Semitism.

In some cases, it was so awkward to merely change the verb that had to I rewrite the entire sentence in italic print. The card would read: "Suburban school districts, where most of the students who look like me live, are well-funded, have up-to-date resources and hire experienced teachers." I had to rewrite it as, "*Urban school districts,*



Nwokoye family

where most of the students who look like me live, are underfunded, have out-dated resources and hire inexperienced teachers."

The process works best if it is slow and meditative. Ask participants to read one of their statements and ask the next person to wait a few moments before reading theirs. I prefer to save the conversation until all of the statements have been read. In that way, participants will have a better sense of the cumulative impact of white privilege and racism in schools.

When all of the statements have been read, participants are asked to form small discussion groups. As facilitator, you will want to decide if the groups should be affinity groups, (that is white participants meet with other whites, people of color meet with people of color and people of mixed race heritages meet with others of mixed race heritages) or if participants should meet in racially mixed groups. There is good reason to do either; it depends on the needs of the group. Since this activity can be hard for people of color, I often prefer the affinity groups.

Discussion Questions

What feelings do you have in response to these statements? (**Facilitator's Note:** Suggest that people really spend some time feeling their feelings and talking about them. It's important!)

Which statements were true for your group but not for you as an individual?

How are individuals affected by their treatment in schools (institutions) based on their group level identity? For whites? For people of color?

For people of mixed race heritages?

What is the impact of the cumulative experiences on us as members of different groups? How do we internalize the messages we receive about ourselves? About each other?

What is our role in breaking the cycle of racial discrimination, white privilege, and the false belief of white superiority in schools?

Facilitator's Resources

I consider the understanding that comes from this activity, critical. Facilitating this activity requires clarity, compassion and patience. It can be really hard for white people, who may get defensive about white privilege; and painful for people of color, who all too often, are navigating racism day in and day out. However, I am convinced that white people must acknowledge our unearned privileges and explore the internalized superiority we construct as a result, in order to be effective allies in dismantling racism. And, we must all be able to see, identify and dismantle racism in all its forms for justice to prevail in schools.

In addition to my own observations of racism in schools, I have used several sources to write the statements.

Kivel, Paul. (1996). *Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice.*

Olsen, Ruth Ann. (1997). "White privilege in schools" in *Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development.*

McIntosh, Peggy. (1997). "White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack" in *Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development.*

The Statements

My actions *are not* qualified, limited, discredited, or acclaimed simply because of my racial background.

I *don't* have to represent my race. What I do is *not* judged as a credit to my race, or as a confirmation of its shortcomings or inferiority.

I *live* in and *work* in a school where the textbooks and classroom materials reflect my race as normal, as heroes, and as builders of the United States.

I see faces like mine liberally represented in the textbooks, posters, and other materials in the hallways, classrooms, and libraries.

I can count on the fact that the majority of the faculty and staff in my school, *are* of the same racial background.

I assume that when I talk about holidays and family celebrations, most of my colleagues/fellow students *will have* experienced similar events and will be able to share in my stories.

I know that the color of my skin causes most of my colleagues/fellow students to make *neutral* or *positive* assumptions about me.

I *will never* be called on to explain to others about my race and culture.

In schools where tracking exists, I *will* see the majority of students in the upper-level math and science classes that are the same race as I am.

Students who look like me *receive* helpful information about colleges and career options from our guidance counselors, who support them to follow their dreams.

When it comes to discipline, students who look like me *are* given the benefit-of-the-doubt.

My teachers *assume* that students who look like me will be going on to college to make something of themselves.

Students who look like me *are* in school programs for the gifted and talented.

Students who look like me *are not* dropping out of high school in disproportionately high numbers.

Students, who speak English, are not asked to give up their native language, (even though English is not indigenous to this land).

Students, who speak _____ like me, are asked to give up their native language and to speak English, (even though English is not indigenous to this land).

Students who look like me *are* taught with strategies that are culturally relevant to our learning preferences.

Suburban school districts, where most of the students who look like me live, are well funded, have up-to-date resources and hire experienced teachers.

Urban school districts, where most of the students who look like me live, are under-funded, have out-dated resources and hire inexperienced teachers.

I *do not* worry that my colleagues suspect that I got my job because of affirmative action.

Crayons, Band-Aids, and other school materials that are labeled “flesh” *will be* my skin color.

I *take* for granted that the state and national tests used to judge my achievement have been developed with groups that included significant numbers of people who share my racial and cultural history.

I leave meetings at school and feel like I belong, like I am heard and supported.

I leave meetings at school and rarely feel like I belong. Rather, I feel unheard, isolated, out-of-place, and outnumbered.

I *will not* hear people suggest that the problems of the school (low levels of achievement, the need for special support services, etc.) are caused by the high numbers of students from my race.

I *can* count on the fact that the majority of the members of the school committee, where I live and where I teach, reflect my race.

I *can* count on the fact that the majority of the members of the board of trustees, where I work, reflect my race.

I *am confident* that policy decisions that affect education and my school are made by state and local bodies of people who understand my racial history and culture.

I *can* criticize the policy-makers and governing bodies without being viewed suspiciously.

I *can* choose to live in neighborhoods that are safe and have well-funded schools.

I *can* choose when and where I want to respond to racism.

Recommended Books for Educators Interested in Understanding and Dismantling White Supremacy

compiled by Phyllis Labanowski

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press.
The author critiques the teaching practices of many white teachers who do not address the educational needs of students of color. She shares ways teachers can be better "cultural translators" while addressing the imbalance of power and the dynamics of inequality in classrooms and in schools.

Freire, Paulo. (1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2nd ed.). New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
This book has provided the foundation for understanding the creation and the maintenance of dominant ideology and with it the "culture of silence." Freire is an educational and political leader from Brazil.

Helms, Janet. (1992). *Race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a white person or understanding the white persons in your life*. Topeka, KS: Content Communications.
A useful book, easy-to-understand, exploring race, racism and whiteness.

Howard, G. (1999). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
Gary Howard reflects on his personal journey and what it means to be a culturally competent white teacher in racially diverse schools. His understanding of the construction of dominance provides a chance for white teachers to deeply explore their own dominant identities.

Ignatiev, Noel. (1995). *How the Irish became white*. New York: Routledge.
Ignatiev reveals how Irish immigrants used labor unions, the Catholic Church and the Democratic party to ensure their entry into the United States as whites, at the expense of African Americans, a group the Irish were taught to hate in "America."

Kivel, Paul. (1996). *Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice*. British Columbia: New Society Publishers.
This book draws on the long tradition of white people opposing racism and helps make sense of the dynamics of racism in our society, institutions and daily lives. It is easy-to-read, informative, and discusses key issues like: affirmative action, institutional racism, political correctness, and the meaning of whiteness.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Portraits of eight exemplary teachers who differ in personal style and methods but share an approach to teaching that strengthens and affirms cultural identity.

Loewen, James. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. New York: New Press.

A survey and an analysis of the twelve leading high school textbooks. In addition to documenting the inaccuracies and omissions, Loewen provides the history that is missing. This is an essential resource for anyone interested in relearning our history. He has also released a new book: *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*.

Spring, J. (2001). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in United States* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.
An in-depth analysis and history of the educational disenfranchisement of ethnic groups in the U.S.

Shade, B., Kelly, C. & Oberg, M. (1997). *Creating culturally responsive classrooms*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
Drawing on a wide variety of research the authors conclude that culturally responsive teaching is good teaching. Their book provides opportunities for educators to do some discovery and to think critically about the issues and ideas, as well as suggests practical applications, focusing on African Americans, American Indians, Mexican Americans, Hispanic Americans and Hmong Americans.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. (1997). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race*. New York: Harper Collins.
The author has contributed a great deal to our understanding of racial identity development. Her book helps educators and parents to make meaning of racial identity for people of color and for whites.

Resources on Multiracial Identities and Mixed Race People

Compiled by John Raible

Interracial relationships are becoming more commonplace, and as a result more and more children of mixed parentage are born into the world. Of course, as Maria Root (the noted expert on multiracial identity) has pointed out, the term mixed implies that there must be two or more "pure" races initially. We know that biologically this is nonsense.

We recognize that categories of race do not reflect biological facts. Physical and social scientists have discredited the idea of human races. Nevertheless, race continues to have meaning as a social construct, and individuals and institutions still insist on classifying people according to racial categories. To complicate matters, race and ethnicity frequently are used interchangeably. There is even an official *Multiracial* box on the latest (2000) U. S. census form, which some argue is an improvement over the older *Other* box. For readers interested in the growing literature on the experience of multiracial or mixed race individuals, the following bibliography offers just a sampling of the many materials available in libraries and on line:

Association for Multi-Ethnic Americans
www.amea.org

Brown, Ursula M. *The Interracial Experience: Growing Up Black/White Racially-Mixed in the United States.*

Camper, Carol (editor). *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women.*

Forbes, Jack D. *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples.*

Funderburg, Lise. *Black, White, Other: Biracial Americans Talk About Race and Identity.*

Gaskins, Pearl Fuyo (ed.). *What Are You? : Voices of Mixed-Race Young People.*

Johnson, Kevin R. *How Did You Get to be Mexican: A White/Brown Man's Search for Identity.*

Kaeser, Gigi and Peggy Gillespie. *Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families.*

Katz, William Loren. *Proudly Red and Black: Stories of African and Native Americans.*

Malcomson, Scott L. *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race.*

Mavin at Foundation
www.mavin.net/index.html

McBride, James. *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother.*

McRoy, Ruth. *Transracial and Interracial Adoptees: The Adolescent Years.*

The Multiracial Activist
www.multiracial.com

O'Hearn, Claudine Chiawei (editor). *Half and Half: Writers on Growing Up Biracial and Bicultural.*

Penn, William S. (editor). *As We Are Now: Mixblood Essays on Race and Identity.*

Raible, John and Sonia Nieto. "Beyond Categories: The Complex Identities of Adolescents," in *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education*, edited by Michael Sadowski.

Register, Cheri. "Are Those Kids Yours?": *American Families with Children Adopted from Other Countries.*

Root, Maria P. P. *Racially Mixed People in America: Within, Between, and Beyond Race.*

Root, Maria P. P. "The Biracial Baby Boom: Understanding Ecological Constructions of Racial Identity in the 21st Century," in *Racial and Ethnic Identity in School Practices: Aspects of Human Development*, by Rosa Hernández Sheets and Etta R. Hollins (editors).

Struggle For Identity: Issues in Transracial Adoption, PhotoSynthesis Productions, Ithaca, New York. (Video).

Tizard, Barbara. *Black, White, or Mixed Race?: Race and Racism in the Lives of Young People of Mixed Parentage.*

Williams-Leon, Teresa (ed.). *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed-Heritage Asian Americans.*

Zack, Naomi. *Race and Mixed Race.*



Adoption

On the section cover: Gillespie family

Instead of a Family Tree— a Student’s Web of Connections

by Alisa Greenbacher, middle school teacher

Introduction to this activity:

Why do elementary teachers often assign a family tree project? Often, it is to accomplish these student goals/outcomes:

- to give students an opportunity to involve family members in a school project
- to become familiar with the student’s own connection to history and family history
- to provide a project with the student as the focus
- to teach students genealogical skills and vocabulary

While the above goals are important, the traditional family tree project often feels uncomfortable for

students who were adopted, are currently living with a foster family, or whose family doesn’t fit the “traditional” family tree model in other ways. If teaching genealogical skills is the primary goal, teachers can certainly teach students to map out a family tree that includes birth-parents, stepparents, and other non-traditional family members of someone in history, or even a of a family friend. When doing this, it is very important to model non-traditional family trees for the whole class, making sure students know that there is no right or wrong way to create a family tree. There is no reason to ask students to do their own family trees, as the chance of creating discomfort for even one child in the classroom is too big a risk to take.



Bartholet family

The following project, a student “Web of Connections,” invites students to study their connections to people from other generations who are connected to their lives or to their community.

“One Generation Before Me” and “Two Generations Before Me”

In this activity, students find two older people they know and interview them about what life was like when they were in elementary school. When doing this with students who are in 5th or 6th grade, a discussion of negative stereotypes of old people (ageism) can be useful as a pre-activity as well.

The first person the students interview should be in their 20’s–50’s. The second person the students interview should be in their 60’s or older.

Some students will need help finding a contact, especially if they do not have contact with grandparents. Using people in the community or even bringing the entire class to a home for older people can be helpful. Or interviewing staff or teachers at the school might work.

Materials

paper, pencil, classroom set of tape recorders and cassette tapes (optional)

Process

Model with students how to find a person to interview, how to ask a person for an interview, and how to set up a time for the interview. (While these steps may seem basic, many students will not know how to do this yet.)

Introduce the concepts of “open-ended” questions and “closed-ended” questions. Tell the students that their goal is to get a few good stories from the interviewee rather than a set of facts. Explain that open-ended questions will give the interviewee a chance to tell stories. For example, the closed-ended question: “What was the name of your school?” allows the interviewee to give a one word answer like: “Jackson Elementary.” An open-ended question would be: “Can you describe the way your fifth grade classroom looked?” It is helpful to have students practice three open-ended and three

close-ended questions with partners in the class and to practice recording the stories on paper or cassette.

Have students generate a set of questions for the real interviews. This can be done either individually or as a class. The questions should include both closed and open-ended questions.

Before students go out and do the real interview, invite an older person to your class so you can model how to get good stories out of the interview. Use the questions your students devised, but also model how the questions can change based on how the interview is going. For example, if the interviewee says he really loved his baseball team, you could ask him to recall what made it so fun, what the coach was like, if he remembers any details from a particular game. Ask students to help you with the interview by asking open-ended questions and elaborating questions.

When all students have completed their interviews, have them share some stories with each other and describe the experience to the class. The interviews themselves can be put on a poster or you can have the students write this project up as an essay. Photos of the interviewees can be brought in as well and put on the poster.

Students can add any number of artistic elements to this project including drawings of what a typical school room looked like, drawings or photos of clothing, music, political buttons, etc. from the era. Students may want to take cameras along with them on their interviews and use these to make a collage on their final poster.

Another fun way to involve the interviewees is to invite them to the class to see the posters at the end of the project.

Selected Resources on Adoption

John Raible

As the global village shrinks in the postmodern era, society wrestles with changing definitions of many traditional categories, including the social constructs of family, race, and culture. The practice of adoption is changing the composition of many family portraits. Teachers, guidance counselors, family therapists, social workers, and other professionals struggle to keep pace with the rapid rate of change, in order to meet the needs of their respective clients.

Adoption issues are relevant not only to adoptees and adoptive parents. Increasingly, birthparents and extended family members are being included in the discourse around adoption. New experiences with adoption point to the need for more enlightened social welfare policies and practices that reflect the complexity of family life today. For example, as more and more lesbians and gay men adopt children and form families, the intersection of adoption and social stigmatization (i.e., homophobia) challenges conventional notions of sexuality and family, and what can be considered the “best interests of the child.”

Today we know more about the impact of adoption on children and families. Educators and helping professionals can plan appropriately for the special needs of many adoptive families. Multiracial families formed when parents open their homes and hearts to children from different racial or cultural backgrounds, as is the case in transracial adoption (and often in international adoptions), can benefit from multicultural education done in a sensitive manner. In addition, many children who are adopted from foster care are likely to be survivors of neglect and physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Many adoptees may be older than the infants placed yesterday; some have additional physical or developmental complications and health concerns requiring specialized attention within adoptive families. It is safe to say that all children adopted today, as well as their families (biological and adoptive) are deserving of special attention from helping professionals, including educators.

Recent legislative changes affecting adoptions are currently being implemented nationwide, which will impact schools everywhere. Whereas in recent decades agencies were cautious and sometimes even reluctant to place children transracially (after the heyday of interracial adoptions in the late 1960s and early 70s), preferring to hold out for same-race foster and adoptive families,

domestic transracial placements are currently on the rise. Similarly, changes in immigration law allow for greater numbers of adoptions of children from agencies overseas. International adoption brings together increasing numbers of children and families of different cultural backgrounds. At the same time, adoptees' rights groups and organizations for birthparents are challenging state laws that deny adoptees and birthparents access to personal family information. Both adult adoptees and birthparents are asserting their rights to open closed records, including medical histories, in a state-by-state push to change these laws.

The trend towards openness instead of secrecy in adoptions has sparked growing acceptance of “open adoptions,” the practice of welcoming some level of connection and communication between relinquishing birthparents and adopting families. For example, as birth mothers acquire more say in decisions about where to place their babies, greater numbers of adoptive parents have ongoing contact with their adoptive children's biological families. As a result, more adopted children are growing up knowing two sets of families, one adoptive and the other biological. All of these changes in adoption practices influence what once were considered “normal” and commonplace notions of family, good parenting, and child development. They have the potential for far-reaching societal impact as the twenty-first century progresses.

Given these trends, there is much to study if we are to meet effectively the diverse needs of adopted children and their complex families in our rapidly changing society. The following resources have been selected because they address some of the major trends within the field of adoptions. The list is by no means exhaustive. It seems that new books, web sites, videos, and magazines become available every month. Even so, the following resources offer valuable information presented in an

accessible, user-friendly style, providing a starting point from which individuals who are interested in various adoption-related issues can launch their own learning process.

Chasnoff, Debra (director). *That's A Family: A Film For Kids About Family Diversity*, Women's Educational Media, San Francisco, CA, 2000.

A 35-minute video that is upbeat and told in the voices of real children (not actors), this film touches on a wonderful variety of families, including households headed by lesbian and gay parents. It also includes foster and adoptive families, and children adopted internationally and transracially.

Eldridge, Sherrie. *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*, Dell Publishing, 1999.

The author, herself an adoptee, explains complex emotional concerns commonly faced by adopted children, such as issues of loss, fear of abandonment, and grief. The book offers practical strategies for parents, along with case histories to illustrate each issue raised.

Gillespie, Peggy and Kaeser, Gigi. *Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1995. Interviews with forty families and photographs by Gigi Kaeser with adults, teens, and children living in multiracial families formed by adoption and interracial relationships.

Koenig, Mary Ann (essays) and Niki Berg (photography). *Sacred Connections: Stories About Adoption*, Running Press, 2000.

A book of essays based on interviews with adults who are part of the adoption triangle: adults who were adopted as children, birthmothers who relinquished children for adoption, and adoptive parents. Illustrated with beautifully photographed black and white portraits, the stories cover the range of experiences in the world of adoption: reunited birthparents and children, adoptees who never search, and adoptees who grow up keeping in contact with their families of origin, among others.

McNamara, Joan and Bernard H. McNamara. *Adoption and the Sexually Abused Child*, Human Services Development Institute, University of Maine, 1990.

An anthology of chapters by experts in the fields of child welfare and adoption, this collection provides background information on an issue faced by many adopted children, particularly those who have been through the foster care system prior to their adoptive placement. Topics include parenting children who act out sexually, sibling relations, addiction, ritual abuse, and therapeutic supports. Together, the chapters offer a model of hope and healing for adoptive families impacted by abuse.

New York State Citizen's Coalition for Children, *Struggle For Identity: Issues in Transracial Adoption*, PhotoSynthesis Productions, Ithaca, NY, 1998.

This 20-minute training video addresses the major issues faced by children of color growing up with white adoptive parents. The audience listens to a conversation between six adults of diverse backgrounds who were adopted as children as they reflect on their experiences living in multiracial families. Among other issues, the video addresses identity and belonging, cultural heritage, and racism. Also featured are brief appearances by several of the adoptees' white parents and an adult sibling.

Pavao, Joyce Maguire. *The Family of Adoption*, Beacon Press, 1998.

This book takes a developmental approach to describe the stages through which all adoptees pass. The stages progress from birth to eight years, preadolescence (eight to twelve), adolescence and young adulthood. Also discussed are the issues and challenges faced by other key members of the "family of adoption," namely, birthparents and adoptive parents.

Schaffer, Judith and Christina Lindstrom. *How to Raise an Adopted Child: A Guide to Help Your Child Flourish From Infancy Through Adolescence*, Crown Publishers, 1989.

Written by two psychotherapists and family therapists, the book originates in their practice at the Center for Adoptive Families, which they describe as a treatment, research, and training facility in Manhattan. The book details different stages of family life with adopted children, whether they are living in single parent families, in transracial, same-race, or international adoptive placements. The authors offer guidelines for predictable developmental stages common to all children, and then discuss complications many adoptees encounter.

Simon, Rita J. and Rhonda M. Roorda. *In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories*, Columbia University Press, 2000.

Co-authored by a leading researcher of transracial adoptions and an adult adoptee, this book relates personal narratives of biracial and black adults who were raised by white parents. Their stories convey the challenges of interracial family life; they run the gamut from facing some "hard truths" about the mistakes commonly made by white parents, to stories from adoptees who report no problems at all related to their adoptive placement.

Steinberg, Gail and Beth Hall. *Inside Transracial Adoption*, Perspectives Press, 2000.

Aimed primarily at white parents, this book offers sound guidance for thinking through the issues and concerns of raising children of color in multiracial families. The authors draw on research as well as their personal experiences to shed light on topics such as racial identity, family dynamics, and the developmental stages of adoptees and their families.

WEBSITE

John Raible Online

jraible@educ.umass.edu

www.unix.oit.umass.edu/~jraible

A new resource for families and professionals devoted to transracial adoption. John Raible is one of the adult adoptees featured in the video *Struggle For Identity: Issues in Transracial Adoption*.



Equity and Identity in Early Childhood Classrooms

A Note from the Editor

The early childhood classroom poses unique challenges to educators interested in exploring issues of equity and identity. On the one hand, young children are seekers of justice. Their burgeoning understanding of the world around them demands that their classrooms become inclusive communities that are just and fair. On the other hand, young children are beginning their journey toward understanding the complexities of self and other, identity and power. At times early childhood educators overestimate, and at other times underestimate, the capacities of young children. We have two articles and a bibliography which offer suggestions and guidance for addressing identity and equity issues in developmentally-appropriate ways with young children. I hope that educators will submit more activity ideas for this age group, so we can expand this section in the near future.

Equity, Identity, and Young Children

Compiled by Phyllis Labanowski

BOOKS

Derman-Sparks, L., & A.B.C. Task Force. (1989). *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The A.B.C. Task Force are leaders of multicultural education for young children. They have synthesized theory and practice in their book, which has been a guide for early childhood educators since it first came out.

Paley, V. G. (1995). *You can't say you can't play* (2nd ed.). Boston: Harvard University Press.

Paley, V. G. (1995). *Kwanzaa and me: A teacher's story*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Paley, V. G. (1999). *The kindness of children*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Paley, V. G. (2000). *White teacher* (2nd ed.). Boston: Harvard University Press.

Vivian Paley is a master kindergarten teacher who has explored her kindergarteners and their meaning making. She has documented the evolution of her own thinking about children over the years.

Pelo, A. & Davidson, F. (2000). *That's not fair: A teacher's guide to activism with young children*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

A wonderful resource for educators which helps to draw out children's natural sense of what is fair and what's not.

VIDEOS AND TEACHING GUIDES

Teaching Tolerance. (1997). *Starting small: Teaching tolerance in preschool and the early grades*. Montgomery, AL: The Southern Poverty Law Center.

A favorite among early childhood educators, this video and book explores classrooms and teachers, which embody the principles of social justice and inclusion. (Free to schools; fax requests on school letterhead to Teaching Tolerance, 334-264-7310.)

Wolpert, E. & Committee for Boston Public Housing. (1999). *Start seeing diversity: The basic guide to an anti-bias classroom*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

A video and guide that provides practical examples of the implementation of an anti-bias curriculum in a pre-school located in an urban housing development. The video explores six areas of bias: age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, abilities/physical characteristics and race/ethnicity with pre-schoolers, their parents and the educational staff.

TEACHING RESOURCES

Children's Book Press
San Francisco, CA
415-821-3080

www.childrensbookpress.org

A catalogue of literature for children that includes: Native Americans, African Americans, European Americans and Latinas/os.

Gryphon House, Inc.
Beltsville, MD
800-638-0928

www.gryphonhouse.com

A good source for early childhood literature and resources for educators.

Redleaf Press
St. Paul, MN
800-641-0115

www.redleafpress.org

Another source for early childhood resources, oriented toward educators.

Shen's Books
Auburn, CA
800-456-6660
www.shens.com

An extensive collection of fiction and nonfiction books for pre-school and elementary children including: multiple versions of traditional fairy tales, special issues (adoption, biracial families, special needs) and one of the best collections of literature about people of Asian descent.



Call for Future Submissions

Request for Lesson Plans, Activity Plans, and Curriculum Units

Family Diversity Projects is interested in supporting educators who create and pilot curricula to accompany the photo-text exhibit, *In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families*. We will accept submissions for inclusion in a revised notebook that will accompany the exhibit to schools across the country. We especially would like activities that focus on adoption, blended families, abilities and disabilities, and mental illness, and any activities suitable for early childhood classrooms.

Due to the complexity of the subject of *In Our Family*, we are collecting best practices in order to inspire other educators to teach about the concepts presented and to encourage educators to create and pilot their own ideas. A curriculum editor will help us to collate the submissions. We will send you any editorial changes for approval before making submissions available to other educators. We encourage you to include samples of student work as well. Credit and acknowledgment will be given for each submission which is selected.

We have created the following criteria in order to assist educators in determining which curricula to submit given what we know are most useful to other educators using *In Our Family*. Please submit individual lesson plans, activities, or curriculum units that you have developed that:

- Connect to the photo-text exhibit and inspire educators to use the photo-text exhibit with their students
- Help other educators introduce the concepts of oppression, inclusion “non-traditional families”, etc.
- Can be spiraled up or down for older and younger audiences.
- Are inclusive of students and their families traditionally excluded by curriculum: adopted, foster, gay/lesbian, multiracial, etc.
- Facilitate students in taking action and working toward justice.
- Are ready to be used by other educators, nation-wide.

We appreciate your work toward equity in our schools and thank you for your support, creativity and inspiration!

Please send submissions via e-mail attachment or in hard copy and on a CD, floppy or zip disc to:

Family Diversity Projects

P. O. Box 1246

Amherst, MA 01004-1246

413-256-0502

E-mail: info@familydiv.org

(Please see the *Format for Submissions*, next page.)

Format for Submissions

In order to create a standard format for the educators/facilitators who will be using the activities in the notebook, we would like to suggest the following. These are the components of a lesson plan/activity that we think may be most useful to others.

If your plans do not conform to this format, feel free to adjust it.

Please send submissions via e-mail attachment or in hard copy and on a floppy disc.

TITLE

DEVELOPED BY

Please write your name and position/title as you would like to see it written in the notebook. Include the name of your school/organization where applicable. If your activity is based on the work of someone else, please include information about the original source as well.

QUOTE OR ANECDOTE

You may want to include a short quote or anecdote...one that highlights an important aspect of this activity.

GRADE RANGE OF TARGET AUDIENCE AND TIME NEEDED

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

LEARNING OUTCOMES *(Feel free to keep the outcomes to a short list; we suggest listing one or two that address an academic goal and one or two that address the development of a social justice skill.)*

Students will:

- 1.
- 2.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES *(for students)*

PROCESS

People who will be facilitating the activity will appreciate the details.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *(if applicable)*

SAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK *(if applicable)*

Please get permission.

FACILITATOR'S NOTES AND RESOURCES

This is an important part of the plan; it will give some advice to others who will be facilitating this activity. In addition, it will offer resources that you may have used to frame your thinking.

RELEVANT ARTICLES *(with permission to reprint)*



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