

## SECTION I

### WHO AM I, WHO ARE WE? EXPLORING PERSONAL, GROUP AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES

The activities in Section I are designed to encourage students to make connections between the ways in which they think about their own identities, the ways in which they categorize others and the concept of nation as a particular kind of reference group. By examining the variety of identities each person has and the importance of context in the selection of appropriate criteria for categorizing themselves and others, students will begin an exploration of how individuals balance the concept of nationality with a variety of other kinds of identities in the course of daily life.

In **Sources of Our "I"dentify**, students examine various aspects of personal identity, and distinguish those aspects of identity which are unique to individuals and those that tie us to reference groups. In an extension activity, students have the opportunity to illustrate how various different aspects of their identities combine to form a unified sense of self.

In **Defining Groups**, students examine how we employ changing criteria to define groups and categorize individuals. Utilizing shoes as a substitute for people, students discuss how the decision to focus on one set of defining criteria over another depends upon the situational context, and how people often manipulate defining criteria for purposes of group inclusion or exclusion.

In **Thinking About Nationalism: A Cluster Activity**, students probe their own knowledge and impressions in generating a cluster definition of nationalism.

ACTIVITY #1**Sources of Our "I"dentify**

People vary in many ways, some subtle and some not so subtle. While we often share very important similarities, each of us is also unique. Some of what makes us unique may be of an individual nature, such as individual talents, experiences or disabilities. Some aspects of who we are tie us to others with whom we share certain things in common. People with whom we share some element of identity in common can be a **reference group**.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will reflect upon the various aspects of who they are, and the sources of their identities.
2. Students will determine which sources of their identities ties them to reference groups.
3. Students will visually illustrate how these various elements combine into a unified individual.

**When To Use:** Ideally, early in the year to provide a baseline for future discussion. Anytime when issues of personal and group identity are relevant.

**Time Required:** 25 minutes, with optional homework assignment.

**Materials:** Student Handout 1-#1; old magazines for optional homework assignment.

**Procedure:**

1. Have the following list prepared to display (on board, overhead or butcher paper), but hidden from student view:

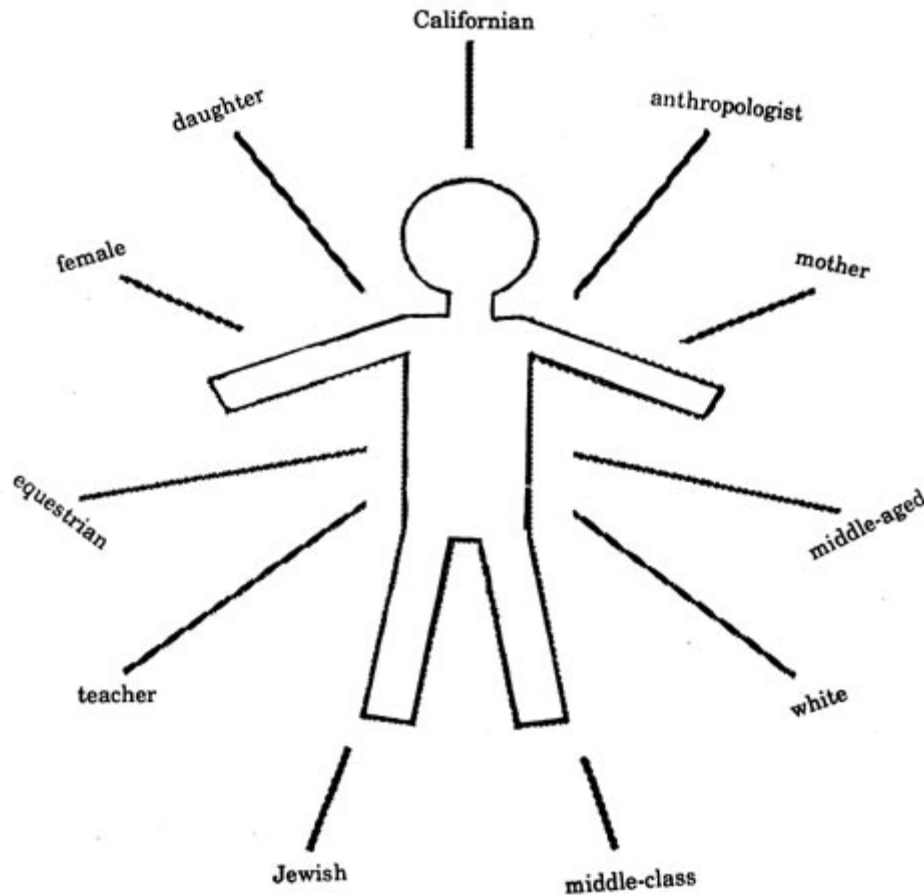
Sources of Our "I"dentify

Age	Skills	Family
Talents	Religion	Ethnicity
Race	Education	Language
Hobbies	Nationality	Class
Ideas	Gender	Background

Activity #1

2. Write on the board or overhead, "Who Am I?" Ask students to think about the question for a minute. Tell them to think of different roles they play at different times of the day, and to try to think of nouns rather than adjectives. You may help by modeling yourself on the board in a manner similar to that illustrated below.

Distribute Student Handout 1-#1, and instruct students to use the figure to write down at least six different kinds of identities that they think are important in defining who they are (besides their name!).



Activity # 1

3. Display the list "Sources of Our Identity." Ask students to examine their own lists and figure out where the different things they wrote down fit into the above categories. Give them two-three minutes to pair things up.

Then ask, "Are there any things you wrote down that do not fit into any of the categories on the list?" Generate additional general categories to accommodate what students have listed, as necessary. Some possibilities might be geographic affiliation (e.g., New Yorker), political identity, physical attributes, club (or gang) identity, etc. (Keep this list available for use in Activity #2.)

4. Ask students to identify which elements on the list define aspects of identity that are usually unique to the individual. Which are most often used to define large *groups* of people? (Race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic class, gender, sometimes language, age, etc.)

Are there any items on the list that tie everyone in the class together in a common group? (They are all teenagers [age]; they may all be sophomores, or a least attend the same school [education], etc.) Are there any items on the list that tie some people together in one group and others together in a different group? Point out that some of us may share a common identity or **reference group** under one category (e.g., students), but have different identities or reference groups under another category (e.g., gender and religion).

5. Ask students to look again at the six to ten things they originally wrote down. Ask them, "Is any one of these aspects of our identity more important than all the others?" Allow students to express themselves, but lead the discussion toward an acknowledgment that it is all of these different aspects together that make up the unique individual that each one of us is, and together make us who we are.

**Optional Homework Assignment:**

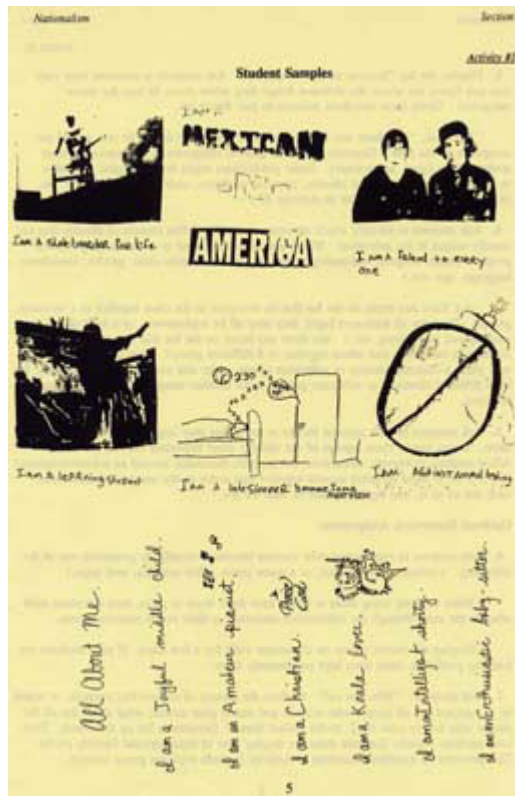
6. Ask students to represent their various identities visually by preparing one of the following: a collage, a storyboard, or a name poem. (See samples, next page.)

When students bring these to class, have them share in pairs, then introduce each other to the class through the information contained in their visual representations.

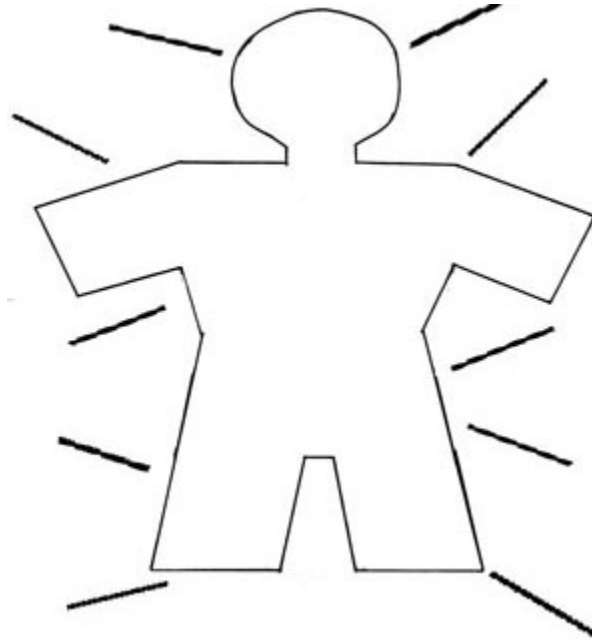
Display all student pieces on classroom walls for a few days. If your students are building portfolios, have them kept permanently there.

7. Ask students: "Who are *we*?" Explore the aspects of culture that connect, or would be recognized by, all people who work at and attend your school; what about the all the people who live in your city? in the United States? Generate a list on the board. Then have students visually illustrate these for display next to their personal identity pieces. This provides an excellent transition to Activity #2 which explores group identity.

Student Samples



**SOURCES OF MY “I”DENTITY**



*These Source Overlap and Interact  
We are More or Less Aware of Them*

Some of These Differences Tie Us to **Reference Groups**

## ACTIVITY #2

### **Defining Groups**

Each of us gives more or less importance to certain aspects of our identity. Some aspects of our identity may be very important to us, but other people may be unaware of them or consider them unimportant. Sometimes, other people may choose to emphasize an aspect of our identity that we do not think very important.

As discussed in Activity 1, some aspects of our identity tie us to reference groups. We may choose to emphasize or de-emphasize our identity with a particular reference group depending upon the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Often, other people impose a **reference group identity** on us that we do not choose; alternatively, we often impose reference group identities on others even though they may wish to emphasize a different aspect of who they are.

In this lesson, students will examine how we employ changing criteria to define groups and categorize individuals. Utilizing shoes as a substitute for people, students will discuss how the decision to focus on one set of attributes over another can change with the situational context. It is also possible to manipulate criteria defining inclusion or exclusion in a group when it serves the group, or individual, purpose. (This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Thomas E. Haren, McKinley Senior High School, Canton, Ohio.)

#### **Objectives:**

1. Students will discuss how the criteria utilized for defining reference group membership can be both inclusionary and exclusionary.
2. Students will examine how criteria for reference group membership can be manipulated to serve group or individual purposes.

**When to Use:** Anytime, but ideally within a few days after doing Activity #1. Anytime when issues of personal and group identity are relevant.

**Time Required:** 1 class period

**Materials:** Shoes. Bring approximately 12 single shoes to class. Aim for some variety in size, style, and gender. Include some "funky-looking" shoes if possible. You may encourage student participation with their own shoes, but using your own shoes avoids student sensitivity about their own shoes and about other people handling them. *If you want students to use their own shoes, warn them the day before that they will be using their shoes in a class lesson.*

**Procedure:**

1. Have students form a sitting circle. Place the shoes in the center of the circle. Ask students to jot down categories for grouping the shoes. Let the students generate their own criteria. Then start sharing their ideas. (Possibilities include size, color, style, brand, age, boys or girls, dress or casual, and more.) As each criterion is suggested, have two or three "helpers" group the shoes appropriately. Do this for four or five different categories.

2. Have students discuss which categories tend to be more inclusive. Which tend to be exclusive? Are there any categories which suggest status? Are any criteria suggested that are more difficult to determine? (i.e. If the shoe is worn by both boys and girls, how should the shoe be classified? If a shoe is equally black and red, for example, which color category dominates and why?) How does being forced to choose affect one's identity?

3. Ask students to imagine that an "All Sports Day" were declared at school so that only shoes associated with sports were deemed acceptable. Have the helpers group the shoes into "shoes associated with sports" and all others. How do shoes that fit the "right" category feel? How do shoes that are left out feel?

Is it possible to think of ways of including in the "sports" group some of the shoes now left out? What are some ways those shoes might propose to fit it? (i.e. Redefine "sports" so that, for example, dance is considered a sport, and therefore any shoes that can be danced in would be acceptable.) What other responses might the non-sports shoes have to being left out? Would the formation of a counter group that establishes its own identity and does not seek to "fit in" be possible? (Have the students apply the question to the real "left out" shoes in front of them.)

4. Can students think of ways that people change or stretch either the criteria for defining a group or their own definitions of who they are in order to make the group more inclusive? Emphasize that groups can be both inclusive and exclusive.

5. What are some examples from historic and/or modern times of groups of people who have not been accepted by the dominant culture? How were they treated? What are different ways that these groups responded to being excluded?

ACTIVITY #3**Thinking About Nationalism: A Cluster Activity**

Students are introduced to the concept of "nationalism" by being asked to think about what the term brings to mind for them. The activity provides a means for getting students "into" the topic as well as providing a written group record which can be corrected, amended and added to as they progress through the year.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will reflect upon what the term "nationalism" means to them.
2. Students will consider various different meanings and nuances to the term "nationalism."
3. Students will have a written record of their understanding of the concept to correct, amend and expand as they progress through the year.

**When to Use:** Anytime, including during the "Unresolved Problems of the Modern World" unit, before the French Revolution, during the "Rise of Imperialism and Colonialism" unit, as an "into" activity for World War I, or whenever the teacher wishes to focus student attention on the concept of nationalism. This is most effective if used early in the school year because once done, it can be referred back to repeatedly as concepts will repeat throughout the year.

**Time Required:** 15 minutes

**Materials:** May be done on blackboard or overhead, but use of butcher paper (newsprint) is ideal so that results may be saved to refer back to later on in year or remain posted on the bulletin board.

**Procedure:**

**1.** Discuss the definition for "nation": a group of people who feel connected to each other by sharing common culture (including language, religion, customs, history, traditions), who feel connected to a particular land, and who desire political sovereignty. Check for student understanding of the suffix "-ism" (used in the production of nouns denoting action or practice - e.g., real-ism; patriot-ism; race-ism, etc.)

2. Write the word "nationalism" in the center of the butcher paper, blackboard or overhead projector. Ask students to give you definitions for the word. Record their answers in a cluster format. When necessary, condense and extract key concepts from their answers, trying to keep similar ideas in the same vicinity. While your students may not initially express all of the following ideas (and may come up with some not listed below), you should end up with something like the diagram below.



3. Explain to students that the word "nationalism" expresses a concept that has many different aspects. It is a relatively new concept in the world, and is one result of Enlightenment ideas. Tell them that emphasizing certain aspects over others may lead a nation and its people in different directions in terms of feelings about themselves and in relations with others. You may want to look back at the cluster and predict the implications of a sampling of the definitions.

4. Keep the cluster posted for continual reference, revision and application throughout the year. You and your students will add to and refine definitions as they apply to new units of study and current events.