



*Knowing Who You Are...*

Helping Youth in Care Develop  
Their Racial and Ethnic Identity



Fairness and Equity Symposium 2005





# Objectives

- Discuss key concepts including why racial and ethnic identity is important; characteristics of a healthy racial and ethnic identity; and important socialization building blocks.
- Reflect on the impact of messages we receive from various influences on how we view our and others' racial and ethnic group membership.
- Begin to explore our own racial and ethnic identity and talk to others about their racial and ethnic identity.
- Articulate practical opportunities and strategies for incorporating racial and ethnic identity development work into day-to-day practice with youth and young adults.



# Definitions

**Prejudice:** Generalization of a particular group (cognition) AND an emotional attachment, such as anger, contempt, disdain, or even compassion (affect).

**Racism (1):** Any attitude, action, or institutional practice backed up by institutional power that subordinates people because of their color. This includes the imposition of one ethnic group's culture in such a way as to withhold respect for, to demean, or to destroy the cultures of other races.

**Racism (2):** The socially constructed system of domination that benefits one racial or ethnic group at the expense of another, based on the belief in a causal link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect or culture and, combined with it, the notion that some races are inherently superior to others.

**Stereotype:** An oversimplified, standardized image or idea about a person or group of persons based on bias or prejudice, often leading to unfair judgments and treatment of the person or group. Generalization of a particular group (cognition only)



# Definitions

**Assumption:** An opinion about another adopted without question or examination.

**Bias:** An inclination or preference either for or against an individual based on unexamined personal judgment and frequently assumption.

**Courageous Conversations:** Dialogue that engages others in spite of interpersonal discomfort in order to challenge the assumptions, biases and accepted structures of racism.

**Discrimination:** The restrictive treatment of a person or group based on prejudiced assumptions of group characteristics, rather than on individual judgment (behavior).

**Disproportionality:** Statistical representation in foster care of a particular racial/ethnic group of children at a higher rate than in the general population.

**Power:** 1. The ability to determine and enforce the rules and make legitimate superiority based on race, economic worth, age, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation and religion. 2. An individual, institution or government that acts with authority, and that exercises control.

# Healthy Racial & Ethnic Identity

A complex set of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that emanate from one's membership in a particular racial or ethnic group.

Identification as a member of a particular racial/ethnic group or groups.

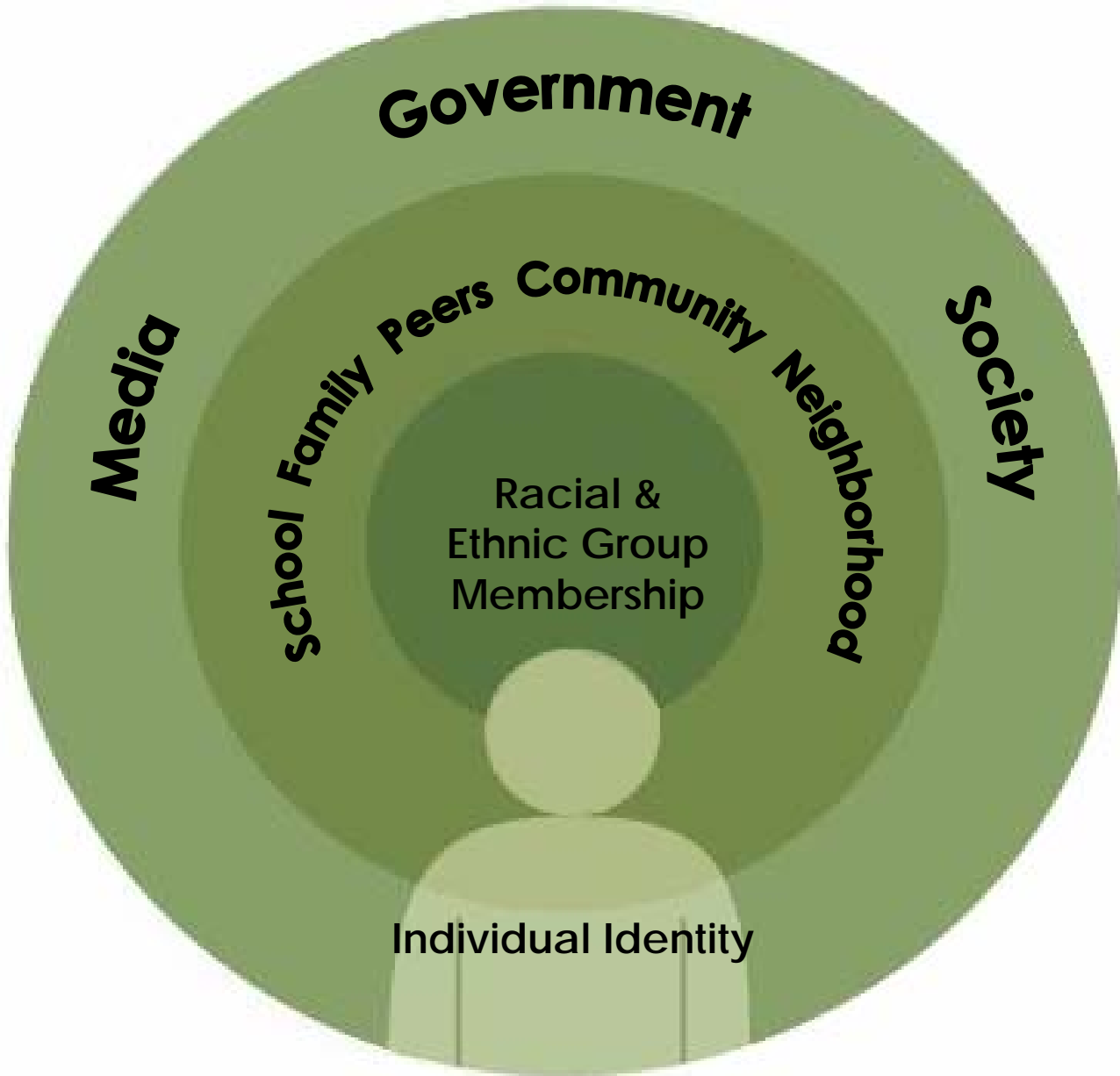
Affiliates with members of his/her own group, but is also generally accepting of people from other groups.



Able to cope successfully with perceived or real racism and discrimination and has possibly shown some effective strategies for dealing with it.

Has a generally positive attitudes about being a member of that group, but also has a balanced view of the positive and negatives associated with that group.

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# Messages

## Protective Messages

Remind and prepare youth to face hostility and racism in the mainstream

## Proactive Messages

Highlight cultural history and individual abilities and traditional cultural strengths

# Racial & Ethnic Identity

*Stages Common in Racial and Ethnic Identity Models*

**Commitment**

**Exploration/Identification**

**Emerging Awareness**

**Relative Unawareness**

# Building Blocks

Youth Outcomes

**Social Competence**

**Psychological  
Adjustment**

Components of  
Identity Development

**Exploration**

Learning about  
different aspects  
of the self

**Commitment**

Developing  
a cohesive  
sense of self

Critical/Important  
Socialization

*Promoting  
Racial and  
Ethnic Pride*

*Developing  
Multicultural  
Competence*

*Preparation  
for Racism &  
Discrimination*

# Racial and Ethnic Identity Development Building Blocks

## **Promoting Racial and Ethnic Pride**

People who have opportunities to learn about customs, traditions, history and the experiences of others from their own racial and ethnic groups develop a sense of pride and hope for themselves. They are also better able to see the possibilities that the future may hold for them and members of their racial and ethnic group(s).

## **Developing Multicultural Competence**

Having an appreciation for those who are different from one's self, having the ability to understand another person's racial and ethnic identity and listening to and understanding their perspective are some of the attributes of multicultural competence that will ensure that we are prepared to live and work in a multicultural society.

## **Preparation for Racism and Discrimination**

Racial and ethnic identity development includes learning about and being prepared to address all forms of oppression and racism, regardless of your racial or ethnic identity. This preparation includes learning how to identify racism and discrimination, how to address it, as well as understanding stereotypes and the role they play in society.

# Courageous Conversations

## **Experience Discomfort**

It's courageous to talk about racism, prejudice and discrimination and experience fully the uncomfortable feelings that may come up for us...anger, guilt, confusion, impatience, fear. Our willingness to risk being uncomfortable is the only way to deepen our interracial relationships and create a space where our different perspectives can sit and interact.

## **Accept/Expect Nonclosure**

It's courageous to accept that we won't all agree, issues may not be resolved and we may not get the closure we are looking for. The fact is that courageous conversations take time and effort, they are not quickly over and done. Instead we can work towards being able to accept and affirm that different experiences exist. When this occurs our own perspectives and life can be changed.

## **Stay Engaged**

It's courageous to not only get in touch with our own perspectives and express them, it takes even more courage to listen to another and allow their perspective and experience to deeply influence our own. There will be many times when we may want to walk away from the conversation, especially when it gets difficult, but staying engaged is the only way for us to get to a place of healing.

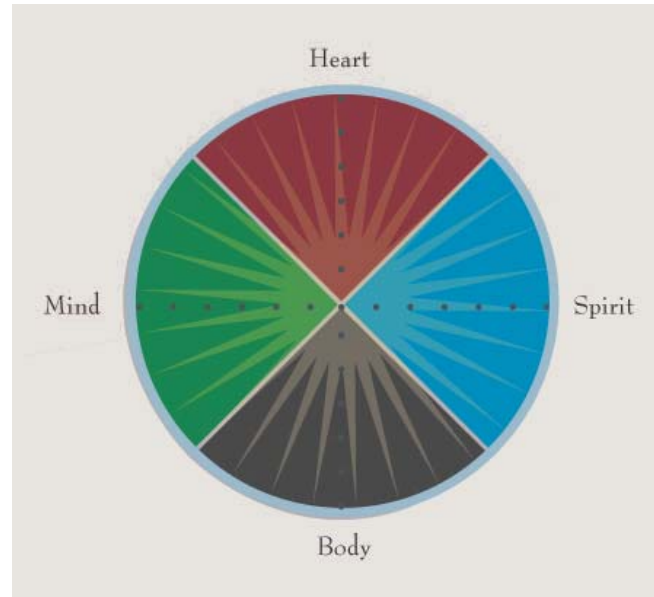
## **Speak Our Truth**

It's courageous to communicate our honest and sincere perspectives and ideas. Saying what we think others want to hear or avoiding saying what we feel prevents us from experiencing one another fully. Speaking our truth honors our experiences and helps us to get to a place where our genuine thoughts can be shared and difficult questions can be asked.

# Heart, Mind, Body, Spirit

Heart - Source and center of emotional life. Where our deepest and sincerest feelings are located and where we are most vulnerable to pain. Gives us the ability to feel humane and altruistic feelings. Helps us to sincerely and compassionately connect with ourselves and others.

Mind - Center of consciousness; generates thoughts, ideas, and perceptions and stores knowledge and memories. Where we think, understand and reason.



Spirit - Our will, sense of self, enthusiasm for living and experiencing life. Inspires and moves us to action, to living by the guiding principles that we have chosen for ourselves. Motivates us to seek fairness and justice for all. Helps us to understand that we are all connected and tied to one another.

Body - Our physical form. Without the body the best intentions of the heart, mind, and spirit cannot come to fruition. Our actions, our words, our physical responses and reactions. How we walk our talk and put into action our beliefs, values and commitments. Care for and supporting ourselves and others in this work, especially when we become tired and weary from our journey.