

Identity and Respect



LESSON THREE

IDENTITY & RESPECT

The materials in this section enable students to start exploring the two key areas of identity and respect. These explorations are often particularly significant for many students, as this may be the first time that they have been encouraged or empowered to explore these areas in their lives.

As with any other personal area, there are complexities around this, but we hope that this brief introduction will enable you to reflect upon a few things before having this very valuable experience with your students. These reflections are critical as preparation for global dialogue for a number of reasons:

1 In order to speak to others about the things that are important to us we have to have reflected upon them, and appreciated the diversity within our own classrooms.

2 It gives students the opportunity to develop those dialogue skills further by being able to listen to and explore the diversity within their own classroom.

This is an ideal time to remind students of the rules for dialogue that they agreed at the start, as it is important for students to feel safe when discussing these very personal elements. It is fine for students to ‘pass’ – nobody should have to share everything all the time, and certainly as students may be new to this kind of very personal discussion, we should respect their wish to remain silent on some issues.

Critically, this requires a new approach for a teacher when asking questions. In class, when we ask questions we are usually seeking recall of information that we have already given the students; it is a test and we expect them to respond quickly. Sometimes we ask them for opinions but, on the whole, questions asked in class expect a quick fire response. There is, however, a world of difference between “What is 2+2?” and “Why is it important to you to celebrate Christmas/Eid?” Students not only don’t have “the right answer” to depend upon, but they may well never have even reflected upon the answer to this, and it is important to give them thinking time in order to genuinely reflect upon this.

Paired or group discussion activities are important as well, as they give students the opportunity to reflect upon these ideas and to rehearse their responses in front of a smaller and more supportive audience, in order to feel more confident about sharing in a larger group.

IN THIS LESSON

1. THEORY

IDENTITY

SELF-IDENTITY

SOCIAL IDENTITY

RESPECT

2. ACTIVITIES

NAME SWAP

WHAT DOES RESPECT LOOK LIKE?

IDENTITY WHEEL

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

3. WORKSHEETS

IDENTITY

One of the critical things about taking part in dialogue is that we will have to talk about ourselves – so it is important to have a good idea of what we are talking about. This is not straightforward for anyone, certainly not without preparation, but it is particularly challenging for adolescents. Part of the process of going through adolescence is precisely this formation of the core of identity, a core upon which they will build their understanding of their own identities throughout the rest of their lives.

SELF-IDENTITY: Self-identity refers to how we define ourselves. Self-identity forms the basis of our self-esteem. In adolescence, the way we see ourselves changes in response to peers, family and school, among other social environments. Our self-identities shape our perceptions of belonging.

SOCIAL IDENTITY: Social identity is constructed by others and may differ from self-identity. Typically, people categorise individuals according to broad, socially-defined labels. For example, if you have dark skin, you may be labelled ‘black’ by others even though you may not have adopted that identity for yourself.

A positive self-identity relates strongly to positive self-esteem. All identities are not equally valued by society, so some adolescents may especially need reinforcement to help them construct

a positive sense of self. Many dimensions of identity can intersect to form our sense of self: gender, religious, racial, ethnic, national, generational, sexual, political, regional, professional, cultural and class. This multi-dimensionality can be explored through the identity wheel activity in this lesson.

There are a couple of particular challenges to beware of when exploring identity with adolescents, and these are to do with the way that they reflect upon (even unconsciously) their own identity formation. Barnett¹ identifies these as the *imaginary audience* and the *personal fable*, and they will be immediately obvious to anyone who is used to working with young people.

The *imaginary audience* is a term used to describe the fact that many adolescents feel that they are permanently on stage; they feel that they are always being watched by everyone. This approach drives the enormous sensitivity and self-consciousness that many adolescents exhibit.

This may often lead on to the *personal fable*. As young people believe that everyone is looking at them all the time, they can fall into the trap of thinking that they are special; that they are important or invulnerable (“The rules don’t apply to me” or “It won’t happen to me”) which can make them sarcastic or dismissive.

These are both steps in the formation of identity and ones with which teachers will be familiar, and we should hold in them in the back of our minds while we are having these discussions with our students.

RESPECT

This is a particularly challenging concept in the context of learning about dialogue. It is also made more complex by the fact that there are so many different understandings of the term in youth and adult cultures around the world.

The most important approach that students need to develop is a discerning and informed respect, not a vague tolerance of anything and everything. You might usefully compare these ideas which are unpacked in the resources below.

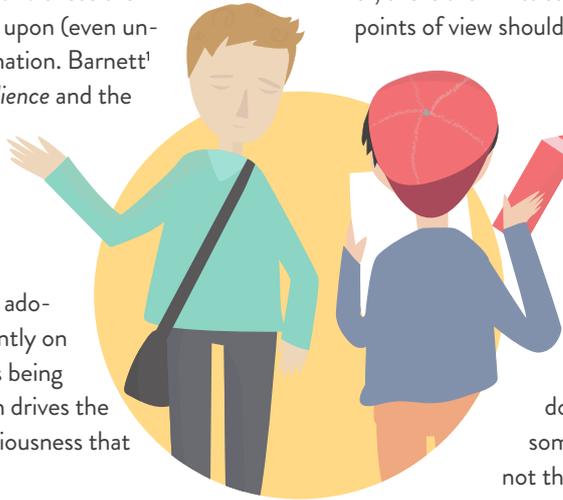
TOLERANCE: Tolerance is the lowest common denominator required if there is to be freedom of religion and belief. However, there are limits to tolerance and it may be argued that some points of view should not be tolerated in a democratic society.

RESPECT: One cannot be taught to respect another position. Rather, respect is ‘commanded’ by people holding a particular view or living a particular way of life. There is also the distinction between respecting a view and respecting someone’s right/freedom to hold a view.

It is important to note that ‘respect’ does not mean that we have to agree with someone else’s point of view. This is certainly not the case, in fact rather the opposite. If we are genuinely treating someone with respect, we should be honest in our relationships with them and, if they say something with which we disagree, then we should ensure that we express that – in a respectful way, of course.

RECOGNITION: One may respect another’s viewpoint or way of life to the extent that it should be publicly recognised as contributing positively to global society.

The exercises on respect in these materials approach it from a profoundly embodied perspective – what does respect look like/feel like? – and this provides students with a much more accessible approach than abstract speculation.



¹ Helping Teens Answer the Question “Who am I”: Physical Development in Adolescents (Barnett, 2005)

A LESSON ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE

By the end of this lesson your students should know that there is diversity in their classroom, understand how it affects them and have experienced reflection upon the importance of respect.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Students can reflect upon themselves and their experiences and students can demonstrate an understanding of how to treat one another with respect.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The worksheets that accompany the activities below can be found at the end of the lesson.

STARTER ACTIVITY 1

NAME SWAP

PURPOSE

To discover the meaning of their own name. This encourages students to reflect on the question, “What makes me, me?”

STEP 1

Prior research (one homework before the first lesson) will probably be necessary for students to get the most out of this. As well as research at home, they can search the internet for the meaning of their names – many sites exist for this.

STEP 2

Each student takes a turn explaining the meaning of their name. They can also include information on why their parents chose it, why it is important to them or what name they would prefer. You could use the *Listen to Me* (see page 10) activity to manage this. There is also considerable potential for display work.

MAIN ACTIVITY 1

WHAT DOES RESPECT LOOK LIKE?

PURPOSE

Students consider the nature of respect in practise through their own experience. Please remember as you approach this activity that ‘respect’ does not mean ‘agree with’ – our experience of student dialogue consistently demonstrates that students often have to work harder to feel comfortable identifying difference but that this is one of the most important experiences that they can have.

The purpose of this activity is to consider a range of ideas around the nature of respect. (We strongly suggest that you use your own judgment about your students to inform the options that you choose.)

RESOURCES

Worksheet 3.1: *What Does Respect Look Like?*

Worksheet 3.2: *R.E.S.P.E.C.T Principles for Dialogue*

STEP 1

Ask students to work in pairs to fill in examples in the *What Does Respect Look Like?* worksheet. These should be from their own experience:

- Of how they have been treated with respect
- Of how they treat others with respect
- Of how they have seen other people act with respect

STEP 2

After they have completed these, you should encourage a class discussion. It is particularly valuable to explore differences in what people have said, as there are no hard and fast rules here. This is particularly true across cultures where people can have some quite different ideas. (In some cultures it is not respectful to make eye contact with someone that you are talking to, in others it is quite the opposite.)

You may also wish to refer to the *R.E.S.P.E.C.T Principles for Dialogue*.

EXTENSION

In your discussion it may be appropriate to remind students that the key idea we need to develop is a discerning and informed respect, not a vague tolerance of anything and everything. You might like to compare the tolerance, respect and recognition scale (see page 36). Additional questions that students might discuss include:

- How do I decide what/whom to respect?
- What would prevent me from respecting a belief/action/statement?
- What does respecting a person mean? Does it mean recognising that even those who have done great harm to others still have human rights that need to be respected?

MAIN ACTIVITY 2

IDENTITY WHEEL ²

PURPOSE

This is an activity designed to help students explore what identity is. This will be an excellent way of helping students to begin to explore the diversity in their own communities. Students explore facets that compose their identities. Students should work on their own throughout this activity, and should never feel pressured to share anything about themselves that they wish to keep private. (Please feel free to adapt the resource for this lesson; it could also include gender, sexuality, etc.)

² Developed by the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, <https://tanenbaum.org/>, used with permission.

RESOURCES

Worksheet 3.3: *Social Identity Wheel Example*

Worksheet 3.4: *Social Identity Wheel*

Worksheet 3.5: *Social Identifiers*

STEP 1

Begin by explaining to students that the purpose of this session is to explore what we mean by 'identity'. Ask them to suggest definitions for this word. While there may be components of our identities that are internal, the vast majority are generated by the society in which we live.

STEP 2

Use an example (possibly an historical character, there is an example one for Christopher Columbus) to demonstrate the way that the wheel should be filled in. Then ask students to fill in the wheel for themselves.

STEP 3

When they have finished, you should ask them to record some information to answer the questions under the wheel:

- What did you learn about yourself?
- Which parts of the wheel were easiest to fill out?
- Which parts of the wheel were the hardest to fill out?
- Are there important aspects of your identity that don't fit on the wheel?
- Were you surprised by any of the categories on the wheel?

EXTENSION

Ask students to answer the questions on the *Social Identifiers* worksheet for one of the aspects of their identity that they have previously established. If appropriate, you can use this as the basis for class discussion about aspects of their identities.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY 1**REFLECTION QUESTIONS****PURPOSE**

It's always great to finish by reflecting upon the key ideas.

STEP 1

You can pick (or a student can pick) one of the following questions for the class to consider:

1. Something I'd like to know more about would be...
2. Something I found particularly interesting was...
3. Today I learned...
4. Something that really stands out about what we learned is...
5. Something I was a little unsure about was...
6. The big question remaining for me is...
7. One of the keywords I learned today is...
8. One thing from today's lesson that made me think was...
9. If I could sum up my learning in three pictures they would be...
10. The most important thing to remember about today's lesson is...
11. The student contribution I found most interesting was...

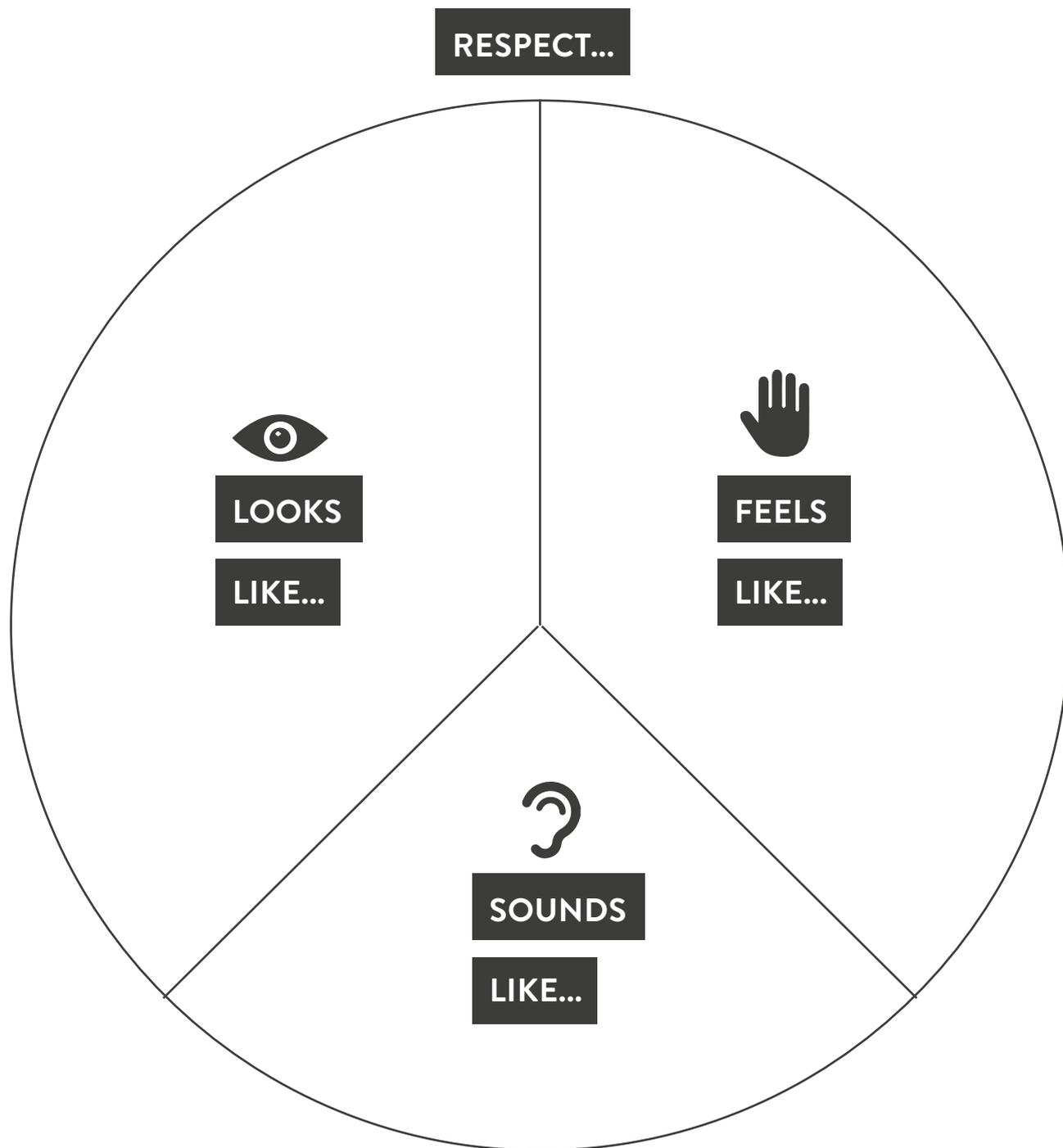
STEP 2

There are lots of options about how to use the selected question:

1. Students can answer in writing and then display their answers where they can see them.
2. Students can answer orally.
3. You can use *Sharing Our Ideas* (see page 11) to stimulate discussion.
4. You can repeat as many times as you want.
5. Get students to write their ideas, so they can use this as the basis for the blog / journal.

WORKSHEET 3.1

WHAT DOES RESPECT LOOK LIKE?



WORKSHEET 3.2

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. PRINCIPLES FOR DIALOGUE

Dialogue enables us to talk about culture and identity, but we recommend that it always emphasises faith and belief, because those two things can play a very positive role in our world, yet are almost always referred to in a negative way. Dialogue emphasises similarity and difference; finding the ways in which we are similar to other people is often easy but discovering the ways in which we are different gives us much more opportunity to learn. Diversity is something that we celebrate. We have a number of principles that support all our work, summed up in the acronym R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

R

RESPECT: We treat everyone with respect, we don't have to agree with one another all the time, but we should always treat one another with respect.

E

EDUCATION: No matter how old or experienced we are, we all continue learning. We can always learn from one another and share a responsibility to teach others about the things that are precious to us.

S

SAFETY: We know that people can only flourish when they are safe. We want everyone who takes part in dialogue to feel safe: students safe to openly share their ideas, teachers safe that they are well-supported, principals and parents safe that the programme is educationally beneficial for all their students.

P

PERSPECTIVE: We want to help people make dialogue work in their individual circumstances rather than forcing everyone to do the same thing. We know that sometimes we have to be patient as schools find the best way to do that.

E

EMPATHY: Being open to looking at the world through someone else's eyes gives us new ways to understand the world and helps us to learn and grow. We don't have to accept everything we encounter; sometimes the thing we learn is that we are different and disagree.

C

COMPASSION: We create opportunities for our young people to actively engage in their communities, working with others of different faiths and beliefs to address pressing issues and make the world a better place.

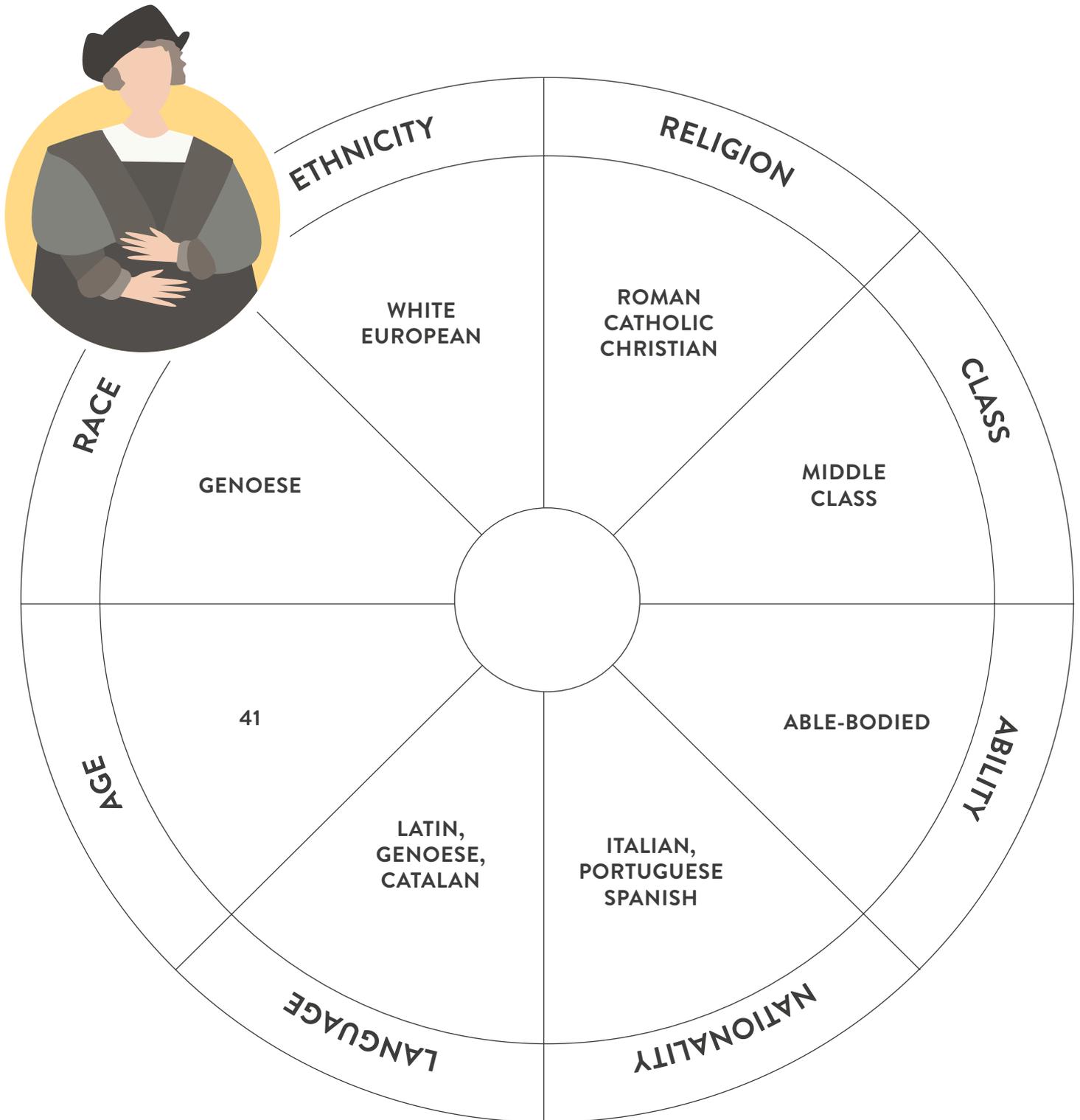
T

TRUST: The key to any relationship is trust. Dialogue is about building trust that we will always treat one another respectfully, openly and honestly, that we will always listen to each other's values and beliefs.

WORKSHEET 3.3

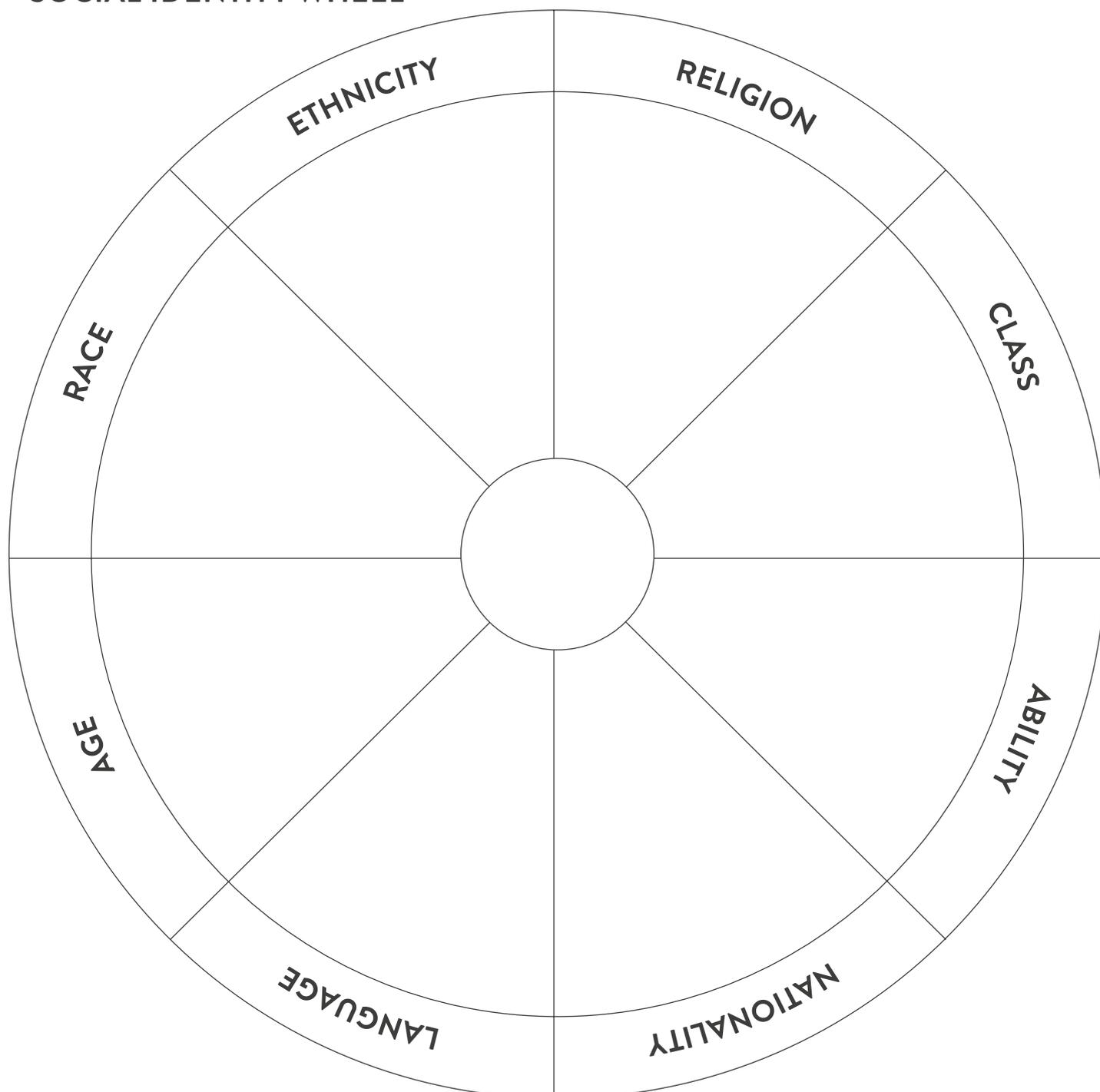
SOCIAL IDENTITY WHEEL EXAMPLE

This Identity Wheel has been completed for Christopher Columbus for the Year 1492, when he set sail for Cuba.



WORKSHEET 3.4

SOCIAL IDENTITY WHEEL



ONLY SHARE PERSONAL

INFORMATION THAT YOU ARE

COMFORTABLE DISCUSSING

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

What did you learn about yourself?

Which parts of the wheel were easiest to fill out?

Which parts were the hardest to fill out?

Are there important aspects of your identity that don't fit on the wheel?

Were you surprised by any of the categories?

WORKSHEET 3.5**SOCIAL IDENTIFIERS**

Only share personal information that you are comfortable discussing. Social Identifiers are those qualities (visible or hidden) that describe who we are. For example: race, gender, age, nationality and religion are all social identifiers.

STEP 1

Pick one Social Identifier that is important to you (that you identified on the wheel).

STEP 2

Now complete the following sentences:

One thing I love about being _____ is:

One thing that is hard about being _____ is:

One thing that I want others to know about being _____ is:

One thing that I never want to hear again about being _____ is: