

You may be wondering ...

Will the topic of ethnic-racial inequities in the Identity Project lead students to wonder or compare which ethnic-racial groups in the U.S. 'have had it worse'?

We have designed each lesson in the Identity Project to support teachers in creating an open and informative space for students to discuss these issues while acquiring key understandings about the role of ethnic-racial identity in their lives.

What does
discrimination mean?

Discrimination means being treated poorly because of one's membership in an ethnic-racial group and/or in other groups with which we may identify based on gender, religion, etc. It is harmful to adolescents' well-being. Research consistently shows that ethnic-racial discrimination has negative consequences for youth's psychosocial and academic outcomes.^{2,3}

Steer conversations away from comparisons. Steer toward self-exploration.



Students will learn that although stereotyping is a natural human tendency, it can be harmful and can result in discrimination experiences. Introducing students to issues of discrimination is not intended to inspire a competition of which group or individual has experienced the most discrimination. These comparisons can invalidate student experiences and are counterproductive to the goals of the Identity Project. The main goal of the Identity Project is to foster students' exploration of their own ethnic-racial identity. Gaining clarity about their own ethnic-racial background and experiences has been linked to higher self-esteem and positive academic outcomes for youth.¹

IN THE CLASSROOM

Build Community Throughout the Journey

As students learn about ethnic-racial discrimination, its historic roots, and its contemporary consequences, provide opportunities for students to reflect on, formulate, and share their own perspectives. Model and practice listening with empathy to the perspectives and experiences of others. Promoting your students' perspective-taking and empathic listening skills can strengthen your classroom community through enhanced student engagement and cooperation.⁴

Foster Perspective-Taking to Build Empathy. Build Empathy to Inspire Action.

In guiding students to listen to others' experiences and perspectives, the hope is to gain greater empathy and understanding to eliminate discrimination for ALL.⁶ Have students consider the following quotes:

"Empathy may be the single most important quality that must be nurtured to give peace a fighting chance."
- Arundhati Roy, Indian Author and Human Rights Activist

"Injustice here is a threat to injustice everywhere."
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., U.S. Civil Rights Activist

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."
- Lilla Watson, Aboriginal Australian Activist

Key Takeaway:

The point of the Identity Project is to prompt students to explore their ethnic-racial identity. Comparing the discrimination and suffering of different ethnic-racial groups in order to determine who had it "worse off" invalidates student experiences. It is detrimental to creating a culture of mutual support among students.

References and Articles for Further Reading:

1. Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Douglass, S., Updegraff, K. A., & Marsiglia, F. F. (2018). A small-scale randomized efficacy trial of the Identity Project: Promoting adolescents' ethnic-racial identity exploration and resolution. *Child Development*, 89(3), 862-870.
2. Wong, C. A., Eccles, J. S., & Sameroff, A. (2003). The influence of ethnic discrimination and ethnic identification on African American adolescents' school and socioemotional adjustment. *Journal of personality*, 71(6), 1197-1232.
3. Umaña-Taylor, A. J., & Updegraff, K. A. (2007). Latino adolescents' mental health: Exploring the interrelations among discrimination, ethnic identity, cultural orientation, self-esteem, and depressive symptoms. *Journal of adolescence*, 30(4), 549-567.
4. O'Brien, E. (2007). Antiracism. In *Handbooks of the sociology of racial and ethnic relations* (pp. 427-440). Springer, Boston, MA.
5. Cytrynbaum, P. (2011). Race Talk When Diversity Equals One. *Teaching Tolerance*: Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/race-talk-when-diversity-equals-one>
6. Dixon, A. (2011, July). Can Empathy Reduce Racism? *Greater Good Magazine*. Retrieved from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/empathy_reduces_racism
7. Eva, A. (2017, October). Three SEL Skills You Need to Discuss Race in Classrooms. *Greater Good Magazine*. Retrieved from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/threesel_skills_you_need_to_discuss_race_in_classrooms
8. Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students. (2017). *Teaching Tolerance*. Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20Difficult%20Conversations%20web.pdf>

Please note that this is proprietary material and cannot be modified or sold without express written permission of Dr. Adriana Umaña-Taylor. For more information, please visit: <https://umana-taylorlab.gse.harvard.edu/>.

How to cite: Umaña-Taylor, A. J. & AERID lab (2020). *You May Be Wondering... Will the topic of ethnic-racial identities in the Identity Project lead students to wonder or compare which ethnic-racial groups in the U.S. 'have had it worse'?*. [Fact Sheet]. <https://umana-taylorlab.gse.harvard.edu/>