Discovering Self: Identity and Culture

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow.

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Contents

The Annie E. Casey Foundation believes that to achieve the result it seeks — that all children in the United States have bright futures — it must integrate racial and ethnic equity and inclusion as a core component of all its work.

With that in mind, the Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative prioritizes equity and inclusion in its efforts to ensure that young people — ages 14 to 26 in the United States who have spent at least one day in foster care after their 14th birthday — have the relationships, resources and opportunities to achieve well-being and success.

Authentic youth engagement has been a philosophical cornerstone since the Jim Casey Initiative's inception and has become a signature practice that empowers young people across the nation. This practice of youth-adult partnership has demonstrated that including young people who have experienced foster care in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy and practices leads to significantly better and more equitable solutions.

With this foundational imperative in mind, the Jim Casey Initiative developed the Equity Conversation Guides for Young Leaders and Partners — a collection of four documents — to help young leaders and adult facilitators engage in conversations aimed at the following objectives:

• developing systems analysis and critical thinking skills;

• creating space to learn together;

• sparking interest to learn more; and

• building knowledge of equity and inclusion, with a positive youth development and adolescent brain development lens.

The Equity Conversation Guides for Young Leaders and Partners are designed to be an integral component of partnering with young people in this important work. Building youth-adult partnerships requires drawing from the lessons of adolescent brain science to provide the most relevant leadership and professional development experiences, prepare and support young leaders and ensure consistent opportunities for young people to advocate for systems change. Moreover, developing equity and inclusion solutions requires a commitment to enabling open conversations between adults and young people to build understanding on key concepts and ideas that can help advance equity and systems change.

Each of the four guides covers a critical component to understanding how authentic youth engagement and youth-adult partnerships fit within an equity and inclusion framework.

1. **Core Concepts and Terms:** To be effective advocates, young leaders need to be equipped with foundational knowledge about the relevant concepts for advancing equity and inclusion. Learning these key concepts in peer groups lends itself to deeper discussion, introspection and critical

thinking. It also allows leaders to apply their understanding of equity from personal experience in their work toward systemic change.

2. **Identity and Culture:** Identity development for young people who have experienced foster care is complex. Experiences with birth families, foster families and other living arrangements influence one's sense of self, family, community and culture. Some young people who have been in foster care might identify with several cultures and communities, whereas some might not know where they come from. Establishing one's place and role in equity and inclusion work must include a journey to understand oneself. This guide is designed to enable adult facilitators to explore these complex themes in a strengths-based environment with young leaders and advocates who have experienced foster care.

3. **Youth Organizing:** Understanding the historical context of youth leadership and advocacy allows young people to fully appreciate the impact of their voice and the political dynamics involved in advocacy. This conversation provides them with an opportunity to learn about the central role that young people have played in systems change with an equity and inclusion lens.

4. **A Historical Perspective of Child Welfare Systems:** Learning about the history and construct of child welfare systems — including the roles that race and ethnicity have played in those systems — is critical to understanding their evolution and to developing equitable solutions. To engage in leadership and advocacy in meaningful ways, young people must understand the context of child welfare systems and how various policies and practices can affect children and families differently. This guide provides historical information specific to child welfare systems through an equity and inclusion lens, while building skills in critical thinking, asking effective questions and applying root-cause analysis.

The guides are intended to spark interest in further research and analysis for the participants and organizations taking up this work. References have been provided to guide some of the next steps for learning.

Tips for Facilitators:

• Starting with the *Core Concepts and Terms* guide will provide the language and ideas needed to move through the rest of the conversations. However, facilitators should use their judgment to determine how and in what order to move through the guides.

• Remember that the guides are meant to set the stage for starting a conversation. It is OK if you do not know each topic comprehensively. You can learn with the group!

• You might find the group needs to have an extended conversation that requires adjusting the timeframes in the agenda. That is OK! Have the conversation that needs to be had.

• Use your judgment in reading the room. Conversations that require intensive new learning and reflection often benefit from breaks that include mindfulness practice or body work — for example, a walk around the room or a two-minute breathing exercise.

• Make it about a result! Remember that this work is in the context of developing solutions to advance racial and ethnic equity. Balance the need for understanding ourselves with building relationships and connections to our work.

"Currently young people across the world are increasingly involved in heritage protection and promotion, recognizing that heritage does not only belong to the past, but is also part of their identity. Transmitting heritage values to young people favors intercultural understanding and respect for cultural diversity and helps create an environment propitious to a culture of peace — principles which are central to the United Nations' mission."

— United Nations Culture and Youth Development, 2013

Each of us has the inherent right to flourish as a human being who is both an individual person and a member of different communities. As young people approach and reach the cusp of adulthood, their individual and collective identities must be validated, respected and nurtured. It is during this time that all young people negotiate identities of race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. As they develop a sense of self-acceptance and self-knowledge, they build up their voices, define their own identities and further cultivate self-love. By reflecting on individual experiences, understanding how experiences shape our worldviews and drawing on cultural strength and guidance, young people strengthen their sense of self as a whole person, as community members and as advocates for systems change.

Identity development for young people who have experienced foster care is often complex. Experiences with birth families and foster families and other living arrangements influence their sense of self, family, community and culture. Some young people who have been in foster care may identify with several cultures and communities, whereas some may not know where they come from. Understanding one's place and role in racial and ethnic equity and inclusion work must begin with the journey of understanding oneself. Many young people who have been in foster care have experienced complex trauma and loss, which may surface in conversations about identity, culture and belonging. The intention of this guide is to open an opportunity to explore these complex themes in a strengths-based environment with young people who have experienced foster care and are serving as leaders and advocates for systems change in child welfare.

RESULTS FOR THIS CONVERSATION

- Experience a healing circle and perspective.

- Reflect on and voice one's own individual and collective identities.

- Build an understanding of culture as an essential part of identity.

- Deepen a personal understanding of identity politics and coexistence in spaces of intersectionality.

- Strengthen a sense of one's own power and leadership through a racial and ethnic equity and inclusion lens.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

- Developing a positive sense of racial and ethnic identity, not based on an assumed sense of superiority or inferiority, is an important task for everyone.

- Those who feel affirmed in their own identity are more able to respect the identity of others.

- All people are part of a culture or multiple cultures.

- All people and all cultures deserve respect.

- Human identity is both individual and collective.

GOALS FOR THE FACILITATOR

- Navigate a discussion with youth on identity, culture, race and ethnicity.

- Experience what it means to develop and share sacred or healing space.

- Facilitate inclusive participation honoring diverse individual voices.

- Respond supportively, from a healing and trauma-informed perspective, to participants' immediate needs during the session.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Flip-chart paper
- Tape
- Watch or timer
- Blank paper for drawing
- Markers in a variety of colors
- Journals or writing paper and pens/pencils for participants
- Index cards
- Post-it notes

- Audio/visual equipment and internet access to show two online videos
- Handout: Who Am I?

NOTES ON AUDIENCE

- Participants/young leaders interested in learning about and reflecting on racial and ethnic equity and inclusion
- Young people who have experienced the foster care system
- Young people who may have experienced trauma and loss
- Young people ages 14–26

GROUP SIZE

Approximate range is 5–25 participants. Number of participants may vary, but it is recommended that the group remains small enough to allow for meaningful participation by all.

IDENTIFYING FACILITATOR(S)

This guide is intended for cofacilitation. Below are some suggestions:

- At least one facilitator should have expertise in identity development and cultural exploration.
- At least one facilitator should already have a relationship with participants and expertise in child welfare and older youth.
- Facilitators must understand complex trauma and be equipped to support young people throughout the session.

We suggest that the cofacilitators meet either in person or via videoconference to complete the preparation activities listed below:

• Read this guide thoroughly.

• Read and discuss background materials provided with this guide.

• Discuss how you will manage difficult conversations, referencing provided materials on healing and trauma-informed practice.

• Discuss your facilitation styles and who will take the lead on each section of the conversation.

• Prepare materials, including agenda, flip charts, handouts and conversation prompts.

• Plan the setup of the space.

• Curate local resources that are culturally relevant and support mental health in the event that participants bring up issues they are experiencing.

TOPIC	MATERIALS	DISCUSSION PROMPTS FOR PREPARATORY DISCUSSION BETWEEN COFACILITATORS
Healing perspective *La cultura cura* Sacred space	"Círculo" in *Anáhuac School and Community Engagement Program Facilitator Manual* (https://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cy/2009/cm0911.pdf) Module 1, pp. 10–13 Appendix: *La cultura cura* concepts **Examples of openings:** Video poem: "In Lak'Ech" Appendix: Text visual: "In Lak'Ech"	• What is the value of creating intentional community? • What is the value of drawing on ancestral traditions?
Identity development in adolescence	Appendix: Sumner, R. "Who Am I?" Identity Formation in Adolescence." Cornell University. Key Terms Glossary	• How will we share key points of this information with participants using our own words?
Community learning theory Coercive and collaborative relations of power	Appendix: Community learning theory Appendix: Coercive and collaborative relations of power	• How can we use the concepts of community learning theory to build relationships of trust? • How would I explain collaborative power relations in my own words?
Healing and trauma-informed practice	SAMHSA's concept of a trauma-informed approach (https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions)	• What are our own experiences of trauma related to this conversation? • How will we respond if the conversation with young people triggers trauma for them or for ourselves?

SET UP THE SPACE

Setting up the physical space for your discussion is an important part of preparing for your conversation and creating a sense of community.

- Set chairs in a circle.

- Identify gender-neutral bathrooms.

- Make sure the space is physically accessible for all abilities and bodies, including chair location, room for mobility and entry points.

- Prepare materials needed (agenda, flip charts, handouts, markers, tape, etc.).

- Set up an altar or a focal, sacred space. Cover a table with a cloth and set it with a small number of objects to suggest contemplation, perhaps flowers, a glass of water, objects from nature or photos or images symbolizing ancestors, sacredness, unity and reverence. Do not use overt symbols of a specific religion, as participants may have different affiliations.

- Encourage participants to add their personal objects to create a sense of shared community.

- Think about what kind of a blessing or intention-setting activity you will do for the opening and gather any materials needed. The sacred traditions of indigenous peoples acknowledge the four directions and the four basic elements — water, fire, earth and air — to mark the beginning of an intention with reverence.

If you are able to connect with participants in advance of the session, invite them to bring an object they are willing to share that is special to them and represents who they are.

For many young people, this request might be emotionally charged. It is important to frame this as an optional invitation because some young people do not have an object they feel is meaningful for these purposes — sometimes possessions get taken, lost or left behind over the course of multiple moves. People might also forget to bring their item. Reassure participants that if they forget or do not bring anything, there will be materials for them to contribute in the same way at the session.

It might be helpful to remind participants who plan to bring something valuable to the session to keep track of the object throughout the day and when traveling to and from the session. For example, if they take the bus, they should be mindful of holding on to the object to avoid leaving it on the seat next to them.

Note that black text placed in "conversation" boxes is the suggested script for facilitators.

1. WELCOME AND BLESSING* (5–10 MINUTES)

As participants come in, ask them to place their personal object on the altar or focal space* and to take a seat in the circle.

- Some participants may not have brought a personal object. You can invite them to write or draw something special to them on an index card to place on the altar. The group will revisit the objects and cards at the end of the session.
- Here are two examples of what might be used as the opening blessing:
  - Video viewing of recitation of the poem "In Lak'Ech" optionally followed by group choral reading in English and/or Spanish. (The poem is included in the Appendix.)
  - A moment of silence and internal reflection to set an intention of respect within the group.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

READ

- SAMHSA's concept of a trauma-informed approach (https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions)
- Appendix: Community learning theory

> Thanks to each of you for being here, for showing up and honoring us with your presence in this circle. Sometimes the hardest thing is to show up and be fully present for events in our lives.
>
> Thank you for placing an object or a card on our altar/focal space. We will revisit these objects at the end of the session.
>
> I'm asking for us to sit in a sacred circle to build energy that allows us to hold one another with compassion and reverence. Building a circle is one of the most ancient traditions used by many peoples. It represents our coming together in a space of inclusion where we are all equal, where we respect and listen to one another and where each of us is valued for who we are.
>
> I'd like to begin with … (a moment of reverence, a blessing, setting our intention).

* In indigenous tradition, a focal space is developed for a gathering. Some traditions call this an altar and open the gathering with a blessing. Using this language here recognizes the beauty and power of these indigenous cultural teachings. The intention is spiritual, not religious. There may be discomfort or feelings of inauthenticity with the use of these words. If that is the case, please feel free to substitute "place of honor" for altar and "setting intention" for blessing. Please use your discretion to decide the language that is most appropriate in your local situation.

2. SESSION OVERVIEW (5 MINUTES)

Review the results and agenda for the conversation.

RESULTS FOR THIS CONVERSATION

- Experience a healing circle and perspective.

- Reflect on and voice one's own individual and collective identities.

- Build an understanding of culture as an essential part of identity.

- Deepen a personal understanding of identity politics and coexistence in spaces of intersectionality.

- Strengthen a sense of one's own power and leadership through a racial and ethnic equity and inclusion lens.

3. GROUP AGREEMENTS (5–10 MINUTES)

As facilitators and participants move through this powerful conversation together, it is critical to begin to collectively create a physical and emotional space where participants are fully recognized, lifted up and held with affirmation — while also creating a community of accountability and trust. This open, welcoming and co-learning space is vital as your group works together to build connections, share personal experiences and break down important issues related to youth organizing and racial and ethnic equity, inclusion and justice.

It is important to invite participants to create a courageous space where they can "show up and show out" by being present, actively engaged and willing to learn, teach and share new things. Facilitators can highlight that showing up can also mean staying engaged while actively stepping back to create space for others, as well as showing up for ourselves.

Facilitators should also strongly encourage participants to speak in the first person and only share from their own experience — always bringing participants back to their own learning.[1]

> If our intention is to meet for this conversation, honor one another and make intentional space where we all feel safe, included, equal, respected and valued for who we are, how do we need to treat one another? What are the agreements we should make?

TIP: *Reference the "Accords from the Young Women's Freedom Center" (below) to get a sense of the kinds of agreements that might be useful. Example: "Accords from the Young Women's Freedom Center" One mic | Mutual respect | Try it on | Right to pass | Confidentiality Amnesty | Take only your own inventory | Move up, move to the side*

List the participants' suggestions on flip-chart paper and guide the group to review and discuss to clarify, add or subtract until there is consensus on the agreements.

After completing the agreements, ask the group to suggest hand gestures that group members can use to indicate their self-care needs without stopping the flow of the conversation. For conversations on emotionally tough topics, hand gestures are often helpful because they are a simple, emotionally sensible form of communication for self-care. This is especially true for youth who may have experienced trauma. Agree on a subtle hand gesture to indicate "need to step away for a moment" and a different hand gesture to indicate "need to step out and talk about it," meaning that one of the facilitators will step out with the participant.

4. *CÍRCULO* (CIRCLE) (30 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR PREPARATION
READ

• "Círculo" in *Anáhuac School and Community Engagement Program Facilitator Manual,* Module 1, pp. 10–13 (https://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cy/2009/cm0911.pdf)

TIP: *What skills, qualities and tools does a facilitator need to "hold" the circle?*

• *Preparedness for a range of emotions*

• *Knowledge of who's in the room*

• *Ability to foster an inclusive, nurturing environment*

• *Ability to give clear instructions about what's going to happen and manage the process*

• *Ability to listen actively, observe energy and refrain from giving advice*

• *A timer signal*

In this process, each person will have an opportunity to speak in response to the following check-in questions:

• What is your name?

• What are your personal pronouns? Inviting participants to state which pronouns they use creates space to honor everyone's identity and gender expression.

  - Examples of personal pronouns: such as she/her/hers or he/him/his or they/them/theirs
  - Examples of genderless group language: folks/people/you all/team

• What is one word that represents who you are?

One person (a volunteer participant or a facilitator) will begin and then each will take a turn speaking and sharing their *palabra* (word), progressing around the circle until all have spoken.

The facilitator should calculate in advance how much time each person will have to speak (e.g., 30 minutes divided by 10 people = maximum 3 minutes each) and plan a subtle way of reminding the speaker that time is up. During the circle, each speaker should have the full attention of the rest of the group without interruptions, side conversations or cross-talk. One facilitator should write the answers to the final check-in question on a sheet of flip-chart paper and post it in the room.

> Now we will hold circle, which is an opportunity to hear each of you share about yourself. We'll hold this circle collectively to honor each of us for who we are, with confidentiality and without judgment. We will go around the circle one by one, and each person will have a turn to speak for ___ minutes. Please tell us your name, your preferred pronouns and one word that represents who you are. If you come to the end of your ___ minutes, I will signal to you by _____.
>
> As each person is speaking, the rest of us will give that person our respectful attention. In indigenous tradition, it is said, "When we build the circle, we hold our seats to not break the circle." Holding circle creates energy among all of us that is held with tenderness and reverence. This means we'll remember our group agreements. We'll remember that this space is for co-learning and exploration and that what is said here, stays here, but what is learned here, leaves here. Before we begin, are there any questions or concerns?
>
> Let's begin. Remember that when it's your turn, you'll share your name, preferred pronoun and one word that represents who you are. Is there someone who would like to start?

5. CONVERSATION: IDENTITY (50 MINUTES)

WATCH

"Being Twelve: New York Twelve-Year-Olds Talk About Race and Identity" (5 minutes) https://www.buzzfeed.com/alivelez/kids-get-real-when-talking-about-race?utm_term=.al7rNen1k#.adRd0lA6o

> What resonated with you after watching that?
>
> The young people in this video touched on a lot of different concepts, such as identity, culture, race, gender and ethnicity. We are going to move into an activity to define these terms together.

Throughout this session, there is always the option to journal. After each activity, you can read the energy of the room or ask participants if they would like to take a couple of minutes to journal their thoughts or feelings. Journal questions might include:

- What resonated with you?

- What did this bring up for you?

- What did you notice about your reaction to this video/activity?

> ▶ *Activity: Graffiti wall: Define identity, culture, race, gender, ethnicity (15 minutes)*

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Several pieces of flip-chart paper secured to the wall

- Post-it notes

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

READ

- Key terms glossary

- *Core Concepts and Terms* conversation guide (to prepare to assist participants with their consensus process on producing definitions)

PREP THE ROOM

- Write "Graffiti Wall" in graffiti letters (a young person can lead on creating this prep work).

- Write key terms or develop cutouts (can be any size, but cut to fit several places), place on flip-chart paper secured to the wall.

PROCESS

- Hand out Post-its — several to each participant.

- Give participants a few minutes to write their definition or understanding of the terms — one term per Post-it note.

- Young people can walk along the graffiti wall to reflect on the various key terms, writing down what each term means to them on a Post-it and sticking it to the wall.

- For each key term, a volunteer from the group or the facilitator will read all of the reflections that correspond to it.

- Pausing after each term, the volunteer or facilitator will synthesize and develop a group definition. If there are gaps in understanding the terms, the facilitator will ask if additional information can be added to the group definition.

- Have participants turn to a partner to share what came up for them during that exercise.

It is helpful to develop a shared language and be on the same page when it comes to these terms and concepts, and we couldn't have done that without everyone's thoughts! While we defined identity on its own, all of the other terms make up identity too. The next part of the conversation digs deeper into that.

Facilitator content presentation: Identity formation in adolescence (5 minutes)

FACILITATOR PREPARATION
READ
• Sumner, Rachel. "'Who Am I?' Identity Formation in Adolescence."

Walk through handout on identity formation. (See Handout: "Who Am I"?)

Why might exploring and discussing identity be important or relevant in the leadership work you do?

TIP: *Because many young people who have been in foster care have experienced trauma and separation from their families, the questions Who am I? and Where do I come from? can be emotionally charged concepts and bring up feelings of sadness, anger or loss. Facilitators should pay attention to body language and the emotional energy of the room throughout the session. Remember, not everybody participates and learns by sharing in a large group or processing new information out loud.*

Facilitator content presentation: **La cultura cura:** *Culture as a source of resiliency, strength and power (3 minutes)*

FACILITATOR PREPARATION
READ
• Appendix: *La cultura cura* concepts

Now that we have defined some key working terms, let's shift our conversation, integrating what we just developed, into a discussion on adolescence as the developmental stage in one's life when we ask, Who am I? This is a period where we explore, develop and confirm our identity based on our upbringing and our limited or deep understanding of where we come from. For some of us, this process is an active exploration, asking relations about our heritage and eventually feeling comfortable with our decisions about how we identify and who we identify as. Culture can be a source of strength during this stage. Exploring our ancestral roots, biological and/or claimed, allows us to dig deeper and learn traditions and teachings that increase our sense of belonging. In many cultural

traditions, youth represent our greatest potential, and key players such as elders, guardians and parents are eager to pass on traditions, stories and rites of passage to assist youth during adolescence. Knowing who you are and where you come from serves as a source of healing from intergenerational trauma, and, potentially, some adverse experiences you might have had growing up. This is called *La Cultura Cura*, or culture cures.

▶ *Activity: Identity bloom (20 minutes)*

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Colored paper and markers (activity can also be done with pencils and regular paper)
- Flip-chart paper or a wall
- Glue stick, stapler or tape

PROCESS

- Pass out blank sheets of paper to all participants.

> The purpose of this next activity is for each of us to name our own identities. On your sheet of paper, draw a flower with your name in the center. On each petal, write one component of your identity. You can leave some petals blank or add more if you want to.

- Partners round 1 (5 minutes)

> Find a partner. Introduce yourselves and share the components of your identity that you chose to represent. Then discuss how your flowers are alike and different.

- Partners round 2 (5 minutes)

> Find a different partner and introduce yourselves. Share and discuss as before.

- Whole group (5 minutes)

Ask the participants to attach their flowers to the poster or wall and to view the flowers of others.

> We are going to share as a large group. In this part of the discussion, instead of sharing what your partner may have said or shared, let's try to speak from our own experience. What thoughts or feelings came up for you during this activity? What did you notice?

As you have noticed on your drawings, we all have multiple identities — multiple aspects of ourselves that make us who we are — and we cannot separate them from one another in the way we live our lives. This concept is referred to as intersectionality. Are people familiar with that term?

Intersectionality is an approach that was largely advanced by women of color. Intersectionality says that aspects of our identity such as race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, etc., cannot be experienced in isolation from one another but are always interacting.[2]

Understanding ourselves through an intersectional lens helps us understand the ways in which systems grant us privileges in some ways and oppress us in other ways. What questions do you have about that?

It might be helpful to keep intersectionality in mind as we move into the next part of our conversation.

6. CONVERSATION: EQUITY, IDENTITY POLITICS AND POWER (35–40 MINUTES)

▶ *Activity: Graffiti wall: Define equity, power, privilege (10 minutes)*

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

READ
• Key terms glossary

PROCESS
Follow the same process as the first graffiti wall activity, but adding the terms equity, power and privilege.

WATCH
"What is Identity Politics?" (2 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRRRrvrZrjc

a. Guided discussion: Identity politics and issues of equity (10 minutes)
The goal of this part of the session is for participants to recognize and discuss examples of how identity politics are present in their own lives.

What stood out to you in that video? What questions do you have after watching that video?

Where do your identities put you in the dynamics of identity politics?

How does your experience as someone who has been in foster care intersect with the other components of your identity?

In what ways can further understanding identity give you strength?

TIP: *Young people who have been in foster care often experience a lack of autonomy or decision-making power over their own lives. The lack of power they have experienced may surface throughout this conversation. Facilitators should keep this dynamic in mind as the session continues.*

We are talking about identity, equity politics and power in the foster care system to acknowledge the challenges you face individually, in your families and in your communities, and to emphasize that you have the power within you to claim your space and your identity, and you have the right to feel safe to be who you are. You have the power to unite with peers you trust to create a safe space among yourselves from which you can draw strength.

b. Guided discussion: Identifying, nurturing and expressing power (15 minutes)

The goal of this part of the session is for participants to recognize that, despite inequities, they do have power within them.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

READ

• Appendix: Coercive and collaborative relations of power

Earlier, we defined **power** on the graffiti wall. Let's revisit that definition and build on it a little more in the context of the child welfare system.

Either as a large group or in groups of three, pose the following questions to the group:

Who has power? What kind of power do they have? What is that power used to do? What is your power? How can you use your power, and to what end? How can you use your power to improve systems?

If the group breaks into groups of three, have someone from each group share some themes they discussed when you come back together in the large group.

TIP: *Different nuances of power are likely to arise during this discussion. Refer back to the facilitator preparation materials on coercive and collaborative power. As the group continues their conversation, lift up each type of power they bring up and determine whether it is coercive or collaborative power. Explain the differences.*

It's hard to know about and cope with the inequities and injustices that are all around us in our society. Yet many of us will continue to face these difficult realities in the struggle for social justice. As we do this, we need to be aware of the pain and fatigue that we and our allies — those who authentically work alongside us to create an equitable world — may feel as we do the work. We need to understand that we have within us the power to heal as we continue to move forward. With that in mind, as our time comes to a close, I want to move us into a conversation about self-care.

7. CONVERSATION: SELF-CARE (15 MINUTES)

a. Guided discussion: Self-care (10 minutes)

You did a lot of introspective work today — a lot of looking inside yourselves and exploring who you are and how you want to define yourselves in the world and in the work you do as leaders. Remember that our identity can shift and change as we get new information about our community and as we develop in our own right. We cannot underestimate the emotions that stir up in us both during the session and afterwards.

What are your thoughts about self-care? What does self-care mean to you?

What do you do to cope with loss, stressful changes, disappointment, pain or fear?

TIP: *Many young people have had several conversations about trauma, triggers and coping mechanisms, while others have not.*

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b. Facilitator mini-lecture: Trauma and vicarious trauma (5 minutes)

- **Trauma** is an emotional response to a terrible event. It is typical to experience shock and denial immediately after the event. Later effects may include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks and physical symptoms. (American Psychological Association)
- **Vicarious trauma** is an emotional response upon hearing about other people's trauma, as if the listener too had the traumatic experience.

Realizing that we all may have had experiences of direct and vicarious trauma, we can learn to draw on our individual and collective resources for healing.

By uniting our voices and strength, we can shape and change systems to be more just.

Know that all life is sacred. Your life is sacred.

8. REFLECTION AND CLOSING (30 MINUTES)

a. Individual reflective journal writing or drawing (10 minutes)

Write or draw to express your thoughts and feelings about our time together today.

How can understanding and naming your own identity be a strength to call on as you go forward in life?

TIP: *Please do not skip this essential processing time or cut it short!*

b. Closing circle/*Círculo* (20 minutes, or 1 minute per person)

- Ask the participants to retrieve the personal objects they placed on the altar at the beginning of the session and then return to sit in the closing circle.
- The closing circle process is similar to the opening circle. Ask each of the participants to share the object they brought and its personal meaning.
- If there is a participant who does not have an object, that person may be invited to share a drawing or words from the reflective journal time.

ENDNOTES

1 Zapella, N. (2007). *Balancing social power in dialogue: What it means to be a multi-partial facilitator in intergroup dialogues.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Program on Intergroup Relations. Retrieved from https://simmonsigd.wikispaces.com/file/view/Multipartiality-+Balancing+Social+Power+in+Dialogue_F2007.pdf

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Below is a list of core concepts and terms that are often used in efforts to advance racial and ethnic equity and inclusion.

Ally: Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize his or her privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice.[1]

Colonization: Some form of invasion or dispossession of a people. The colonizer-colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized.[2]

Community-based responsive alternatives: In the context of child welfare and youth justice, interventions or programs serving young people in their communities, primarily to divert, prevent or reduce interaction with public systems and promote youth development.

Cultural appropriation: Theft of cultural elements — including symbols, art, language and customs — for one's own use, commodification or profit, often without understanding, acknowledging or respecting its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption that a dominant culture has the right to take others' cultural elements.[3]

Culture: A learned set of values, beliefs, customs, norms and perceptions shared by a group of people that provide a general design for living and a pattern for interpreting life. "Culture [is] those deep, common, unstated experiences which members of a given culture share, which they communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged." [4]

Decolonization: The process of a colonized group becoming self-governing or independent.[5]

Disparity: A difference in experience, treatment or outcome. Racial disparities are differences in outcomes based on race (i.e., one racial group is worse off than another racial group).

Disproportionality: The state of being out of proportion. Either an over- or under-representation of a given population, often defined by racial and ethnic backgrounds, at any given point in a child-serving system.

Diversity: All the ways in which people differ, encompassing all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.[6]

Equality: Sameness in status, rights and treatment. Everyone receives or has the same things.

Equitable community engagement: Ensures that the affected community is directly involved in the design, operationalization and monitoring of any and all solutions to problems that are affecting said community. An equitable community engagement process or strategy is participatory, recognizes and values the experiences and expertise of community members and involves sharing power and resources as equal partners.

Equitable public-private partnerships: Represents a fair and formal agreement between a public agency (local, state or federal) and a private-sector entity — inclusive of affected-community leadership — to partner together by sharing their skills and assets in providing services to the general public and/or a targeted population.

Equity: Fairness. Everyone receives or has what is needed to thrive and reach one's full potential.

Ethnicity: A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interest, history and ancestral geographical base. (Examples: Cape Verdean, Haitian, Polish, etc.)

Gender: A social construct used to classify a person as man, woman on some other identity. Gender is fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.[7]

Historical trauma: The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding of an individual or a generation caused by a traumatic experience or event.

Identity: Who a person is, the way they think about themselves, the way they are viewed by the world and the characteristics that define them.

Impacted communities: Refers to groups of people with some thread of commonality who are disproportionately exposed to environmental or social factors that negatively affect their well-being directly and/or indirectly.

Inclusion: The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. Going beyond diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.[8]

Internalized racism: The private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. For example, the ways we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases and prejudices are within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, **internalized oppression** can involve believing in negative messages about oneself or one's racial group. For white people, **internalized privilege** can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement or holding negative beliefs about people of color.[9]

Interpersonal racism: How our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our prejudices or unconscious biases — whether or not it is intentional,

visible or verbal — we engage in interpersonal racism. This type of racism can take the form of bigotry, hate speech or racial violence.[10]

Intersectionality: An approach largely advanced by women of color, which argues that classifications (identities) including gender, race, class and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society and in social systems and are mutually constitutive.[11]

Institutional racism: Racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes.[12]

Justice: People are treated with fairness, their human rights are honored and they receive what they need.

Liberation: The act or state of gaining full rights and full social and economic opportunities.

Oppression: Systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others already have access to it.[13]

Power: The authority and ability to decide who has access to resources; the capacity to direct or influence the behavior of others, oneself and/or the course of events.

Prejudice: A prejudgment or unjustifiable attitude, usually negative, of one type of individual or group toward another group and its members.[14]

Privilege (unearned privilege): Systematic advantage that is granted based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation or other dimensions of diversity, regardless of individuals' personal characteristics or efforts.[15]

Race: A socially constructed system of categorizing humans primarily based on observable physical features such as skin color and/or on ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories.[16]

Racial equity: The condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity was no longer a predictor of one's outcomes (i.e., if every person was given what is needed to enjoy a full and healthy life).

Racialization: Distinct from racism, which is often understood as a conscious belief, racialization can describe a process that does not require intentionality and connotes a process rather than a static event. It underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of race. According to john a. powell, "structural racialization is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors."[17]

Structural racism: Racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.[18]

Tribal sovereignty: The authority to self-govern. Treaties, executive orders and laws have created a contract between tribes and the United States affirming that tribal nations retain their inherent powers of self-government.[19]

Unity: Cohesion, harmony, interconnectedness and integration.

White supremacy: A belief that white people are superior to those of all other races and should therefore dominate society. This is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and people of color by white people and nations of the European continent — for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.[20]

Additional resource: Racial Equity Tools Glossary found here: www.racialequitytools.org/images/uploads/RET_Glossary913L.pdf

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La cultura cura concepts

La cultura cura is a viewpoint, a way of life and a set of values asserting that each of us is sacred and has unique ancestral roots. This legacy of practices, traditions and values can be used to heal, renew and strengthen our well-being — mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Knowing who we are and where we come from and reclaiming ancestral teachings that assert our human connectedness and self-discipline provide the pathway to healing while increasing well-being.
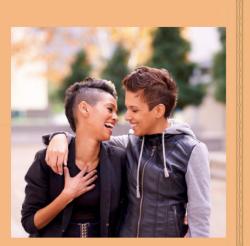
CONCEPT	DEFINITION	PURPOSE
Bendición	One member of the group expresses thanks for the gathering, calls upon spiritual sources for strength and guidance and may set an intention for the gathering. The bendición may take the form of words, song, burning of sage, recognizing the four directions or other forms.	In indigenous tradition, an intention is developed for a gathering. Evokes heritage which builds on the values of tradition.
Círculo	*Círculo* represents community — an ancient way of being among native people. Participants are in a circle and each person speaks to a prompt or without a prompt while all others give the speaker respectful attention. If anyone leaves and doesn't come back, it breaks the circle. This is the opening of every session.	Builds unity and energy among all those present. Builds a sense of responsibility. The goal is to build on our individual and collective teachings and sharing of life experiences. Here we learn about the power of all voices being heard and listened to. Participants see how similar their experiences are and how these commonalities could be explored critically, but communally, to offer insights that would direct efforts for future sustainable change. *Círculo* serves two purposes: 1) as an extended invitation and/or established practice of kinship meant to address a spectrum of important and or sensitive matters. 2) a traditional practice found around the world used to come into equity, respect, healing, reverence, etc. (Juan Gomez, director, Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement [MILPA])

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	PURPOSE
Conocimiento	A process of building relationships of trust by sharing experiences and by listening to and recognizing one another's human experiences.	*Conocimiento* is rooted in good will and kinship toward humanity and used as a process of informality to develop formality. *Conocimiento* also provides a background and values-based presence in service of learning exchanges, pending trade, business, partnership, etc. (Juan Gomez, director, MILPA)
Palabra	One's moment to speak and have voice, *palabra* is sacred — it is your identity, your authenticity, your integrity. A very profound concept that is beyond explanation, but essentially it's the process of vocalizing of one's values, perspectives and current state of mind in relationship to the group, issue and self-report. (Juan Gomez, director, MILPA)	*Palabra* represents individual identity, integrity, commitment and responsibility to the community, one's connectedness to community.
Voz del pueblo	Seeking out and listening to the knowledge of the community.	Cultural perspective and wisdom enriches learning. Learning connects to prior knowledge and experience.
Educación	Formal education but also informal education, wisdom, teaching, culture. Represents the power of cultural knowledge and teachings. *La buena educación*: A community sociocultural moral base and worldview of righteous implicit and explicit values, behaviors, customs and stories, etc. (Juan Gomez, director, MILPA)	*Educación* is how we hold one another accountable.
Entendimiento	Investing in building capacity and knowledge from a critical consciousness place, not passive, interactive, utilizing, having the information.	
Integración	Taking understanding to action.	Through *integración*, we apply our knowledge.
Movimiento	Ongoing work.	*Movimiento* prepares you to be fully present.
Health	Health as an integrated balance of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being: The cultivation of leadership and professionalism that is informed by a matrix of la cultura cura philosophies and practices. (Juan Gomez, director, MILPA)	

Text Visual "In Lak'Ech"

IN LAK'ECH

Tú eres mi otro yo.
You are my other me
Si te hago daño a ti,
If I do harm to you,
Me hago daño a mi mismo.
I do harm to myself.
Si te amo y respeto,
If I love and respect you,
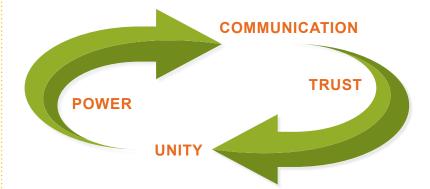*Me amo y respeto yo.*
I love and respect myself.

- L. Valdez and D. Paredes

Community Learning Theory

The Community Learning Theory (CLT) approach is a method of engaging people in developing knowledge responsive to their needs and aspirations while building their capacity for personal and group success. Diverse stakeholders are encouraged to work together for the purpose of developing mutual trust and respect, thus empowering participants to work collaboratively towards mutually identified goals. Among the goals of CLT:

- Building true partnerships
- Establishing and enhancing trust among team members
- Identifying goals and developing concrete vision, mission and action
- Implementing an empowering methodology by using the wealth of knowledge and expertise of participants
- Creating unity among participants

The strength of CLT is that it builds upon the cultural strengths and experiences of individuals and creates a common unity of purpose among diverse groups in the community. Expertise is shared, and all participants gain a greater understanding of one another as individuals and as communities.

COMMUNICATION

TRUST

POWER

UNITY

Key principles of CLT:

- The opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogues creates a sense of mutual appreciation and understanding among group members.
- All experiences are valid and a valuable source of knowledge.
- Meaningful knowledge can be created simply by sharing experiences.
- The act of sharing personal struggles leads to mutual trust and bonding.
- The sense of mutual trust validates the belief that within the group is the knowledge and ability to overcome challenges.

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Coercive and Collaborative Relations of Power

The following paragraphs are taken from James Cummins' 2001 book, *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society.*[1]

"Coercive relations of power are the exercise of power by a dominant group (or individual or country) to the detriment of a subordinated group (or individual or country). The underlying assumption is that there is a fixed quantity of power that operates according to a zero-sum logic — that is, the more power one group has, the less is left for other groups. Coercive relations of power are reflected in and shaped through the use of language or discourse and usually involve a definitional process that legitimates the inferior or deviant status accorded to the subordinated group (or individual or country). In other words, the dominant group defines the subordinated group as inferior (or evil), thereby automatically defining itself as superior (or virtuous). Coercive relations of power generally operate to maintain the division of resources and status in the societal power structure.

Collaborative relations of power operate on the assumption that power is not a fixed, predetermined quantity but rather can be generated in interpersonal and intergroup relations. Participants in the relationship are empowered through their collaboration such that each is more affirmed in her or his identity and has a greater sense of efficacy to create change in his or her life or social situation. Thus, power is created in the relationship and shared among participants. The power relationship is additive rather than subtractive. Power is created with others rather than being imposed on or exercised over others. Within this framework, empowerment can be defined as the collaborative creation of power."

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"Who Am I?" – Identity Formation in Adolescence

Rachel Sumner, Ph.D. - Cornell University | www.actforyouth.net/adolescence/identity/

What is identity?

People can identify with lots of different groups, like their gender, race, nationality or political party (just to name a few). **A personal identity is a cohesive sense of self,** and it includes ideas about all of these group identities, in addition to values and goals. If asked about their identity, someone might say something like "I'm an American woman, I want to make the world a better place and I take care of my family."

Identity in adolescence

Many adolescents begin developing a sense of identity. They're trying to answer the question "Who am I?" Lots of the things that teens do, like trying new activities or wearing different kinds of clothes, are part of their search for an identity. Even though identity development often begins during the teen years, it can be a lifelong process; people can change the way they think about themselves when they experience changes in life, like starting a new job or becoming a parent.

How do teens develop an identity?

Psychologists who study identity have described two processes that are involved in identity development: **exploration,** which involves trying out different roles or options, and **commitment**, which involves committing to some aspect(s) of identity.[1]

Identity exploration

In order to try out different roles and options for themselves, teens might try things like:

• Hanging out with a new group of friends

• Trying new activities

• Learning more about something that interests them

Identity commitment

There are lots of benefits associated with identity commitment. People who have committed to some aspect(s) of identity tend to experience **more self-esteem and life satisfaction, and fewer symptoms of depression or anxiety.**[2,3]

"Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken."

- Oscar Wilde

Consequences of Engaging in Identity Exploration

Benefits:

- People who report high levels of exploration and high levels of commitment usually have the best outcomes.

- Researchers have found that having engaged in identity exploration in the past is associated with facets of adaptive psychological functioning, like self-esteem and purpose in life.[4]

Pitfalls:

- Exploring one's options for identity is associated with identity confusion, or feeling a lack of certainty about one's identity.

- People who are currently engaging in identity exploration and experiencing identity confusion might experience increased symptoms of depression or anxiety.[4]

There are benefits associated with having explored one's identity, but the process of exploration can be unsettling and uncomfortable. Adolescents should be encouraged to explore their identity, but they might require some additional social and emotional support while doing so.

Tips for Supporting Identity Formation

- Role models can help adolescents imagine different roles or options for their future selves. Look for role models in your family, schools or community.

- Talk about values, goals and identities with teens. They may be interested to know how you made decisions about the kind of person you want to be.

- Try to support commitments that have been made. Identity commitments can help someone feel grounded and less confused while they engage in identity exploration.

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