



Photo: CTVnews.ca

UNIT 2: WHAT MAKES US WHO WE ARE? THE COMPLEXITY OF IDENTITY

[Description: group of people protesting with signs about racism and anti-Asian hate]

Components of Identities

PERSONAL IDENTITY

- Hobbies
- Preferences
- Favourite Music
- Skills
- Personality Traits

SOCIAL IDENTITY

- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion
- Social Class
- Politics



Photo: Unsplash.com

Where
Does
Identity
Come
From?

[Description: night scene of Dundas Street, downtown Toronto, with video billboards, traffic]

Where Does Identity Come From?

Family:

Often the first
and most
powerful agent

Education:

Schools/teachers
provide critical
information about
social groups

Peer Group:

Exerts social force
to conform to
behaviour,
appearance, etc.

Media:

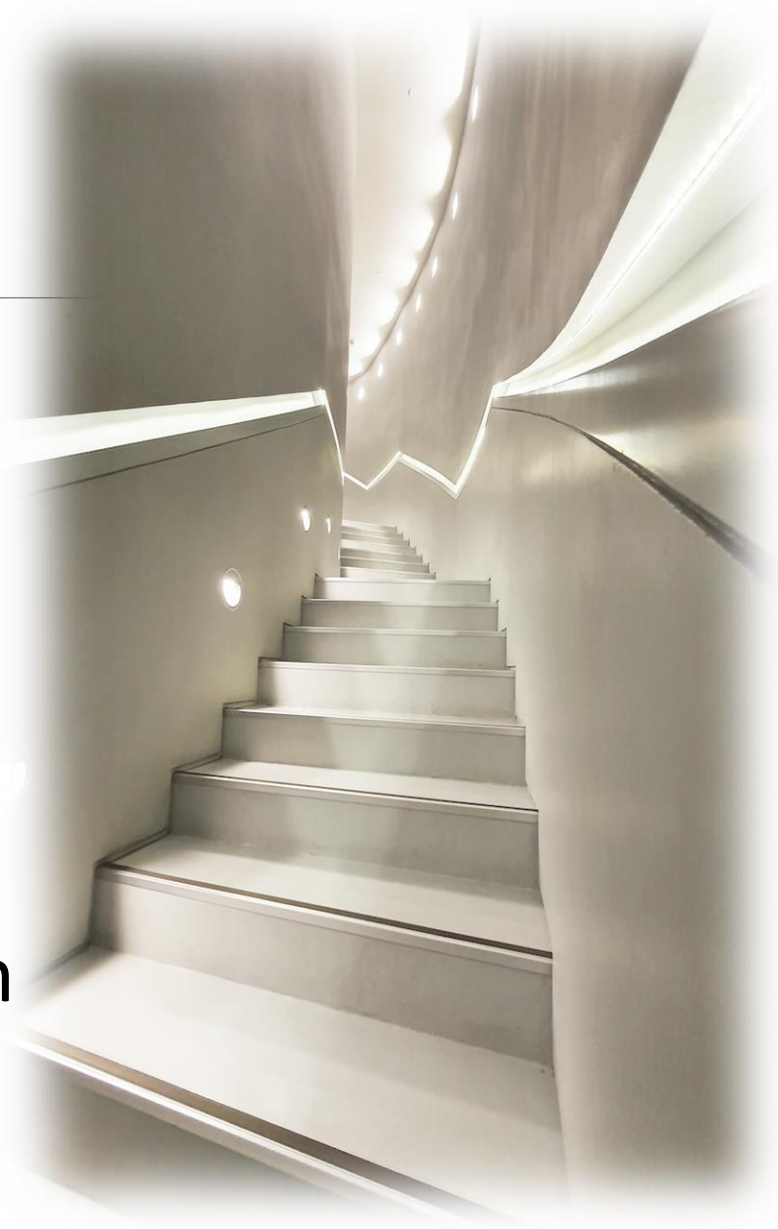
Repeated exposure
to information,
images, and
messages shape
identity

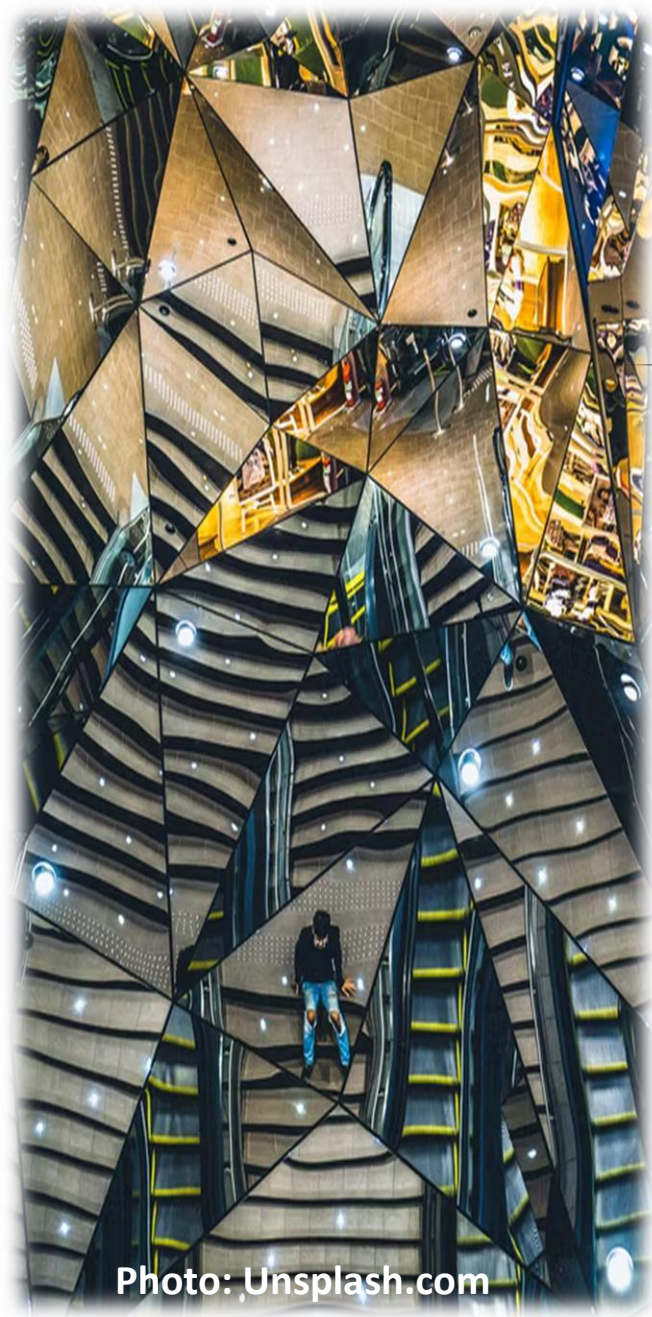
Riddle me this....

I am not who I think I am

I am not who you think I am

I am who I think you think I am





The Looking-glass Self

Charles Cooley (1864-1929)

The looking-glass self can explain how identity develops through interaction. There are three components in the process:

- 1) How you imagine you appear to others
- 2) How you imagine those others judge your appearance
- 3) How you feel as a result

Photo: Unsplash.com

[Description: person reflected in a series of fragmented mirrors]

Social Identity: Race

Let's think about it...

Biological “Races” can be identified by their common:

- a. Blood type
- b. Skin color
- c. Genes
- d. Heritage and Language
- e. All of the above
- f. None of the above

Race as biology

Problems with biological notions of race:

1. More genetic variation within a 'racial' group than there is between
2. Dimensions used to classify biological race are unclearly defined (e.g., skin colour)
3. People all over the world are genetically mixed
4. What about other forms of identity?
5. distracts attention away from the structural dimensions of inequality



Social Identity: Race

Race as a Social Construction

- As biological entities, “races” do not exist – there is no biological basis to race!
- Racial classification is a social and historical process, and a **product of human perception and classification** imposed by dominant groups. In short, it is a social construct
- Physical differences are deemed by society to be socially significant
- Racial identities vary across time and space (who is/was considered “white” or “black” in Canada?)

Power: Racialization in Canada

Racialization is:

- the process by which bodily features or assumed biological characteristics are used systematically to mark certain persons for differential status or treatment
- the process by which attributes such as skin colour are given social significance as markers of distinction



[Description: Cree students sitting at their desks with their teacher in a classroom, All Saints Indian Residential School, Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan, 1945]

Source: Archives Canada

Categories of Otherness

CATEGORY

- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Socioeconomic Status
- Age
- Ability

FORM OF OPPRESSION

- Racism
- Religious oppression
- Sexism
- Heterosexism
- Classism
- Ageism
- Ableism

Power: Dominant Groups

Who do you think of when you hear the word **race**?

Who do you think of when you hear the word **gender**?

Who do you think of when you hear the words **sexual orientation**?



DOMINATION & SUBORDINATION



Photo: Unsplash.com

- **Dominant groups** hold power and authority in society & set the parameters and limits within which subordinates operate
- “Blacks have historically been characterized as less intelligent than Whites, and women have been viewed as less emotionally stable than men” (Tatum p. 23)
- The dominant group (white, monied, older, heterosexual, Christian, men) is seen as the “norm” for humanity

[Description: crowd of people protesting with sign that reads injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere]

From Biological to Cultural Racism

- attention is shifted away from crude ideas of biological inferiority and superiority to cultural validity
- The cultural values of “others” are said to be in opposition to dominant values

“I’m not racist, but ‘they’ have a”:

- Culture of violence
- Culture of laziness
- Culture of deviance
- Culture of crime

Forms of Racism

**RACISM IS A
PANDEMIC**

- 1) **Racial bigotry:** open, conscious expression of racist views by an individual
- 2) **Institutional or systemic racism:** racist practices, rules, and laws that have become part of the system
- 3) **Polite, smiling, or everyday racism:** racism hidden behind smile or words that seem friendly (i.e. microaggressions)
- 4) **Aversive Racism:** when people try to avoid contact with members from different racial communities



Toronto & GTA



WARMINGTON: Humber College hosts staff seminars on how to scrub 'white supremacy'

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Joe Warmington

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Humber College is running an employee program designed to help people with the "unlearning" of their "white skin privilege" and "white supremacy." PHOTO BY @HUMBERCOLLEGE /Twitter

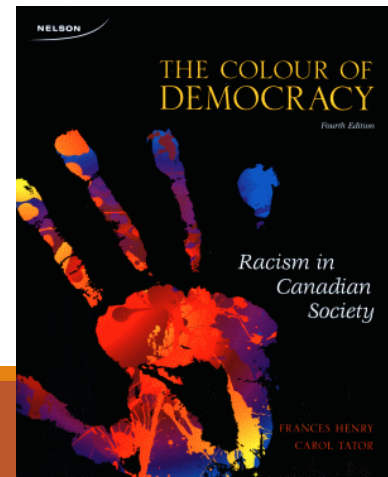
The Unlearning Circle

- Offers an “opportunity for white people to examine how they have been conditioned by their whiteness and how it shows up in their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and within their institutions”

WHITENESS

- is racial category that emerged during the colonial era and created a racial hierarchy.
- is more about how you are likely to be treated in a racialized society than it is about who you are in any meaningful sense.
- a location of structural advantage and racial privilege

(see Henry & Tator, *The Colour of Democracy*, 2010)



WHITENESS

- Is a **PROCESS** whereby power is attained and exercised, and sustained in a society that is divided by colour.
- Whiteness is about **SYSTEMS** of domination that perpetuate forms of structural inequality
- Whiteness is **NOT** about attacking or critiquing white people as individuals.

(see Henry & Tator, The Colour of Democracy, 2010)

