



CRITICAL THINKING TOWARDS IDENTITY FULFILLMENT: A FRAMEWORK

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USING THIS FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Intended as a learner-centered experience in which a participant chooses activities independently and conducts an investigation about themselves with little guidance
- ▶ Broken into three sections with multiple activities in each:
 - ▶ Identifying Identity
 - ▶ Investigating Identity
 - ▶ Reflecting and Acting Forward
- ▶ A list of activities follows in the table of contents

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Note on Pairing Activities:
Activities with the same number are meant to more easily pair together. For example, Activity 1 in Identifying Identity is meant to pair smoothly with Activity 1 in Investigating Identity and Activity 1 in Reflecting and Acting Forward. That said, these activities can be done in any combination, in any order.

FRAMING

“As a person ascends a spiral staircase, she may stop and look down at a spot below. When she reaches the next level, she may look down and see the same spot, but the vantage point has changed.”

– Beverly Danning Tatum

Who we are, how we think about ourselves, and who we become are all inextricably related. This framework is designed to help the individual person engage in deep critical thinking about their own identity and, in doing this investigating and reflecting, move forward as a more self-aware citizen of the world.

This process is a never ending cycle that a person could engage with throughout their lifetime.



A person could complete this full framework, complete it again, and find different results.

Although some activities align directly with one another, they are intended to be interrelated.

IDENTIFYING IDENTITY: OVERVIEW

- ▶ Activity 1: Life Map, 6
- ▶ Activity 2: Gender Roles, 7
- ▶ Activity 3: Family Culture, 8
- ▶ Activity 4: Relationships, 9

“How long it takes to become the person one has always been.” – Parker Palmer



Time Required: 45-80 minutes

Materials Needed: Blank paper, newsprint, or poster board; Markers or colored pens/pencils for drawing and writing

Objective: to creatively reflect on one's life up until or through the present moment using the format of a "map"

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Think about your life thus far. What have been important moments? Decisions? People? How do these connect? You can brainstorm on paper if that helps you.
3. Decide on a format for your "life map." Some people choose to accentuate the "map" metaphor by drawing a road or roads, others use a large symbol (a flower, tree, or other representation), and others create more of a concept map or arrangement of words and ideas. It's completely up to you what you choose.
4. Begin creating your life map. At the end, you should have a visual representation of the important pieces of your life up until (or through) this present moment.

Identifying Identity
Activity #1:
Life Maps

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Materials Needed: Blank paper, notebook paper, or computer; Pen or pencil if handwriting

Objective: to thoughtfully reflect on the role of gender in your development or expression as a person

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Be prepared to write. This activity asks you to engage in “free-writing” in order to access ideas, memories, and metacognitions about your gender identity. You’ll write in response to some or all of the prompts below for as long as possible (a minimum of 20 minutes of free-writing is suggested).
3. Prompts (choose one, several, or all):
 1. When did you first know you had a gender? Describe the memory.
 2. How do you feel about being gendered?
 3. Has there ever been a time where you felt that your gender did not fit you? Describe it.
 4. What gender roles do you notice in your personal life? Work or school life? How do these impact you?

Identifying Identity
Activity #2:
Gender Roles

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Materials Needed: Blank paper, notebook paper, or computer; Pen or pencil if handwriting

Objective: to thoughtfully reflect on the role of race, nationality, and ethnicity on your development or expression as a person

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Be prepared to write. This activity asks you to engage in “free-writing” in order to access ideas, memories, and metacognitions about your identity. You’ll write in response to some or all of the prompts below for as long as possible (a minimum of 20 minutes of free-writing is suggested).
3. Prompts (choose one, several, or all):
 1. What is your race, ethnicity, and nationality?
 2. Describe your family history.
 3. Pick one answer to question 1. What makes you proud about that identity?
 4. Pick one answer to question 1. What is one special activity you associate with that identity?
 5. What stereotypes do people have about your identity? Why?

Identifying Identity
Activity #3:
Family Culture

Time Required: 40-60 minutes

Materials Needed: Blank paper, newsprint, or poster board;
Markers or colored pens/pencils for drawing and writing

Objective: to creatively reflect on the ways one relates with other people in their life

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Choose a format for your relationship thinking. This could be a concept map, list, free-write, portrait, or other way of expressing your ideas.
3. Position yourself at the center of your relationships. Then begin branching outwards. You can use these prompts to support your thinking:
 1. Which relationships are most important to you? Represent this.
 2. Which relationships are least important or peripheral? Represent this.
 3. In which relationships are you most or least authentically yourself? Represent this.
 4. In which relationships do you feel safest/least safe? Represent this.
 5. How do you act on the relationships you have? Represent this.



INVESTIGATING IDENTITY: OVERVIEW

- ▶ Activity 1: Processes of Development, 11
- ▶ Activity 2: Gender Identity, 12
- ▶ Activity 3: Racial Identity Development, 13
- ▶ Activity 4: Personality and Relationships, 14

“No human is free of social structures, nor (perhaps) would happiness consist in such freedom.” – Marilyn Frye



Investigating
Identity



Time Required: 60-75 minutes

Materials Needed: Computer and internet; scrap paper

Objective: to describe major models of identity development and to analyze ways that identity development models can offer ways of understanding an individual's conception of self

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Access the google document and make a copy for yourself.
 - [Investigating Identity Activity #1: Processes of Development.](#)
3. Proceed through four stations.

Investigating Identity
Activity #1:
Processes of Development


Time Required: 90-120 minutes

Materials Needed: Blank paper, notebook paper, or computer; Pen or pencil if handwriting; computer and internet

Objective: to describe ways in which gender roles impact a person's development

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Watch either:
 - [“The Mask You Live In”](#) or
 - [“Miss Representation”](#)
3. As you watch, take notes on the ways that gender identity and gender roles impact people's development.



Investigating Identity
Activity #2:
Gender Identity

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

Materials Needed: Blank paper, notebook paper, or computer; Pen or pencil if handwriting; computer and internet

Objective: to describe stages of racial identity development using personal examples

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Read through Janet Helms' Racial Identity Development model for White People and for People of Color. Based on your own racial identity, re-read that section and annotate with your own personal examples.
 - [Investigating Identity Activity #3: Racial Identity Development](#)
3. Optional Exploration:
 - Research other models of racial identity development.

Investigating Identity
Activity #3:
Racial Identity Development

Time Required: 35-55 minutes

Materials Needed: Computer and internet; Scrap paper and pen/pencil if handwriting

Objective: to explore the ways that a personality type can explain one's relationships with others

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Complete an online version of the Myers-Briggs personality test.
 - One option is:
<https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>
 - If you'd prefer the official version, it's available for a fee at:
https://www.mbtionline.com/?utm_source=MBF&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=online
3. Reflect briefly on the results. Do they fit with how you express yourself in relationships?

Investigating Identity Activity #4: Personality and Relationships

REFLECTING AND ACTING FORWARD: OVERVIEW

- ▶ Activity 1: Key Transitions, 16
- ▶ Activity 2: Resisting Gender Roles, 17
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- ▶ Activity 4: Relational Work, 19

“Education that connects the will to know with the will to become.”
– bell hooks

Reflecting
and
Acting
Forward

Time Required: 30-45 minutes (/ongoing process)

Materials Needed: Computer or notebook/paper and pen/pencil

Objective: to reflect on ways that you have developed and to create action steps to support yourself in upcoming life transitions

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Reflect in writing for 5-10 minutes on the key transition moments that you have gone through in your life.
3. Identify 1-3 transitions that you might undergo in the next months or year of your life. For each transition you identify, draft the following:
 - One potential challenge in this transition
 - One way you might address this challenge using what you know are your strengths
 - One resource to tap into during this transition
 - One goal for your development as you go through this transition

Reflecting and Acting
Forward Activity #1:
Key Transitions

Time Required: 20-40 minutes (/ongoing process)

Materials Needed: Blank paper, notebook paper, or computer;
Pen or pencil if handwriting

Objective: to describe ways in which you can resist gender roles in your own life

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Reflect for 5-10 minutes on how gender roles currently impact your identity or behavior.
3. Choose one way that gender roles currently *negatively* impact you in your personal life or interpersonal relationships. Develop an action plan with measurable steps for how to address this issue.

Reflecting and Acting
Forward Activity #2:
Resisting Gender Roles

Time Required: 30-45 minutes (/ongoing practice)

Materials Needed: Blank paper, notebook paper, or computer; Pen or pencil if handwriting

Objective: to develop a plan for working towards healing and activism based on your racial identity

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Reflect for 5-10 minutes in writing on ways that your race impacts you on a daily basis.
3. Develop an action plan with two threads: healing and activism.
 - Healing: what is one way you can seek healing about your racial identity? This might take the form of a personal meditative practice, joining a group of people who talk about racial identity, developing a personal learning goal around race and identity, or other internal work.
 - Activism: what is one way you can learn more or engage in anti-racist activist work? This could mean attending a training or series of trainings, donating or working with local or national groups, or other external work.

Reflecting and Acting
Forward Activity #3:
Healing and Activism

Time Required: 25-30 minutes (/ongoing practice)

Materials Needed: Computer and internet; Scrap paper and pen/pencil if handwriting

Objective: to develop a plan to work on a single important relationship

Directions:

1. Get present. Clear your workspace and gather materials. Set up so that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of your process.
2. Reflect for 10-15 minutes on a relationships that is important to you that you have motivation to continue to work on.
3. Develop an action plan for working on this relationship:
 - You could commit to face-to-face interaction with this person or a new way of interacting with them.
 - This could mean adjusting your own behaviors as they impact this person, or communicating honestly with this person about your behaviors.
 - This could alternately mean expending intentional energy on appreciating this person.

Reflecting and Acting
Forward Activity #4:
Relational Work

Bibliography and Suggested Reading

- ▶ [Bibliography of Resources Cited in this Framework](#)
- ▶ Suggested Reading on Identity Development
- ▶ Suggested Reading on Gender Identity and Gender Roles
- ▶ Suggested Reading on Racial Identity Development and Anti-Racist Work
- ▶ Suggested Reading on Interpersonal Relationships