



# RA Training Presentation

## OIB

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# Table of Contents

- Introduction
- Activity
- Discussion
- Relating to your Students
- Making sure your students are supported
- Building an Inclusive Community
- Conclusion





# Introduction

What is Identity?

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# Identity- What is it?

- “Who someone is, individually” (The Dictionary Project, 2010)

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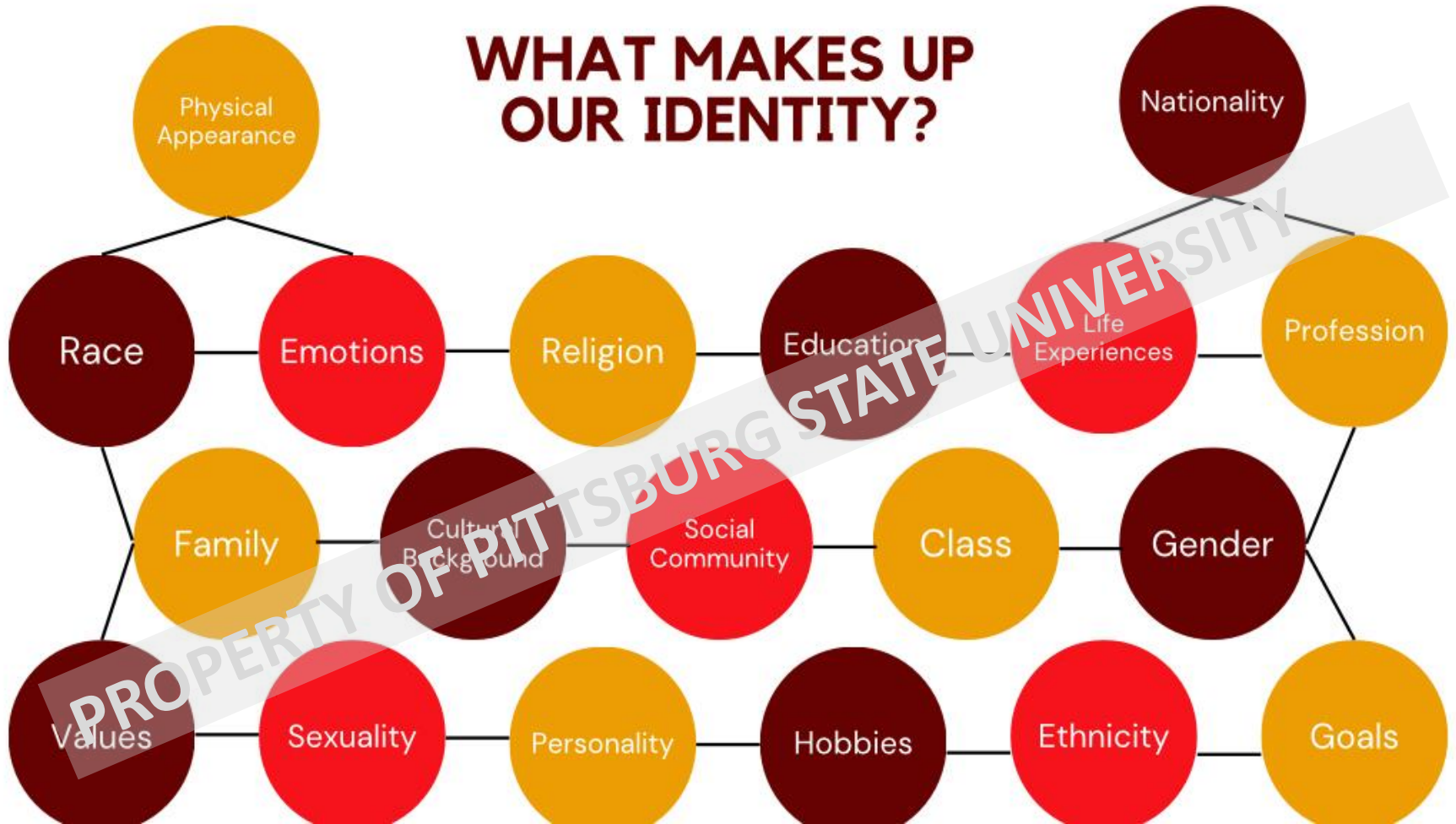


# Identity- What is it?

- “Who someone is, individually” (The Dictionary Project, 2010)
- “Refers to either (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b) socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or (a) and (b) at once)” (Fearon, 1999)



# WHAT MAKES UP OUR IDENTITY?





# Activity

Take a few minutes to come up with  
5-10 things that you think reflect  
your personal identity

# Example for Me

- KCMO
- Redhead
- Adopted
- Recent College Graduate
- Extrovert
- Queer
- Aries
- Hiking







# Discussion

What did you come up with? Why did you pick these things? How can you use these aspects of your identity to connect with others?

# Identity- Why it's important

- Gives people a sense of community/belonging
- Helps to provide people with a sense of direction
- Contributes to decision making
- Builds self-awareness





# Relating to your students

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# Shared Identities

- One way people relate to others is through shared identities
  - Friends that have the same major
  - People who grew up in the same social circles
- Many people gravitate towards those who have shared identity aspects, and tend to avoid those that they don't have much in common with because of this, it may be more difficult to relate to some students, and easier to relate to others



# Relating to your students

- There are things that you will have in common with your residents
  - Students at the same school
  - Living on campus

These things are often important parts of identity, but since everyone can relate to that, they aren't always the most helpful to building connections



# Relating to your students

- To build a connection with someone who you don't seem to have anything in common with, it is important to be open and accepting, and take interest in what they are saying
  - Ask questions about their hobbies, interests or experiences (people generally like to talk about themselves)
  - Share if you have similar experiences with any of their hobbies, interests or experiences
    - i.e. if they like basketball- I saw the OKC Thunder play once and it was pretty cool





**Making sure your students  
are supported**

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# Making sure your students are supported

- Many students experience significant changes in their identity during their time in college
  - As an R.A. they may come to you for support if they are confused about their identity, or if they just need to talk to somebody
- Especially in a Residential Community it is important that students feel supported by their neighbors and community during this time
  - As an RA it is important to set the standard that your community will be inclusive and accepting of all students, regardless of their identity





# Identity Development in College

- College is many student's first time away from their families
  - New friends
  - Introduction of new interests and hobbies
  - Living on their own for the first time
- Many students are exposed to people of different backgrounds and identities, that they may not have been exposed to previously
- Major and Career Changes occur for many students



# Identity Development in College

- During College, most students are in between two different stages of identity development (Erikson)
  - Adolescence (identity v. confusion)
    - In adolescence, people explore their societal and familial roles, their values and beliefs.
  - Young Adulthood (intimacy v. isolation)
    - In young adulthood, many people begin to form close relationships that shape their identity
- Supporting students through these phases of identity development is essential



# Identity Development in College

- Sometimes, people have trouble understanding and accepting their identity, and may encounter some of the following challenges:
  - Self Exploration
  - Fluidity
  - Social Expectations
  - Fear of Rejection
  - Comparison
  - Internalized Bias
  - Internal vs. External Identity
  - Intersectionality



# Intersectionality

- "Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking." (Crenshaw, 1989)



# How to support someone who is discovering their identity

- Listen Actively
- Ask Questions
- Provide Resources
- Normalize Uncertainty and Fluidity
- Encourage Self Reflection
- Celebrate Progress
- Avoid Assumptions
- Be Respectful
- Affirm Them





# Building an inclusive community

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# Identity and Oppression

- We all have quite a few different things that we consider important parts of our identity
- For many people, there are foundational parts of their identities that may cause them to experience oppression or discrimination
  - This is because people who are members of non-dominant identity groups may experience limitations, disadvantages or disapproval from members of the dominant group



# How to build an Inclusive Community

- In college students have ample opportunity to challenge their assumptions, explore their own identity, and learn about other's identities
- Making yourself check your unconscious bias, not being afraid to try new things, or interact with people who you don't have much in common is a great way to expand your knowledge and contribute to creating a welcoming and inclusive community
- Encourage others to do this as well





# How to build an Inclusive Community

- One thing you can do is work with your residents to create a set of rules that everyone agrees to for your community (let them come up with this on their own, but maybe suggest a few things if they are struggling)
- Discuss with them, as a group, that discrimination will not be tolerated within the community
  - It may be helpful to define to them exactly what discrimination is, and how it effects people so they understand why it is important to include in the community rules



# Key Takeaways

- Identity is multifaceted
- College is an important time for identity development
- Some identities may cause us to experience privilege, while others may cause us to experience bias
- In order to create an inclusive campus environment, it is important to create space for people of all identities, and try to avoid bias about people's identities when interacting with others





**Thank You for Listening!**

Questions?

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