### *It Takes a Nation: Forming and Informing School Identity through Media*
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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
High School Journalism I-IV, Newspaper, Yearbook

**Keywords:** Media, journalism, school culture, collective identity, stereotypes, community-building, newswriting, video production, interviewing, nationalism

**Teaching Standards:** See Appendix 1 for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** This curriculum unit takes the ideas of nation and nationalism and applies them to a school campus. Schools, like nations, have boundaries, leaders, history, traditions and unique identities and cultures that most students would not typically stop to consider. This unit encourages students, especially at schools eager to identify or create a collective identity, to closely examine and scrutinize the forces behind their school's own political and cultural system, a system they experience daily. Students will study the factors that contribute to nation formation through global and local examples. They will consider the role media play in informing and reinforcing the identity of their school as well as historical, economic, political and cultural factors. Through a campaign combining research and activism, they will conduct interviews and create written, image-based and video stories to report on their findings and invent new ways to build a positive collective identity on campus.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 28 students in Journalism 1/Yearbook.*

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**It Takes a Nation: Forming and Informing School Identity through Media**

*Michele Lemere*

## Introduction

It is human nature to want to identify with and belong to groups. From the microcosm of one's family to the political and cultural lines drawn by those in power, categorization and group identification is necessary and inevitable. A person's interactions with these groups influence his or her identity, and one of the most influential among young people is the educational institution. Students spend a significant amount of time immersed in these scholastic "nations," often not by choice, yet they have a tremendous impact on their futures. One's school can affect where and whether one attends college as well as career prospects. A student who attends a "good" school benefits from academic excellence internally as well as a solid reputation by association. Conversely, if the school is perceived by its students and community as "bad," the student's options diminish.

This curriculum unit explores the idea of schools as nations with unique identities and cultures. After learning about the methods and reasons of nation formation, students will examine the forces behind their school's own political and cultural system, a system they experience daily. They will consider the role media play in informing and reinforcing the identity of their school as well as historical, economic, political and cultural factors. Then, they will use student-generated media to report on their findings as well as effect change.

## Background/Demographics

This curriculum unit is designed for a high school Journalism or Newspaper course but can be adjusted for a variety of social studies and English Language Arts classes. Elective courses focused on leadership, civics, sociology or psychology also will find it adaptable. While I am gearing this unit toward a school struggling with a negative identity, any school could benefit in this analysis. After all, any student journalist/leader needs a clear sense of his or her school's sense of identity in order to serve his or her constituents. Therefore, nearly any school, regardless of demographics, would benefit from implementing this unit in order to become more self-aware.

The school in which this unit will be first implemented is an urban high school in Charlotte, NC with a 2015 enrollment of 1,928 students. It is a Title I school in which the demographics are 48 percent African-American, 40 percent Hispanic, 7 percent Asian, 3 percent White, .3 percent American Indian/Alaska Native and 1.7 percent listed as "two or more."[1] This school also has the highest percentage of English Language Learners among high schools in the district. Portions of the population are transient, and the school experiences a high absence rate and below average achievement overall. Although the school achieved an 89 percent graduation rate (students graduating on time) in 2014-15 and exceeded growth on targets for student progress, on a North Carolina Department of Public Instruction scale of A+ through F, this school earned a grade of D due to a score of 18 percent in ACT readiness (the percent of students who scored high enough to qualify for admission in the UNC system) and 30 percent in EOC proficiency (those who earned grade-level scores on Biology, Math I and English II exams.)[2]

Like many schools in rapidly growing cities, this school struggles with a shifting sense of identity. Several of the students complain of a "lack of school spirit."  During a recent student government election campaign, nearly all of the candidates cited "school spirit" and "changing our bad reputation" as their primary goals if elected. What students are describing as "lack of school spirit" seems to be rooted in a lack of collective identity. Because students move here from across the city and country – and often from across the world – a portion of the student body is fractious and transient. Students speak several different languages and carry their own perceptions of what school should be like. Furthermore, turnover is high among faculty and administration, making it difficult to form traditions and remain stable from year to year.

Efforts are underway to build an identity as a culturally rich school, yet self-segregation often occurs. This is apparent in the cafeteria and in the halls, where students typically socialize with members of their own race or ethnicity. After school clubs, such as African Club, Latin American Student Association, and Asian Society, also form along racial lines. Our communities, particularly among English Language Learners, tend to form along racial and/or language lines. In *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum offers an explanation, claiming that these separations are part of forming a racial identity. "We need to understand that in racially mixed settings, racial grouping is a developmental process in response to an environmental stressor, racism. Joining with one's peers for support in the face of stress is a positive coping strategy."[3] The problem, Tatum states, is when these students are basing these identities primarily on cultural stereotypes (Blacks are athletes and

performers, doing well in school is White, Asians are quiet and obedient, Latinos work in construction, immigrants are stupid because they don't speak English, multi-racial people need to pick a race, etc.)

At a school in rural North Carolina, clubs and programs aimed at Latino students helped combat the stereotypes of all Latinos as illegal immigrants and as high school dropouts who work in chicken-plants or as landscapers. The student population transformed from a primarily black and white school in the 1990s to roughly 41% Latino, 34% Caucasian and 25% African-American by 2008. To address the changes, the school started a dropout prevention program that collaborated with a local university to help Latino students succeed in high school and apply to college. Another group, the Action Inspiration Motivation (AIM) Club, sent students to work as tutors and Spanish translators at elementary and middle schools, often leading to internships and jobs. Yet while teachers were trained to help better serve ESL students, there seemed to be little to no training on how to engage black students and no clubs created to celebrate African-American culture, according to a study by sociologist Alexis M. Silver.

The incorporation of clubs, programmes and resources encouraged Latino students to find a place of belonging within the school and community. The school's proactive responses to the expanding Latino population resulted in progressively better graduation rates, rising academic achievement levels among Latin students and growing Latino representation in student government and other prestigious school organizations.

The lack of similar clubs for black students, states Silver, caused perceptions of African Americans to remain "largely delinked from academic engagement. Indeed, the lack of clubs celebrating African American identity or history reinforced the black/non-black colour line as opposed to eroding it."[4]

So, how do we continue to encourage students to identify positively with their own racial background while fostering a sense of community in the nation-school as a whole? How do we identify and come to terms with stereotypes and push against them? How can we invent traditions that will help us form a collective, positive identity? My goal for this unit is to use mass media to entice students to examine this and several other

indicators of campus communities in an effort to create a sense of school-wide "nationalism," identity and pride.

**Rationale**

While schools may not be nations in the literal, political sense, many of the traits theorists and scholars attribute to nations and nationalism also apply to academic institutions. Schools, like nations, may have physical territories (the campus), a government (administration), and shared history, camaraderie and traditions. A key component of this unit is a nation's ability to "invent" traditions in order to establish group bonds and pride, legitimatize the institution and set behavioral norms.[5] The trait of nationalism this unit strives to avoid, and even combat, is the tendency of chauvinistic nationalistic groups to raise barriers against newcomers (e.g. immigrants) or otherwise alienate the "other."

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson defines a nation as "imagined" because most of its members will never meet each other, which is easily applicable to a school that graduates hundreds of students each year[6]. He also describes it as "limited" because a nation, however large, has boundaries thus cannot encompass all of humankind, just as all of us do not attend the same school.[7] Most importantly for the purpose of this unity, Anderson cites the birth of mass-produced books and newspapers as a key influence on the formation of modern nations. As deified monarchies and privileged access to sacred scripts declined and the focus on linear history increased, people who shared a common language needed new ways to "link fraternity, power and time…Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves and to relate to others, in profoundly new ways."[8]

Today, mass media continues to foster shared narratives within communities, though media sources are not always viewed as trustworthy or truthful. A 2011 Knight Foundation survey of high school students found that 92% think it is important to be informed of the news, with 88% identifying newspapers as "very or somewhat truthful," but only 34% saying the same for social networks. Yet when asked how often they received news and information from social networks, including Facebook and Twitter, 56% said they did so on a daily basis. Of those daily users, 91% agreed that "people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions."[9] While the support for First Amendment freedoms is encouraging, the increased use of not-vetted social media as a

news sources stresses the need for critical analysis and unbiased reporting skills in students.

A high school journalism program is not only a powerful way to teach writing, reporting and interpersonal skills, it is a hands-on, engaging way for students to learn about the freedom of the press, democracy, bias and rhetoric. Yet, as Regina Marchi of Rutgers University states, schools that can afford journalism programs are typically in White, middle-class or affluent neighborhoods, so low-income youth of color often do not have access. Marchi's study included interviews with 30 participants in after school programs that were sponsored by non-profit news outlets and targeted minority and low-income youth. Many of the participants expressed negative attitudes about mainstream media, especially concerning coverage of their own neighborhoods and communities. They felt the coverage was unbalanced on the side of crime and violence and blamed this coverage on how people in other neighborhoods negatively perceived them. Some claimed that news, in general, was too depressing and sensationalized. Marchi found that participating in these after school programs gave students the chance to focus on topics in their neighborhoods that were important to them (positive and negative) and transformed their opinions about the power and intent of journalism.

> The findings indicate that the greatest benefit of journalism training for disenfranchised youth may not lie in the generation of stronger communication skills (although this is certainly a benefit), but in the development of a sense of civic empowerment among youth populations that commonly feel alienated from journalism and politics.[10]

Marchi argues that the benefits of these two programs were that they were off-campus, thus avoiding school-based censorship, and that they were audio and video centered, making them accessible to students with weak writing skills. I would counter that a school that is committed to graduating civic-minded, critical thinking citizens would allow some leeway beyond the typical sports and lunch coverage often found in school newspapers. The writing portion of this unit encourages students to build their writing skills, even if that means an English Language Learner starts out writing a simple photo caption and progresses to a full paragraph.

High school journalism programs have been proven catalysts in creating a collective identity and shared culture on campus. An analysis of 45 high school journalists at 19 schools revealed that school news reporting helped students identify with peers they may not otherwise share bonds with and encouraged them to stand up for

disenfranchised students. The journalism students said their publications were able to tell their school's story accurately and more comprehensively than mainstream media. "By making decisions collectively about what their peers should be informed about, high school journalists participate in not only informing themselves and others, but also in constructing the news relevant to the collective identity of their high school community."[11]

**Objectives**

This unit exposes students to global definitions of nation, nationalism, media coverage and stereotypes, then challenges them to apply these concepts to their own school. The activities and formative and summative assessments directly align with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English III-IV in reading, writing, speaking and listening and have corresponding College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards (see Appendix 1.) There is a heavy emphasis on speaking and listening skills, collaboration and the use of technology. By the end of this unit, students will be able to analyze written and visual texts for author's purpose and rhetoric, conduct research in which they make judgments about the reliability of sources, and communicate and conduct interviews with peers and school staff. They also will be able to create and publish news, features and opinion pieces in writing and through photography and videography.

The unit is divided into four parts. The first three introduce students to major concepts and skills and will take approximately two weeks of in-class instruction based on a 90 minute per day schedule. Each part includes an essential question, global or national examples, and a direct link to the school. Part four contains the independent practice and application of parts one, two and three. It can be completed in as little as 10 days with each small group of students choosing one of the options, or it can become an ongoing project in which students complete several of the assignments over the course of the semester in groups or individually.

In part one, students will consider different definitions and examples of nations and the way the term is used. For example, the American Pledge of Allegiance states we are "one nation, under God." What does that mean? In addition, what are some other ways, besides political boundaries, that people are grouped into nations? Examples may range from the Nation of Islam to Niner Nation (UNC Charlotte.) They will discuss the characteristics these nations have in common and how a school may be considered a nation. Part two uses Social Identity Theory in order to dig deeper into the idea of

collective identity. Topics include cultural background, shared history, government and leadership, common goals and self-categorization.

The third part focuses on the roles stereotypes and mass media have on a group's collective identity. Students will begin to identify stereotypes associated with various groups on campus. This may include racial stereotypes as well as those associated with gender, sexual orientation, class and social groups (athletes, nerds, skaters, etc.) Then, students will examine how media may be stereotypical in its reporting and consider the effects that reporting may have on the members' internal perceptions (how they see themselves) and nonmembers' perceptions of the group. Finally, students will research news coverage of their school and compare it to other schools. They will analyze the coverage for accuracy, stereotypes and internalization. In part four, students will brainstorm ways to tell the more complete story of their "nation" school. They will collaborate on a culminating project based on their investigation that will be publicized school wide in an effort to spark discussion in the community. Written stories, photos and interactive blogs will be posted on a news website and social media and video versions will be produced for a daily video announcement program. This is also a time for students to work with administrators on inventing traditions that celebrate the school's diversity while bringing them together as a collective, cohesive group.

**Teaching Strategies**

Differentiation is key in any classroom in order to reach students at different levels and with varied learning styles. My journalism classes tend to be academically heterogeneous, ranging from freshman who are new to the country to seniors enrolled in AP courses. This unit employs a variety of teaching and learning techniques in order to reach mastery. It contains ways for everyone to be involved as a classroom community.

Modeling

When teaching hands-on skills and activities that will require students to work independently outside of the classroom, such as interviewing using a video camera, it is crucial for teachers to model the steps involved in the skill and the behavior expectation. I will model the skill while students watch, we will practice the skill together, and they will practice the skill with peers before they leave the classroom.

Team/Community Building

Because of the potentially controversial topics in this unit, it is important for students to have a safe place where they can speak honestly and without judgment. This unit requires students to feel a sense of community and belonging within the classroom before they begin broaching these topics with others on campus. Icebreakers, getting-to-know-you activities and team builders are appropriate at the beginning of the unit.

Peer Teaching and Evaluation

Being able to teach a task or concept to a peer is a reliable sign of mastery. Furthermore, students are often better equipped to explain and learn concepts to people who are close to their own age. Peer teaching and evaluation using rubrics helps foster relationships and trust in the classroom. Students who create their own rubrics have increased ownership of the assignment. While basic rubrics are provided to guide students in interviewing, newswriting and video production skills, students are encouraged to create their own projects and participate in the way they will be evaluated.

Small group/whole class discussions

Small group and whole class discussions allow students to engage with different points of view and form arguments. They help students feel comfortable with speaking in public and prepare them for classroom discussions in the college environment. Small groups in particular help shy students contribute ideas in a more comfortable setting. They also ensure that students come prepared with questions and comments.

**Lessons/Classroom Activities**

Part I Essential Question: What is a Nation? (1-2 class days)

*Anticipatory Activity*

Ask students to brainstorm and reflect on the word "nation." Depending on the students' levels, this may be in the form of a freewrite/share out or a small group or whole class brainstorm in which students shout out words that the teacher writes on the board. Prompt

and guide students as necessary, asking them to think about the myriad ways people are grouped into nations. Possibilities are the United States' Pledge of Allegiance ("one nation, under God"), the Nation of Islam (religious), Fox Nation (media) and UNC Charlotte's Niner Nation (collegiate/athletic.) Students may research the term "nation" for more ideas. Discuss the characteristics these nations have in common as well as their differences. Topics should include language, symbols, music, and holidays/celebrations and other traditions. Create a working definition of "nation."

*National Anthems*

Choose 3-4 national anthems to analyze. Include the American national anthem as well as other anthems that represent the cultural background of students in the class. Supply a printed version of the lyrics for each as well as a YouTube video clip of each. (See links below.) Students will annotate each anthem, noting words with positive and negative connotations, symbolism and imagery. They will watch the video clip for each, paying attention to the related images on the screen as well as the mood of the music. Then, they will answer this prompt orally and in writing: What can you infer about each of these nations based on their national anthems? What types of emotions and results are they attempting to evoke in the citizenry?

   Links to national anthems:
US: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1wLtAXDgqg
Russia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nlpyh2TL3e0
USSR: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK2GUxOnjDQ
France: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laWIjgWDesE
Israel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjfFpFW9OdA
South Africa: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr0414FrN7g
Canada: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr0414FrN7g
Nepal: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7ZvETrH-I4

*Schools as Nations: Alma Maters*

Apply the class's working definition of nation to schools. Discuss how your school has symbols, traditions and an anthem (alma mater.) Provide the lyrics of the school's national anthem so that students may annotate independently and discuss in pairs or small

groups. Play a recording of the song or listen to a live performance, if possible. Then students will answer this prompt orally and in writing: What emotions and results is this song attempting to evoke among students and staff? Does the tone and imagery of the alma mater match the tone of our school? Why or why not?

Part II Essential Question: What Makes a Nation? What influences nationalism and social identity? (2 days)

*Anticipatory Activity*

Present these elements of social identity theory in the form of a graphic organizer (see appendix.) or have students take notes. Students will analyze the examples in class using these questions and summarize their answers on the graphic organizer.

**Cultural background.** Explain/break down the terms homogeneous and heterogeneous. Is the group's social background heterogeneous, homogeneous or both?
**History:** Do the members share a common history?
**Leadership:** How do leaders "rally the troops?" Is it mandated, forced or invented? What makes people want to follow the leader?
**Common goals:** Do the members have an objective or shared purpose/goal? Is there an enemy to be defeated?
**Self-categorization:** Do members choose to join or are they forced? How does this affect the success of creating a collective identity?
**Inclusion:** Are new members welcomed or is this a strict in-group?

*Example I: The Lone Nut*

Students will view the 3-minute video The Lone Nut
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=256eKjULdgQ, which is a humorous look at how to start a movement through the analogy of a dancing guy at an outdoor concert who develops a following. Discuss the video and apply the six points as a class. Write these results in the graphic organizer. Answers should be similar to what follows.

**Cultural background.** The members appear to be similar in age and race (homogeneous.) They appear to share a common appreciation for the music.
**History:** Not easy to determine, but probably not.
**Leadership:** The leader is doing his own thing. The first follower is the one who gets the momentum going and makes more people want to follow, even though the leader will get the credit.
**Common goals:** The common goal seems simply to be to have fun.
**Self-categorization:** Members definitely choose to join. This seems to make it more appealing.
**Inclusion:** New members are eagerly welcomed. The only criterion is to dance.


*Example 2: Kankakee, Ill.*


Students will listen to the 16 minute excerpt "Last But Not Least" from the radio series *This American Life*.[12] The clip focuses on the town of Kankakee, Ill., which was named the worst city in America in 1999. While researching their town in 2014, high school students discovered that Late Show host David Letterman mocked their town in two shows that year. He created a top 10 list, interviewed the mayor by phone and sent the town two gazebos in a mocking attempt to improve the community. After learning this, the students created a movement to tear down the gazebos and rebuild them into a rocking chair to gift to Letterman for his retirement. Their ultimate goal was to destroy the symbols of the negative perceptions and stereotypes their town faced. After listening to the clip, students will use the graphic organizer to analyze the social identity of the group. It should look something like this:


**Cultural background.** The school is 40% Black, 20% Hispanic. Some Whites were mentioned. They say they are proud of being heterogeneous.
**History:** Yes. In fact they studied it, which was the catalyst for the movement.
**Leadership:** The leaders used traditional and social media to spread the word of their cause. The leaders were the students' peers.
**Common goals:** Their common enemy is David Letterman and their negative reputation in society. Their goal is to dismantle the gazebos, which are negative symbols of their city, and repurpose them into a rocking chair as a statement to Letterman and society in general.
**Self-categorization:** Members choose to join.

**Inclusion:** The in-group includes only those who want to dismantle the gazebos. The out group is against the project.


*Example 3: Our School*


Students will follow the same procedure in small groups, charting their answers on large paper. This time they will analyze their own school on the six traits. Each group will hang its chart on the wall for a gallery walk.
Closing Discussion and written response: Examples 1 and 2 are examples of successful groups. What aspects of these groups does our school share? How are they different? Based on this data, do you think our school could be successful in starting a movement? If not, what would need to change?


Part 3 Essential Question: How do media and stereotypes affect identity? (5 days)


*Anticipatory Activity*


Revisit the Kankakee, Ill. story to segue into the ideas of perception vs. reality and stereotypes. Play the story again, asking students to listen for words that others (the outgroups) use to describe Kankakee. Or, to save time, offer these words on the board: Skankakee, poor, dark, gang, Black, Hispanic, lowest of the low, drug dealers, ghetto, not educational, gangsters, hood rats. Discuss: Do these words tell the entire story of Kankakee? Why or why not?


*Media Portrayals and coverage*


Ask students to call out or make a list in small groups of what they think the media's influence is in society. Write their responses on the board. Then ask them if they can think of any examples of when the media may contribute to stereotypes, as the ones that appeared in the Kankakee example.
Next, project these ideas on the board, adapted from Challenging Islamophobia Through Visual Media Studies" by Diane Watt:

- The media are considered an authority – if it is news, it must be important.
- If people do not know many people in a minority group, they may get their "knowledge" of that group from media reports
- The media can influence what we think of as "normal" and "abnormal" or "deviant"
- The media can influence a person's identity by making them feel that they either belong or do not belong.[13]

*International example: Image Analysis*

Project a photo of the cover of the Maclean's magazine from October, 23, 2006, or choose a similar photo from a news outlet that seems to portray a group in this manner. The cover photo can be found by searching the archives for the date at [www.macleans.ca](http://www.macleans.ca) Ask students to describe what they see and read in the photo. Prod them with these questions.

- Who are the people in the photo and what are they doing?
- Does the photo have a direct relation to the headline and story? If there is a caption, does it help to make that link? Does it identify the subjects of the photo by name?
- What colors are used and how do they affect the mood of the photo?
- What is the vantage point of the photographer?
- Overall, what do you think about Muslim women based on this photo and headline?

You may paraphrase or provide this excerpt from the Watts article to further spark discussion.: "It depicts a tightly-packed group of women completely covered in black Islamic burqas. The fact that women in this photograph are packed closely together might suggest homogeneity and anonymity as opposed to individuality. Muslims have frequently been depicted in the media in large, anonymous, and sometimes angry mobs. In the foreground the eye is attracted to one uncovered face, a close-up of a young girl peering up from the crowd with a hostile glare... The color black figures prominently. Christian, Jewish, and Islamic clergy all wear black as a sign of submission to God, but it is doubtful that this is the association non-Muslim viewers would tend to bring to this photo. Muslim women are often assumed to be submissive, but not in any positive religious sense. In Western societies black is also associated with night and may signify mystery, death, evil, unhappiness, and fear. The color black thus sets the mood of the image, and viewers may associate these meanings with the women themselves. The

camera is positioned above the crowd so that the spectator looks down on the group. This sets up a relation of power and superiority between the spectator who is above, and those being viewed below. Since the photographer is necessarily hidden the view is "from nowhere," creating a distance which sets up the women as the impersonal objects of both the photographer's and the spectator's gaze. These women are, in effect, dehumanized."[14]

*National Example: Sports Stereotypes*

Next, bring the conversation closer to home by showing the photo from the article "Race and Beyond: The Media's Stereotypical Portrayals of Race[15]" and asking the same questions from the Maclean's exercise. Then, ask students to guess how many African-Americans they think make a living playing professional sports in the United States. After they provide guesses, tell them they will need to read the article to find out. Give them ample time to read and annotate the article before starting a student-led discussion. (This article also includes a link to another article, a controversial cover from Bloomberg BusinessWeek, worthy of examining. Finally, a third worth noting is a LeBron James *Vogue* 2008 magazine cover juxtaposed against a "mad brute" U.S. Army enlistment poster. It is easily searchable on Google images.)

*Examining School Groups*

Students will brainstorm a list of categorical terms that apply to students and staff at school. They may include subgroups based on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, class and social divides (athletes, nerds, skaters.) Make sure each student includes at least one that applies to him or herself. Choose six of the most commonly used terms, combining as necessary, and write each on a large sheet of paper. Post the papers around the room. Students will have 5-10 minutes to visit each poster and write stereotypes associated with each group. Once time is called, ask students to walk to a poster of the term that most closely applies to them. Have each group read the stereotypes listed on the poster and lead the discussion. Are these ideas sometimes true? Always true? How could they be qualified?

*Local Application*

Students will use this framework to conduct research about their school. The first phase of their research should be fact-based. Topics include school demographics and statistics,

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction grades and related data on school performance, staff, etc., and basic history of the school (year built, location, assignment boundaries, etc.) For phase two, students should focus on news coverage. Students may be divided into groups and given topics to research based on decade (1950s, 1980s, 2000s,) or topics (sports, academics, crime.) As they read, view images and watch coverage, ask them to note examples of stereotypes and generalities. Next, each group will conduct similar research on a another local school, comparing their school's coverage to other schools. Each group will present its findings on a PowerPoint or Prezi and share with the class.

Culminating discussion: Is the news coverage of our school what we expected? Is it accurate? Have we internalized the way we are covered and become that stereotype? Similarly, are the other schools portrayed the way we thought they would be?

Part 4 Essential Question: What story of our nation do we want to tell? (10 days-ongoing)

Students will create a media campaign on a school news website using the data collected and ideas generated to tell their story. To spark ideas, refer back to the Kankakee story[16]. It is important for students to generate the components of their campaign in order to create buy in and ownership; however, the assignments below are a possible framework.

1. Public opinion. Students will interview peers and staff about their perceptions and opinions about their school. This may be in the form of one-on-one written interviews, electronic polls and/or videos to be posted on the website.
2. Puncturing stereotypes: Students will ask peers of different subgroups to define a stereotype about that group and negate it. For example, they may hold a sign that says "I am _____, but I am not _____." Take photos of each student and post to the website. (This also would work as an in-class, ice-breaker activity and gives the teacher a chance to model it before sending students out to pursue it with peers.)
3. Promoting traditions: Students will identify current traditions (homecoming, spirit week, celebrations) and cover these traditions with pictures, stories and videos.
4. Inventing traditions: Students will use examples discussed at the beginning of the unit to create new symbols and traditions. For example, they may write a new alma mater that reflects the tone of the school and teach it to the student body. Or, they may design a T-shirt or sticker to distribute to all community members.

5. Celebrating diversity: Students will observe the subgroups identified earlier in the unit (cultural, social, etc.) and write feature stories and videos about those groups. The goal is for all of the subgroups to be represented.

6. Lunching and learning: Students will commit to having lunch with at least one person from another subgroup for at least one lunch period and write a first-person account of the experience.

7. Starting or supporting a club. What types of clubs and organizations are we missing on campus? Start a club to address a need, or support a fledgling club by helping them with publicity and organization.

8. Spreading the word: Students will contact local media to pitch story ideas and interview journalists about how their school is covered and why.

Students will form groups to work on these activities based on interest and skill level. The groups will create rubrics in order to be evaluated. See appendix 3 for examples of prepared rubrics to use early on in the unit as a model for students.

**Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards**

The activities and assessments in this unit directly align with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English III-IV in reading, writing, and speaking and listening and have corresponding College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards.

Reading Standards

RI5: Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing and engaging. Students will annotate, discuss and evaluate visual, written and audio texts, including national anthems, magazine cover photos, an article about sports stereotypes and a radio feature story.

Writing standards

W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content. Students will write news and feature stories and photo captions about events and people on campus.

W6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information. Students will work together to post stories, photos and videos to a campus news website and/or for the school's daily video announcements. They will use still and video cameras in these endeavors.

W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. Students will combine internet-based research with personal interviews to complete their culminating projects in order to solve the problem of creating community and school identity on campus.
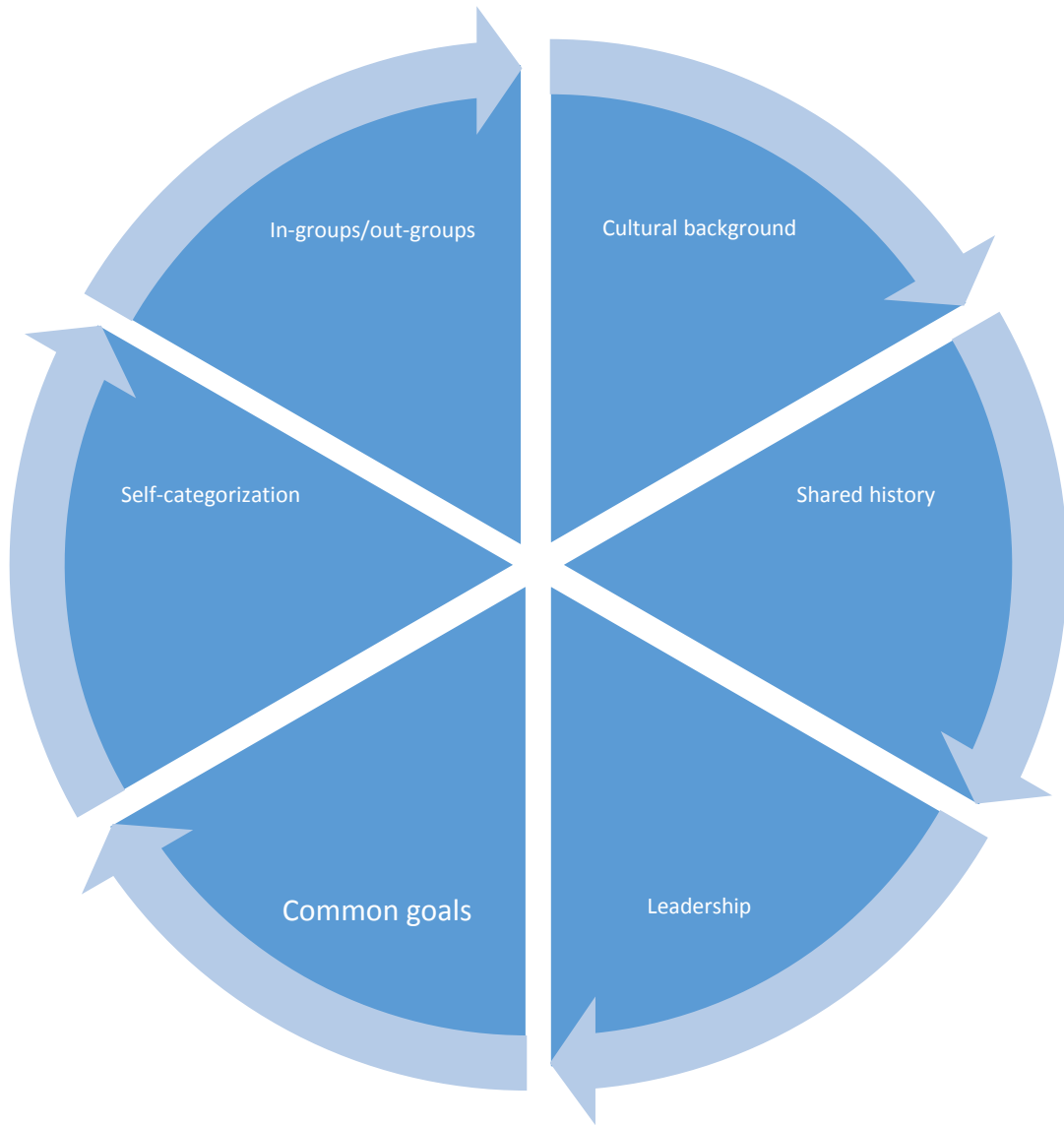
Speaking and Listening Standards

SL5: Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning and evidence and to add interest. Students will create and present PowerPoint presentations in class as well as stories and visuals on the website.

# Elements of Social Identity

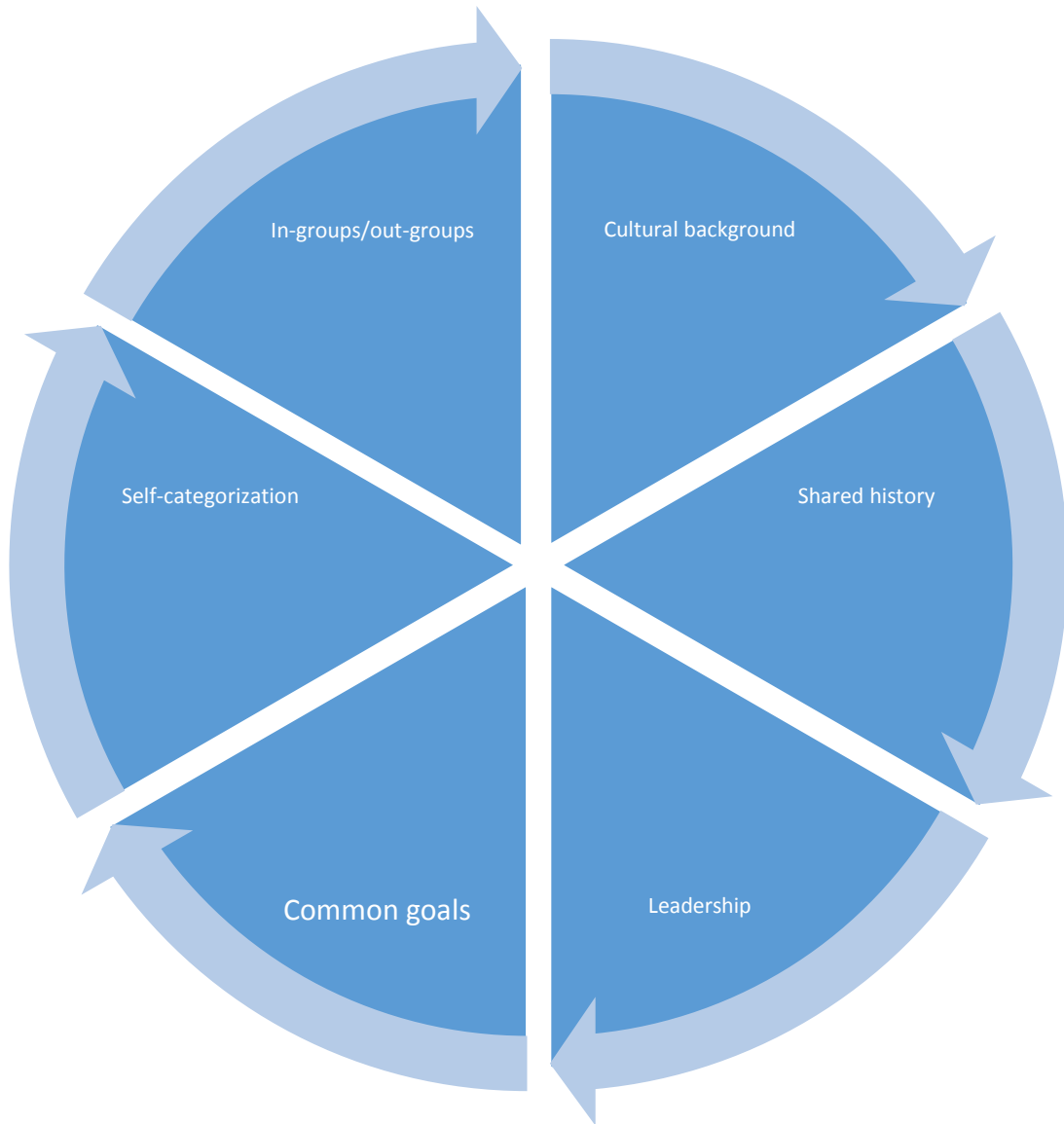## Example 1: The Lone Nut

In-groups/out-groups

Cultural background

Self-categorization

Shared history

Common goals

Leadership

**Elements of Social Identity**

Example 2: Kankakee, Illinois

**Appendix 3: Rubrics**

**Interviewing Peer Evaluation**

Name of interviewer:_____ Name of interviewee:_____

| Category | A | B | F |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professionalism | He or she greeted me with a handshake and maintained eye contact. | He or she greeted me with a handshake. | He or she did not greet me. |
| Respectfulness | He or she always asked questions in a pleasant and curious tone. I felt respected and comfortable. | He or she usually asked questions in a pleasant and curious tone. I felt uncomfortable at times. | He or she insulted me and/or complained about me. He or she may have used profanity. |
| Engagement | He or she asked or all questions completely and professionally. | He or she asked or some questions completely and professionally. | He or she only asked 2 or fewer questions. |

**General Story Rubric**          **Name**_____

| Aspect of story | A-B | C-D | F |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Headline | Strong, catchy headline. Most likely uses a subject and verb. First letter is capitalized | Headline is about the topic but is boring. Capitalization may be incorrect. | No headline |
| Byline | Includes BY and the writer's name directly under the headline. | Incomplete or in the wrong spot. | Not included |
| Human sources quoted or paraphrased | Two human sources quoted using correct format. | One human source quoted using correct format | No human sources |
| Physical sources | Two sources used and cited | One source used and cited. | No sources used or cited. |
| Photo | Student-produced photo or graphic. | Borrowed photo or graphic. | No photo or graphic. |
| Relevance to school community | Directly relevant to school readers. | Possibly interesting to school readers. | Not relevant. |
| Peer edit | Story was peer edited and revised. Peer's name: | | Story was not peer edited. |
| Spelling/Grammar | Few to no mistakes | Some mistakes, but meaning is still clear. | Mistakes make story unreadable. |

**Video Production Rubric**             Name:_____

| Category | Exemplary (4) | Proficient (3) | Developing (2) | Incomplete (1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Introduction** | Unique and memorable introduction engages the audience immediately and communicates the purpose of the piece. | Introduces the topic and purpose in an engaging manner. | General introduction of the topic and purpose. Little creativity and only somewhat engaging. | Introduction is not included or does not make sense. The topic and purpose are not clear |
| **Content** | The project has a clear focus related to the chosen topic and one or more of the following elements; reflects broad research and application of critical thinking skills; shows notable insight or understanding of the topic. | There is focus that is maintained throughout the project. The project presents information in an accurate and organized manner that can be understood by the intended audience. | The project has a focus but may stray from it at times. There is an organizational structure, though it may not be carried through in a consistent manner. There may be factual errors or inconsistencies, but they are relatively minor | The project loses focus and/or is not organized in a logical way. There are major factual errors or inconsistencies. |
| **Layout/ Design** | Organization of presentation is excellent. Transitions add to the viewer's understanding of the topic. Titles are added to | Sequence of project components is clear and evident. Transitions provide easy movement from one scene to another. Titles are used | Adequate preparation and sequence is shown. Transitions are adequate. Titles are present. | Either lack of preparation or illogical sequence. Transitions are choppy or distract the viewer. Titles are not present or distract from the overall video. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | enhance understanding. | and add to the video's flow. |  |  |
| **Technical Elements** | The camera work is smooth and the focus is crisp. Sound and visual files are distortion free. Transitions are timed for smooth movement between scenes. Titles are legible. There are few technical problems, and none of a serious nature. | The camera work is generally smooth and the focus is usually crisp. Sound and visual files are mostly distortion free. Transitions provide a smooth movement between scenes. Titles are mostly legible. There are few technical problems. | The camera work may be choppy or panning is too fast. Sound and visual files may have some distortion but it doesn't distract the viewer. There are some technical problems, but the viewer is able to follow the presentation. | The camera work is choppy and the scenes are blurry or panning is too fast. Sound and visual files contain significant distortion. Transitions are awkward between scenes. Titles are illegible. Technical difficulties seriously interfere with the viewer's ability to see, hear, or understand content. |
| **Collaboration** | Effective teamwork. The final product represents something that would have been impossible to accomplish working alone. | Students worked together and were assigned different roles | Presentation a result of a group effort, but only some members contributed | Obvious that the presentation was created by one person |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conventions** | Correct grammar is consistently used. | Correct grammar is used in the piece (only one or two grammatical errors). | Some instances of incorrect grammar are noted (more than two) | Grammatical mistakes interfere with ability to understand the piece. |
| **Relevance** | The piece is relevant and would appeal to school readers and the general public. | The piece is relevant and would appeal to school readers. | The piece is relevant to school readers but does not appeal to them. | The piece is not relevant to school readers. |
| **Conclusion/ credits** | The ending gives a sense of completion. The viewer feels satisfied. Credits include names, dates and acknowledge ments. | The ending attempts to complete the story. Credits include names and/or dates. | The video stops abruptly. Credits may be missing or incomplete. | There is no apparent ending. The video feels incomplete. Credits are missing. |

**Reading List for Students**

Fullwood, Sam, III. "The Media's Stereotypical Portrayals of Race." Center for American
    Progress. March 5, 2003. Accessed November 21, 2015.
    https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2013/03/05/55599/the-
    medias-stereotypical-portrayals-of-race/.

    This easy to read article takes the media to task for over representing African-
American males as sports figures and under representing them in other careers.

Reed, Brian, prod. "554: Not It!" In *This American Life*. WBEZ. April 10, 2015.
    Accessed October 30, 2015. http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-
    archives/episode/554/not-it?act=2.

    This breezy and entertaining radio clip focuses town of Kankakee, Ill., which was
named the worst city in America in 1999, and how a group of teenagers there took back
the town's reputation from late night talk show host David Letterman.

**Bibliography for Teachers**

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 2006.

    The book examines the formation of nations citing European, Asian, African and
North American examples. Anderson focuses on the spread of language, the shift from
religious to secular ruling powers and the advent of printing, museums and map-making
as forces in creating communities.

Hobsbawm, E. J. (Eric J.), and T. O. Ranger. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions."
    Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge
    University Press, 1992.

    The introduction provides an overview of how cultures create traditions and
symbols in order to create a collective consciousness and socialize groups of people.

Marchi, R. "From Disillusion to Engagement: Minority Teen Journalists and the News
    Media." *Journalism* 13, no. 6 (2011): 750-65. doi:10.1177/1464884911431379.

    The student subjects in this article experienced a change in their distrustful
attitudes towards the media after they were challenged to create their own video-based
news stories about their community.

Moos, Julie. "The next Generation of News Consumers Relies on Social Media, TV, Web for Information." Poynter.org. September 16, 2011. Accessed November 22, 2015. http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/146205/the-next-generation-of-news-consumers-relies-on-social-media-tv-web-for-information/.

Though an older study, this survey of high school students found that, not surprisingly, young people increasingly are using social media as a news source. It includes a link to a full report of questions and responses as well as comparisons to earlier years.

Schofield Clark, Lynn. "High School Journalism and the Making of Young Citizens." *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism* 12, no. 4 (January 1, 2011): 417-32. Accessed November 22, 2015. http://jou.sagepub.com/content/12/4/417.abstract.

Through observation and anecdotes from several student journalists, the writer shows how high school news outlets help to create a collective identity and promote advocacy in schools.

Silver, Alexis M. "Clubs of Culture and Capital: Immigrant and Second-generation Incorporation in a New Destination School." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 5 (2014): 824-40. doi:10.1080/01419870.2014.941892.

After investigating a rural North Carolina school that had experienced a significant increase in Latino students, the writer found that the formation of identity based clubs and programs to serve this population increased graduation and college rates. The writer laments that similar groups have not been formed to serve the school's African-American population.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Other Conversations about Race*. New York: BasicBooks, 1997.

Tatum, a college president and psychologist, combines theory and personal anecdotes to broach the difficult topic of racism. Though it was written nearly 20 years ago, her ideas about race relations in America, and how to improve them, are still highly relevant.

Watt, Diane. "Challenging Islamophobia Through Visual Media Studies: Inquiring Into a Photograph of Muslim Women on the Cover of Canada's National News Magazine." *Simile* 8, no. 2 (May 2008): 1-14. Accessed November 22, 2015. doi:10.3138/sim.8.2.001.

The author uses a depiction of Muslim women on the cover of a popular Canadian

magazine to illustrate how minority groups are stereotyped visually in the media, subsequently leading to marginalization in society. Though it is written in an academic tone, her overall ideas and analysis are worthy of paraphrase for a younger audience.

Notes

[1]*Enrollment Summary: Scheduling/Reporting Ethnicity as of 11/18/2015*. November 18, 2015. Administrative report, Charlotte.

[2] *Accountability and Testing Results, 2014-15 School Performance Grade Score and Growth Status.* Report. Accessed November 22, 2015. http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/.

[3] Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Other Conversations about Race*. New York: BasicBooks, 1997. 62.

[4] Silver, Alexis M. "Clubs of Culture and Capital: Immigrant and Second-generation Incorporation in a New Destination School." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 5 (2014): 836.

[5] Hobsbawm, E. J. (Eric J.), and T. O. Ranger. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 9.

[6] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 2006.

[7] Ibid., 7.

[8] Ibid., 36.

[9] Moos, Julie. "The next Generation of News Consumers Relies on Social Media, TV, Web for Information." Poynter.org. September 16, 2011. Accessed November 22, 2015. http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/146205/the-next-generation-of-news-consumers-relies-on-social-media-tv-web-for-information/.

[10] Marchi, R. "From Disillusion to Engagement: Minority Teen Journalists and the News Media." *Journalism* 13, no. 6 (2011): 751.

11 Schofield Clark, Lynn. "High School Journalism and the Making of Young Citizens." Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism 12, no. 4 (January 1, 2011): 429. Accessed November 22, 2015. http://jou.sagepub.com/content/12/4/417.abstract.

12 Reed, Brian, prod. "554: Not It!" In This American Life. WBEZ. April 10, 2015. Accessed October 30, 2015. http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/554/not-it?act=2. (For visual learners, also show the 1999 Letterman clip at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sieWuTlR56g)

[13] Watt, Diane. "Challenging Islamophobia Through Visual Media Studies: Inquiring Into a Photograph of Muslim Women on the Cover of Canada's National News Magazine." *Simile* 8, no. 2 (May 2008): n.p. Accessed November 22, 2015. doi:10.3138/sim.8.2.001.

[14] Ibid., n.p.

[15] Fullwood, Sam, III. "The Media's Stereotypical Portrayals of Race." Center for American Progress. March 5, 2003. Accessed November 21, 2015.

https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2013/03/05/55599/the-medias-stereotypical-portrayals-of-race/.

[16] Reed, Brian, prod. "554: Not It!" Also show students the social media campaign at https://www.gofundme.com/letsgodave and news coverage of students tearing down the gazebo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4uk_HFlLQg for inspiration.