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Contemporary Issues in Art Education

*To my family, especially Nigel and Julia
—Yvonne Gaudelius*

Yvonne Gaudelius and Peg Speirs,
EDITORS

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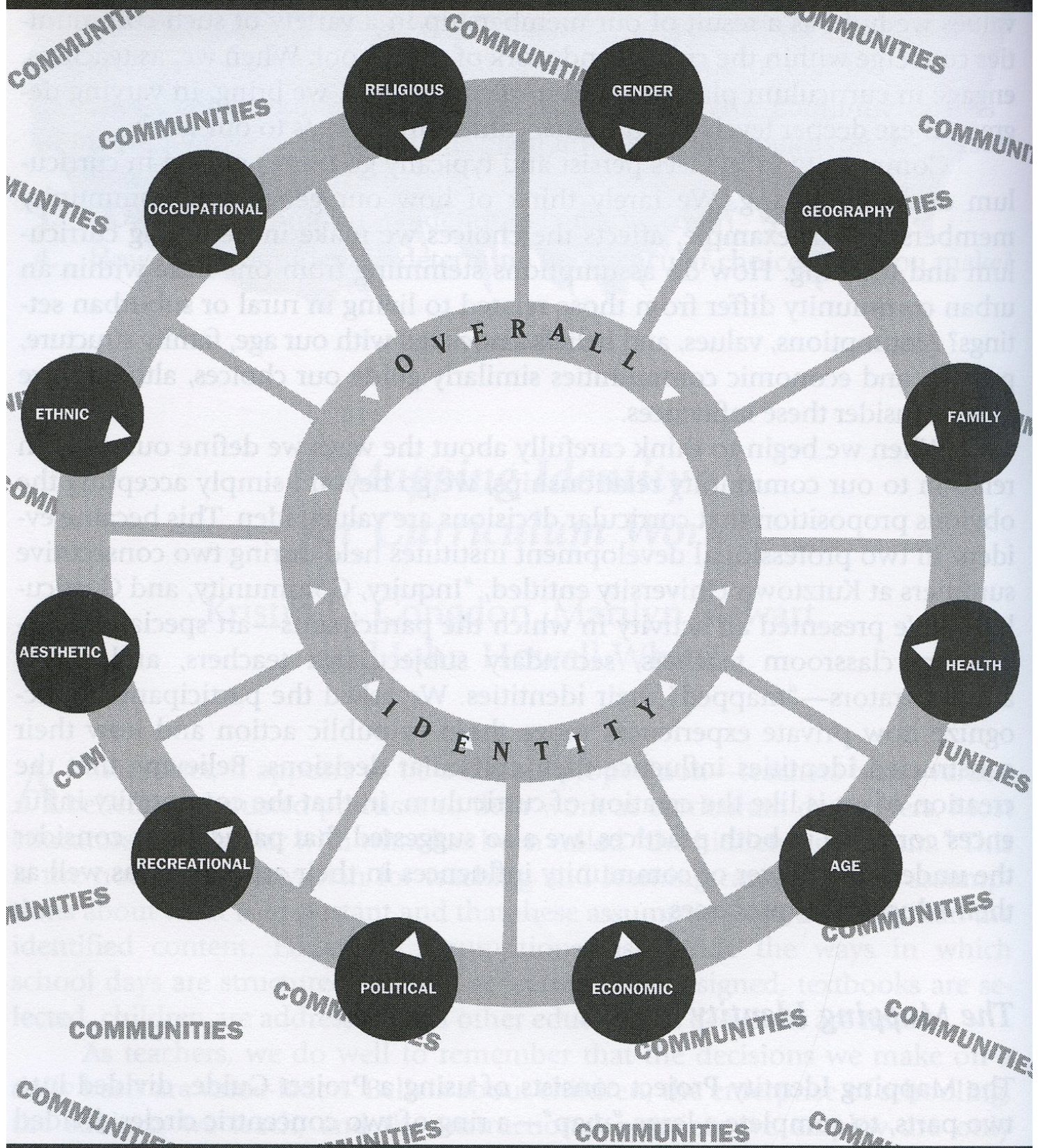
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Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

MAPPING MY IDENTITY



Using the worksheet provided as a guide describe your relationship to that community in the white areas around the circle.

In the larger white triangles rank the communities represented in the black circles by their importance of how they affect you as an individual.

In the center of the circle describe how your community identities affect your art and curriculum development.

CHAPTER 8

QUESTIONS AND EXPLORATIONS

1. What influences the choices that we make as teachers with regard to curriculum planning and implementation? As you think about your answer, consider both conscious and unconscious influences.
2. How are our individual identities constructed? Write about the various aspects of your identity and explain how they help make you the person that you are.
3. How are our community identities constructed?
4. How does your identity determine the curricular choices that you make?

Mapping Identity for Curriculum Work

Kristin G. Congdon, Marilyn Stewart,
and John Howell White

At the outset, it appears to be a simple proposition—teachers bring values, beliefs, and trusted practices to their work as curriculum developers. Most educators are familiar with what has been called “the hidden curriculum.” This is the notion that any plan for teaching and learning carries with it assumptions about what is important and that these assumptions guide more than the identified content. Educators’ assumptions also guide the ways in which school days are structured, spaces for learning are designed, textbooks are selected, children are addressed, and other educational decisions are made.

As teachers, we do well to remember that the decisions we make on a daily basis are value-laden. Beliefs about children, the enterprise of schooling, the subjects we teach, and the instructional practices we employ are only some of the beliefs that undergird our selection of content, the means we choose for its delivery, and the practices we sanction within the school community. It is also important, however, to recognize the sources of these beliefs.

Teachers, as do all people, exemplify and actualize the beliefs and values that emerge from their active participation with the world. Our individual identities are constructed through our interaction within overlapping and intersecting communities to which we belong. In addition to living in a local community—our city, town, or neighborhood, for example—we are members of what we loosely refer to as “shared-interest” communities. If one is a member

of a softball team, for example, one belongs to a larger recreational community of people who play or watch softball. Part of our identity consists of membership in this recreational community. The assumptions, beliefs, and values we hold as a result of our membership in a variety of such communities converge within the culture and work of the school. When we, as teachers, engage in curriculum planning and implementation, we bring, in varying degrees, these deeper level assumptions, values, and beliefs to our work.

Community influences persist and typically go unrecognized in curriculum decision-making. We rarely think of how our geographic community membership, for example, affects the choices we make in designing curriculum and teaching. How do assumptions stemming from one's life within an urban community differ from those related to living in rural or suburban settings? Assumptions, values, and beliefs associated with our age, family structure, politics, and economic communities similarly guide our choices, although we rarely consider these influences.

When we begin to think carefully about the ways we define ourselves in relation to our community relationships, we go beyond simply accepting the obvious proposition that curricular decisions are value-laden. This became evident in two professional development institutes held during two consecutive summers at Kutztown University entitled, "Inquiry, Community, and Curriculum." We presented an activity in which the participants—art specialists, elementary classroom teachers, secondary subject area teachers, and a few administrators—"mapped" their identities. We asked the participants to recognize how private experiences move them to public action and how their constructed identities influence their curricular decisions. Believing that the creation of art is like the creation of curriculum, in that the community influences converge in both practices, we also suggested that participants consider the underlying power of community influences in their art-making as well as their educational processes.

The Mapping Identity Project

The Mapping Identity Project consists of using a Project Guide, divided into two parts, to complete a large "map"—a ring of two concentric circles divided into separate boxes for each shared-interest community (see Figure 8.1). In Part One, participants follow a series of prompts in the Project Guide that encourage reflection upon individual community memberships. The participants consider identification with and relationship to religious, gender, geographic, family, age, economic, political, recreational, aesthetic, racial/ethnic, occupational, and health communities. The kind of self-reflection required to complete this initial phase of the mapping exercise helps participants come to an awareness of self as much more complex than day-to-day experience typically provides. We have found that participants take this initial

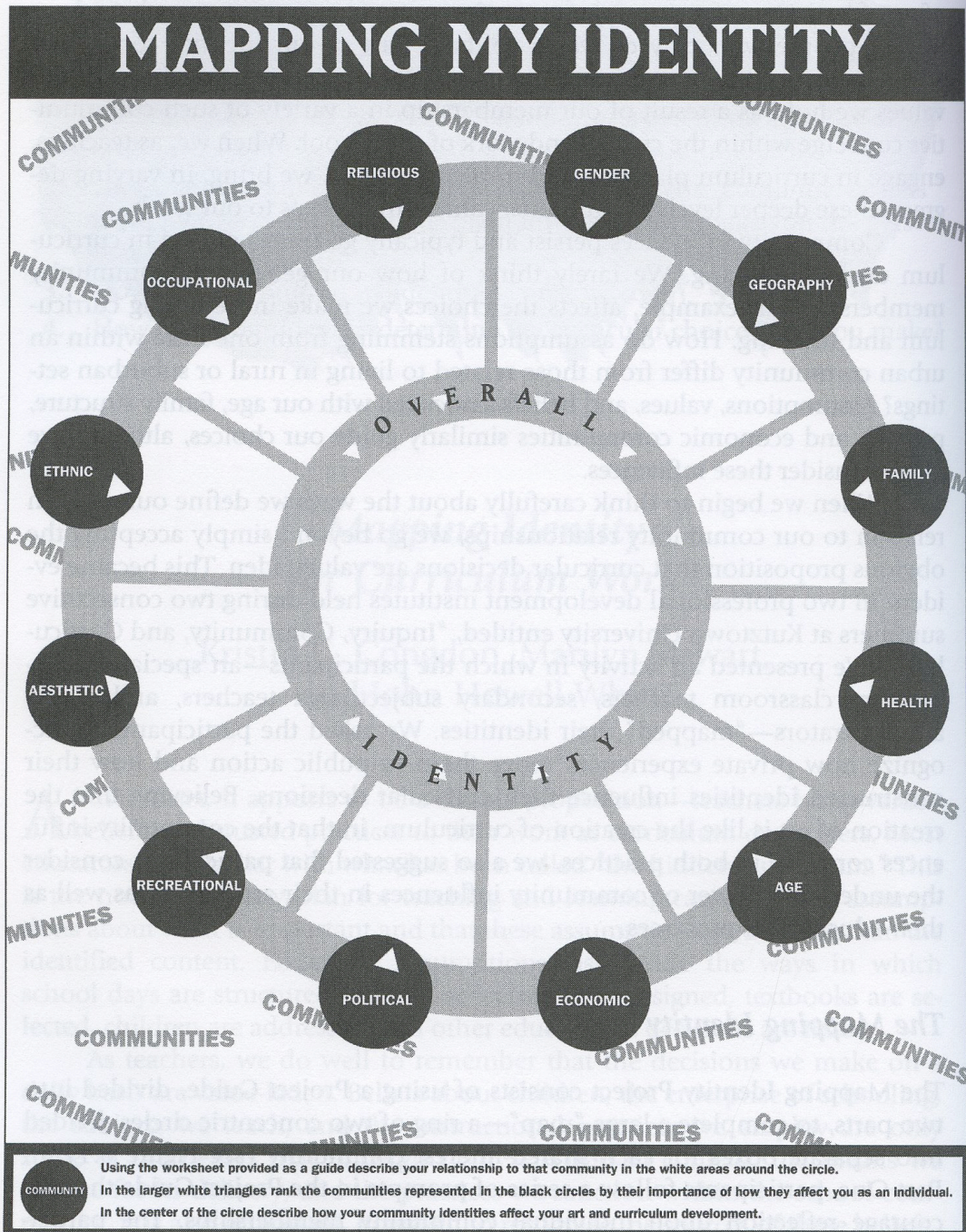


Figure 8.1 Identity Map.

charge very seriously. Most report that they have not previously reflected upon these questions and that the experience of doing so is poignant and, in some cases, life-changing. Part Two prompts participants to review their shared interest community memberships and rank those memberships' importance in relation to their impact upon them as individuals. For instance, a teacher might rank her or his gender identification as the most important factor in construction of identity, followed by political, ethnic, occupational, and other community relationships. Finally, participants consider how their community identities impact the decisions they make in their curriculum work (and art-making, when appropriate).

The Mapping Identity Project can serve as both an instructional tool and an artwork. The map may be enlarged, printed on poster-board, and worked on with paint, markers, collage, etc. It also may be used to prompt reflection in journals or sketchbooks or responses in essay form.

(Faint, mirrored text from the reverse side of the page is visible through the paper, including phrases like "Gender and Sexual Identity/Community", "Geographical Identity/Community", and "Family Identity/Community".)