

*Critical Thinking About Social Media*

## Lesson plan for CTSM\_Identity and Community

This lesson plan uses activities called *think-pair-share*, *spiraling conversation*, and *for-and-against*. In a think-pair-share activity, students first spend 1-2 minutes thinking to themselves about a question posed by the instructor. They then spend 1-2 minutes talking about the question with another student. Finally, they share the results of that conversation with the class.

In a spiraling conversation, intermediate steps are interposed between pairing and sharing. At each step, the students “spiral” outward (either clockwise or counter-clockwise) to pair with other students, before returning to their original pairs.

In a for-and-against activity, the class is divided into two groups, one of which is focused on finding good arguments in support of a position, and the other on finding good arguments against it.

**Objective:** Students will consider the relationship between identity and community, the way one’s in-group identities are defined in part by different out-groups, and questions about the extent to which our identities are under our control.

1. Lecture (10 minutes): Summarize the material on identity and community from the presentation, “CTSM\_Identity and Community”. Alternately, the video can be viewed at the start of the class.
2. Activity (10 minutes): Spiraling conversation on group memberships and how they structure our identities.
  - Think about some of the in-groups you identify with.
    1. What kinds of values define these groups? Why do you identify with those values?
    2. What kinds of out-groups are contrasted with these in-groups? What kinds of values define these out-groups?
    3. How do the values of your in-groups, and those of your outgroups, affect your sense of identity, of who you are?
  - Pair and discuss your answers.
  - Spiral out to discuss your thoughts with others (can be done multiple times).

- Share with the group.
3. Activity (10 minutes): A spiraling conversation on the way our identity and what we identify with can come apart.
- Think about something you identified with, and considered valuable, but whose values you did not live up to in the moment.
    1. For instance, perhaps you identified with *being a good friend*, but there was some situation where you had the chance to be a good friend, and you did not live up to that identity.
  - Think about what you learned about yourself when this happened.
  - Spiral out to discuss your thoughts with others (can be done multiple times).
  - Share with the group.
4. Activity (10 minutes): A spiraling conversation on the way we can make it true of ourselves, at least sometimes, that what we identify with is actually part of our identity: we have at least some ability to engage in *self-determination*.
- Think about something you identify with, and consider valuable, where you have been faced with a situation where you had to live up to those values, and you did so successfully.
    1. For instance, perhaps you identify with *being a good skier*, and you put effort into learning how to ski.
  - Think about the way your commitment to the identity, and the values and habits it requires, allowed you to do what was necessary to make that identity part of your identity. In this way, you engaged in an activity of *self-determination*.
  - Spiral out and discuss your thoughts with others (can be done multiple times).
  - Share with the group.
5. Activity (10 minutes): A think-pair-share and for-and-against on whether we can determine, for any part of our identity, whether what we identify with really is part of our identity.
- First, divide the students into two groups, one “for” and one “against” the proposal: we have the ability to make *anything* we identify with become part of our *identity*, of who we *really are*.
  - The members of each side are meant to come up with the best argument either “for” or “against” the proposal.
  - Then, have the students think individually about reasons that support their specified side.
  - Then, spiral out to discuss their thoughts with others that are on the same side of the proposal (either “for” or “against”). This can be done multiple times.
  - Then, have the students discuss with their respective groups first, to come up with the best defenses of the proposal (either “for” or “against”).

- Finally, reconvene the class as a whole and encourage members from each side to present the best arguments either “for” or “against” the proposal.
- *Crucially, you should be thinking about who (if anyone) has a right, and under what conditions, to determine whether what we **identify with** may not be a part of our **identity**.*
  1. For instance, I may identify with being a Canadian, but that is not enough, by itself, to self-determine that I *actually am*, as part of my *identity*, a Canadian.
  2. So there are some limitations to whether we can make anything we like part of our identity.
  3. The question is, what is the extent of these limitations, and how do we figure out what they are?
    1. After all, it seems possible that the Canadian government could decide that anyone who identifies with being Canadian will count as *being* Canadian.