

Personal Reflection Activity

BRIDGE Identity Gears Module

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

Preparation

- Print and complete the Identity Gears worksheet (front and back) to use as an example.
- Print one copy of the Identity Gears worksheet (front and back) for each participant.
- Complete Module 1, Introduction/Space Setting (approximately 20 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated)

Learning Outcomes

- Identify and articulate one's own personal religious/worldview identity in conversation with the various identities one holds
- Articulate how worldview identity influences one's life
- Discuss how religious/worldview identity can influence college students' lives

Introduction (5 Minutes)

Tell participants: We often think we have to be “experts” on religion or know everything there is to know about our traditions in order to engage worldview. This is one of the reasons why interfaith dialogue is often seen as something that only happens between religious leaders and religious scholars.

But the truth is, anyone can participate because everyone is an expert on their own experience. You are only required to speak for yourself, not for your tradition. You are not required to represent your entire tradition, only the ways that it manifests itself in your life.

That said, it is important to do some pre-work to explore your beliefs and your identities. These exercises will help you to do that.

Ask participants and pause for discussion between questions:

- Is reflecting or engaging your own worldview something you do on a regular basis? Why or why not?
- Why do you think it's important to know how to talk about worldview?

This is a completely independent exercise and best for groups that are new to the conversation around worldview and/or don't know one another well. Participants will need a writing utensil and a copy of the Identity Gears worksheet.

Tell participants: The activity is simple; the thinking involved is complex. What I will invite you to do is to consider the different parts of your personal identity, and how they all interact to make you the person you are. This exercise is often called "Identity Wheels" but we're going to take it a step further and think about the parts of our identity as gears, since they all work together.¹ Worldview does not exist in a vacuum, and knowing how it influences (and is influenced by) your other identities will help you understand what you bring into interfaith interactions you have with your colleagues and students.

Identity Gears Activity: Part One (20 Minutes)

Distribute Identity Gears worksheet

Tell participants: In the gears on the sheet describe the different identities you carry. Assign gear sizes based upon how much they influence your self-efficacy. For example, if you think of yourself first as a woman, assign "woman" to a larger gear, and if you see your Christian identity as less of an identifier, assign it to one of the smaller gears. If you see all the intersecting parts of your identity equally, make note of that.

Note that the point of this exercise is not to assign ourselves labels, but to explore the different parts of who we are, and how that plays into our understanding of our worldview (even if that worldview doesn't fit neatly into a box).

If you're someone who prefers to avoid labels, you can think about the gears in terms of your relationships, experiences, stories, your family history, your heroes, your values, etc. This exercise is completely yours, so if you want to write in "I'm NOT _____" in terms of your identity, that is complete okay.

Share a little bit from your own worksheet as an example.

¹ Adapted from "Voices of Discovery", Intergroup Relations Center, Arizona State University.

Identity Gears Activity: Part Two (20 Minutes)

Instruct participants to flip the sheet to the other side of the worksheet.

Tell participants: Let's go back to the same exercise we did before, but this time you're going to bring your worldview identity into focus. If your worldview identity is in formation, or you're still considering how you identify, that's completely fine.

Write in questions you are considering, ways that you define your relationship with a higher power, or higher purpose. You can include elements of different worldviews that you do identify with, and elements you don't. Again, this isn't to compartmentalize ourselves.

I encourage you to be compassionate with yourselves during this exercise; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

[Optional slide, IDENTITY GEARS PART 2: YOUR WORLDVIEW]

Prompts to help you fill out the gears:

- Someone doesn't truly know me unless they know _____ about what I believe.
- It is so important to me, but I'm scared to let other people know that I believe _____ .
- I know I may carry a set of biases toward _____ worldview.
- One thing that angers or frustrates me about an aspect of my worldview is _____ .
- People often have inaccurate perceptions about this aspect of my worldview: _____ .
- I don't identify strongly with any worldview, but I do hold strong values such as _____

Discussion (15 Minutes)

Instruct participants to find a partner (trios are fine if there is an uneven number of participants) and reflect together about the exercise for 10 minutes.

Here are some discussion questions:

- What's different in talking about worldview identity versus other identities?
- Did you learn or discover anything about yourself through this exercise?
- How could you use this activity with your students?

Reconvene and ask participants to share their reflections on the exercise.

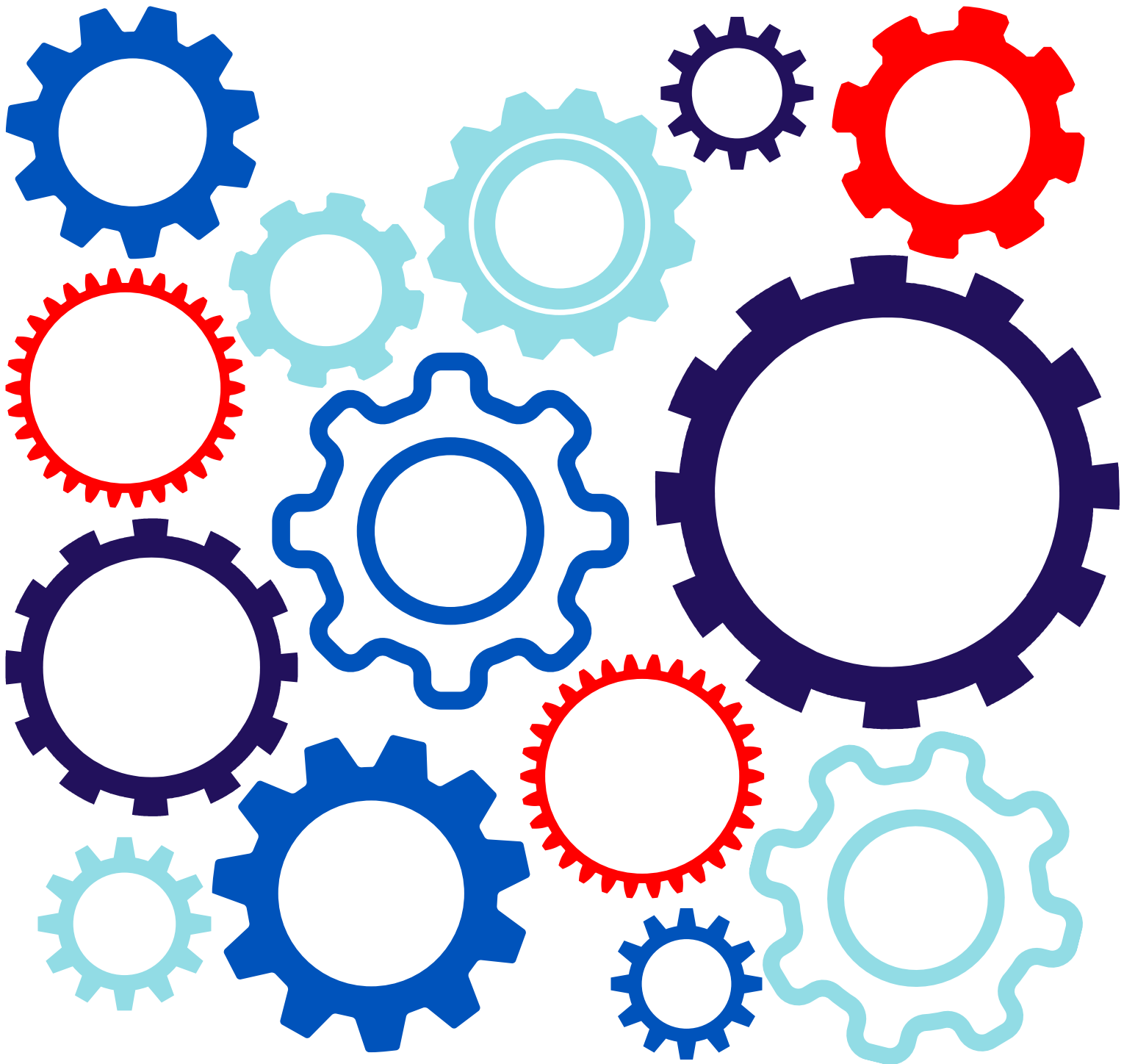
Tell participants: I will end by offering the disclaimer that this is a beginning. Hopefully you will continue your personal reflection and fully integrate your worldview into your overall description of what makes up your identity.

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources support your continued engagement with worldview identity. Lastly, please don't hesitate to be in touch and consider me a thought partner for incorporating worldview into your daily work. Thanks again!

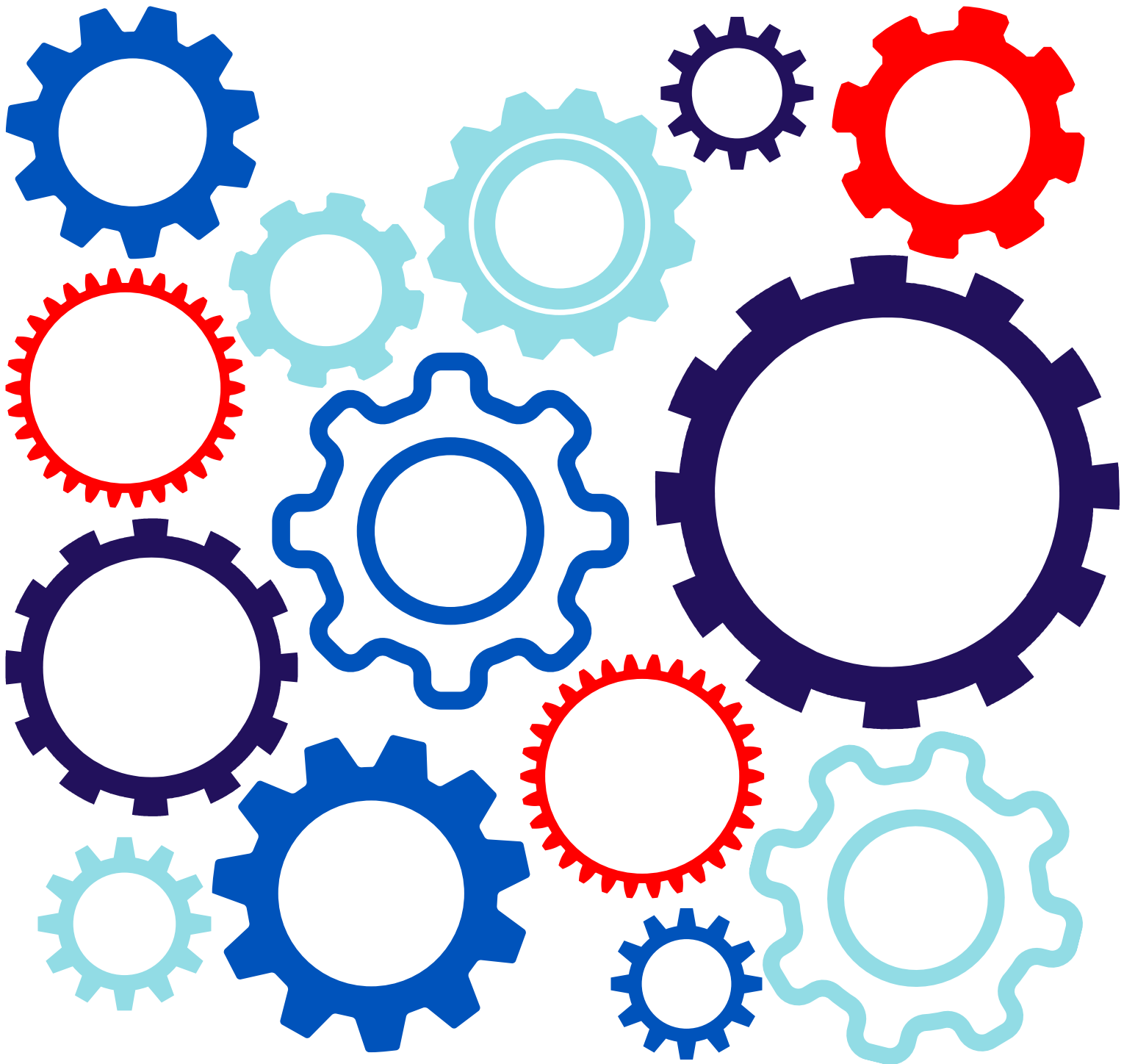
Identity Gears

Think about the different aspects of your identity and how they influence your understanding of who you are. You may assign different identities to gears based on their size, and locate them in accordance with how they influence one another. At least one gear needs to be your worldview identity, however you understand it.



Identity Gears: Worldview

Now focus in on your worldview identity. Think about the things you have learned about your worldview through religious education, academics, experiences, and relationships. Use the guiding questions in the presentation slide to map out your worldview identity/identities as you understand them.



Personal Reflection Activity

BRIDGE Timeline Module

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

Preparation

- Make two small signs to hang up on two opposite facing walls in your room. One should say "TODAY" and the other should say "THE DAY YOU WERE BORN."

Introduction (5 Minutes)

Tell participants: We often think we have to be "experts" on religion or know everything there is to know about our traditions in order to engage worldview. This is one of the reasons why interfaith dialogue is often seen as something that only happens between religious leaders and religious scholars.

But the truth is, anyone can participate in this work because everyone is an expert on their own experience. You are only required to speak for yourself, not for your tradition. You are not required to represent your entire tradition, only the way that it manifests in your life.

That said, it is important to do some personal work to explore your beliefs and your identities. This exercise will help.

Timeline Exercise (40 Minutes)

This exercise is a reflection on personal experiences and formative moments that is done as a group. It is best for people who have done some prior work/reflection about their worldview and groups with low levels of trust established.

Learning Outcomes

- Make space for people to think individually about their own worldview in a way that separates the need for expertise from the willingness to enter into interfaith experiences
- Help participants reflect on how their experiences have shaped their perceptions of people of different worldviews

Note that you can change the time frame and the questions in accordance with the needs of the group (e.g. condensing to 'time in college' instead of lifespan).

You will need an open, furniture-free space with two walls at each end. Participants will need to be able to stand, walk back and forth, and be able to hear/see question prompts from the facilitator(s). Please make appropriate arrangements for people needing accommodation to participate.

Explain exercise.

Designate one wall as "TODAY." Designate another wall as "THE DAY YOU WERE BORN."

Tell participants: We're going to do some reflection as a group about the watershed moments in our lives that have influenced both our own worldview development and how we see the worldview of others. This is an exercise we will do as a group, and I will invite people to share their stories as they feel comfortable. I will pose a series of questions to you, and you will place yourself on the timeline of your life as appropriate.

Imagine the space between the two walls marked "today" and "the day you were born" is a continuum of your lifespan. If you are 40 years old, the middle of the room would be 20 years old, so if you experienced something at 20, that's where you will stand. You may be able to point to multiple instances in your life when these things have happened for you. As I ask you questions, position yourself based on your most salient memory.

Lead Exercise

Read through the questions below, allowing approximately five minutes of conversation and reflection for each.

Prompt participants to stand on a moment in their life:

- When I first learned there were different belief systems.
- When I first remember clearly identifying with the worldview identity I hold.
- When I first remember questioning the worldview I grew up in/around.
- When I first identified a powerful commonality with someone of another worldview.

After posing each question, allow participants to place themselves on the timeline and then ask participants: Would anyone be willing to share briefly the story of where you are standing? Why was this moment in time what came to you? How did you feel at that moment? What would have helped you navigate it?

Debrief (15 Minutes)

Invite participants to take their seats.

The goal of this discussion is to steer the group toward the understanding that worldview engagement is about personal narrative, and that we often have more in common than we think we do. This area of identity does not require theological expertise to explore; you only have to be an expert in your own experience.

Tell participants: I would like to get a feel from all of you about how this exercise went.

Potential debrief questions, select a few:

- Was it difficult to remember these points in your life?
- Were they easy to talk about?
- Did you hear any elements of your experience in the experiences of your colleagues?
- What takeaways can you draw from this kind of activity?

Tell participants: Our worldviews are complex and we have experiences that influence our orientation toward others. It's important to note that worldview engagement is high stakes, and we all have experiences that we bring into the space. But ultimately you are only responsible for speaking from your own experience. Thank you for your vulnerability during this exercise!

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources support your continued engagement with worldview identity. Lastly, please don't hesitate to be in touch and consider me a thought partner for incorporating worldview into your daily work. Thanks again!