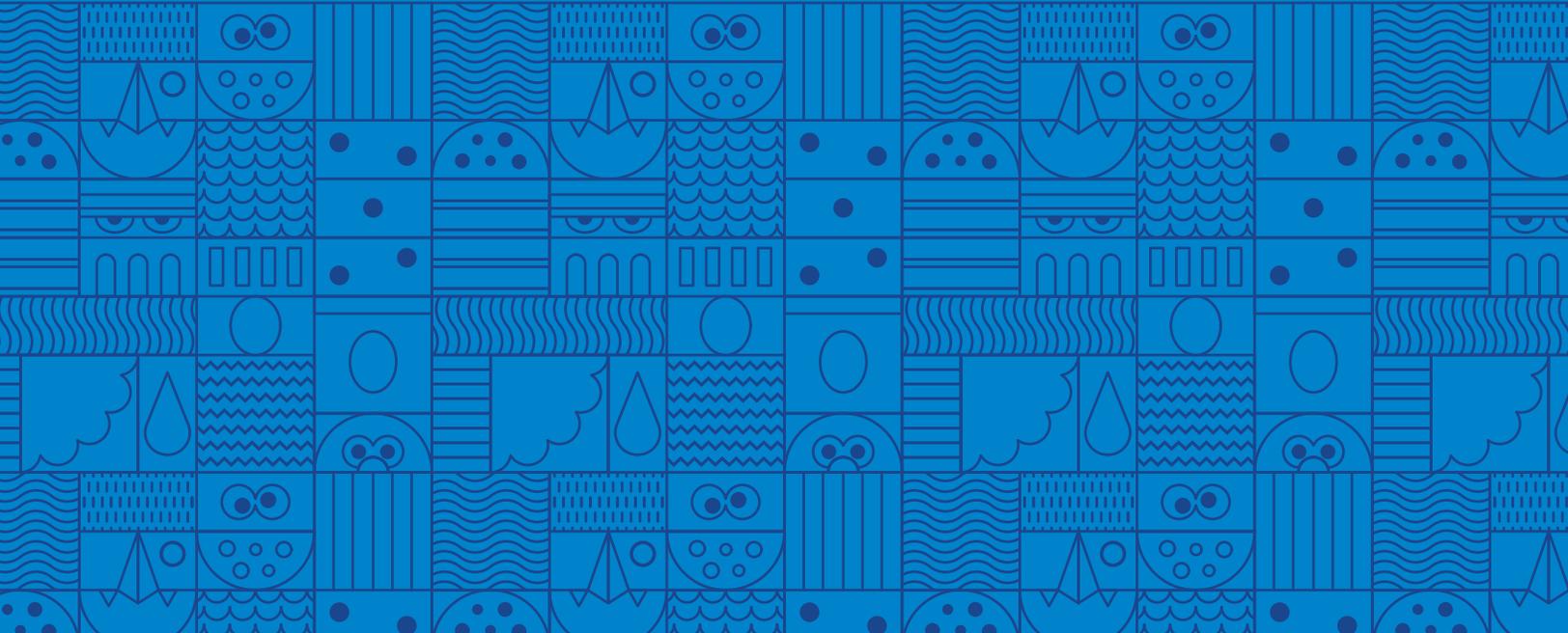


Identity Matters

Parents' and Educators' Perceptions of
Children's Social Identity Development

Led by Jennifer Kotler, Tanya Haider &
Michael H. Levine at Sesame Workshop

Conducted by NORC
at the University Of Chicago



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Parents' and Educators' Perceptions of Children's Social Identity Development

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We are grateful to the parents, guardians, and educators who have shared their opinions with us about the richness of their children's identities.

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FOREWORD

It all began in 1969, on a street where colorful Muppets and humans lived—and learned—side by side. Fifty years later, Sesame Workshop is a mission-driven, global nonprofit organization that operates across every media platform and delivers targeted social impact programs to many of the world’s most vulnerable children. Throughout this landmark year, we have brought people together around the timeless lessons that *Sesame Street* has always taught: everyone, no matter who they are or where they are from, is equally deserving of respect, opportunity—and joy.



A great many things have changed at the Workshop over the past 50 years, but one thing that has not is our “theory of change.” It is simple and straightforward: we are unwavering in our commitment to these values:

- + Education is determinative to life outcomes
- + Early education has the greatest educational impact
- + Everyone is entitled to equal access to a quality early education
- + Media can cost-effectively deliver and scale educational impact

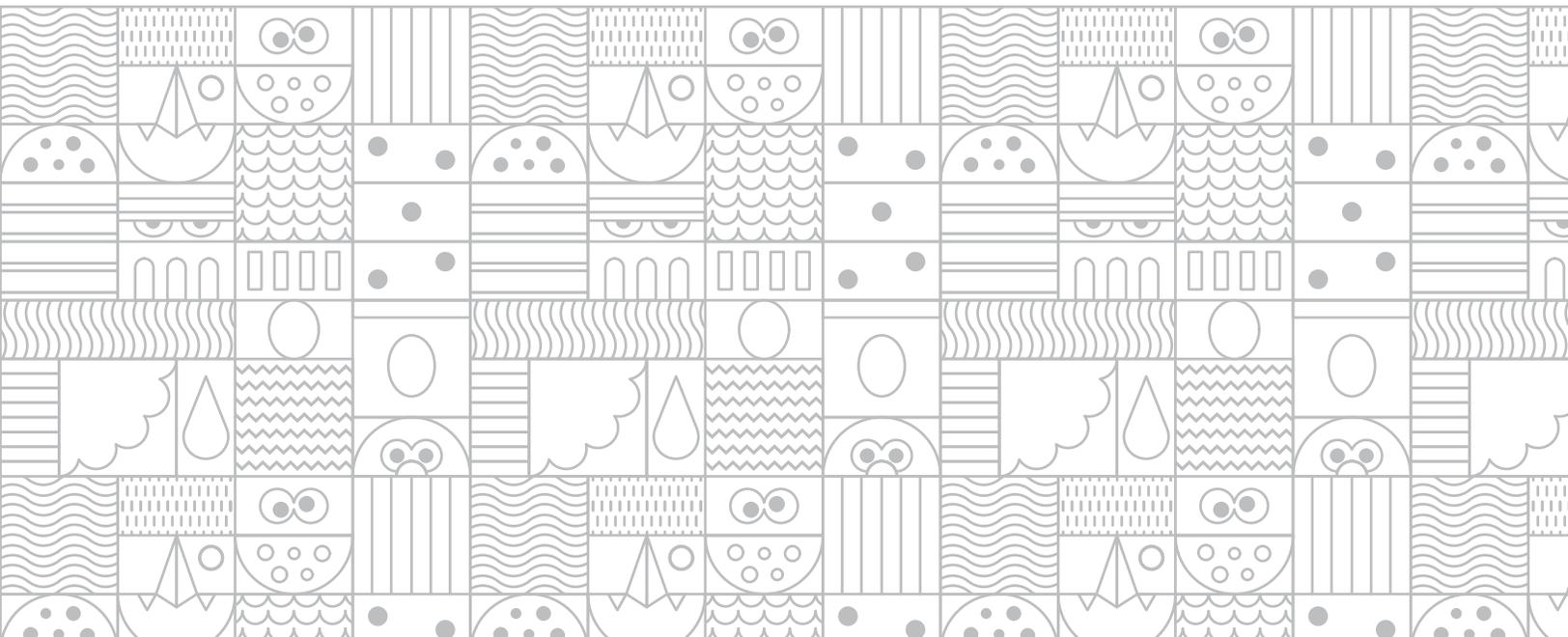
To advance these core commitments, 50 years ago we assembled the first multi-racial, multi-cultural cast to appear on national television. In succeeding years, we have been proud champions in promoting the value of racial, gender, linguistic, and financial diversity.

To better understand the rapidly changing landscape that families are facing in preparing their children to thrive in a more diverse and complex society, and to bring a national focus on the importance of social identity, Sesame Workshop and NORC at the University of Chicago undertook the current study.

Identity Matters: Parents and Educators' Perception of Children's Identity Development documents how the most important adults in children's lives—parents and educators—view social identity development and its influence on children's pathways to life success. The study findings indicate that identity development, given its critical role in propelling our children's futures, is given inadequate attention by too many parents and educators. Moreover, there are important differences across demographic groups—especially between majority and minority group members—in how identity factors are understood and the steps that are being taken to promote family dialogue and community attention.

In the consequential age in which we live and do our work, Sesame Workshop remains committed to being a leader and a force for change. We intend to respond to this important study by continuing to work every day to deliver on the promise of equality with respect to people of all colors, genders, and backgrounds.

Jeffrey D. Dunn
President and CEO
Sesame Workshop



Sesame Workshop, the global leader in children’s educational media, is celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Sesame Street* this year. From the very beginning, *Sesame Street* was designed to serve and represent all children from different backgrounds and identities. The idea that children across all races, ethnicities, gender, family structures, social class, religions, and countries of origin should be able to see themselves represented in positive ways on the show remains a fundamental part of the Workshop’s ethos today.

Since the original broadcast of *Sesame Street* in 1969, the United States has continued to become a more and more diverse society in every dimension—race and ethnicity, religion, family structures, and social class. For example, by the year 2060, it is estimated that the United States will not have a single racial or ethnic majority (Census, 2012). Christians are declining as a share of the U.S. population, and the number of people who do not identify with any religion has grown (Pew, 2016). The share of children living in two-parent households is at one of its lowest points in history (Pew, 2015). However, while diversity has increased, there are major inequities in wealth, discrimination, and well-being across various population groups (cf. Chetty et al., 2018; Pew, 2017; Rider et al., 2018).

We know that children fare better when they feel valued and respected by the people who surround them and by the institutions that serve them. Having a positive identity is critical for children’s development (Bennett & Sani, 2004). Feeling positive about one’s identity is associated with greater self-esteem and tolerance and with better outcomes in adolescence and adulthood. Having a positive sense of pride in who you are can be a protective factor in the face of discrimination and other adverse experiences (cf. Marcelo & Yates, 2019; Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, Rowley 2007). Children learn from an early age what identities mean by observing the behavior and comments of others, such as caregivers (Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Social identities can be a form of pride, but can also be a source of prejudice—of categorizing people into in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; McLeod, 2008).

To mark the occasion of our 50th anniversary, we have undertaken a major study of how parents and educators perceive children's social identity in order to:

- + Better understand which personal and group identities shape children and the way they are treated,
- + Document how children learn about their own and others' identities during their most formative years, and
- + Understand how the adults in children's lives—their parents and teachers—discern the impact identity has on a child's ability to succeed.

The data from two representative national surveys reveal that parents' and teachers' attitudes toward identity are both complex and nuanced—many do see the connections between social identities and later outcomes but in aggregate, few parents are talking frequently about social identities with their children. While teachers discuss social identity factors more regularly with children than parents do, there are some identities—notably social class and religion—that appear to be off-limits.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of children's identities, the study is comprised of two complementary surveys that were created in conjunction with an expert panel of scholars, practitioners, and child development specialists. The first is a nationally representative survey of 6,070 parents of children ages 3 to 12. The second is a nationally representative survey of 1,046 educators of children in preschool through fifth grade. Each survey focuses on attitudes, experiences, and approaches to talking to children about six social identities: race and ethnicity, gender, country of origin, religion or religious beliefs, social class, and family make-up.¹

KEY FINDINGS

Parents Differ on the Level of Importance Attached to Children's Identity Development

When asked to think about children in general, parents vary on the degree to which they believe these identities matter in determining a child's success in life. Key findings include:

- + Most parents indicate that the different social identities have some impact on children's success pathways. For example, 68% of parents say a child's race/ethnicity impacts their ability to succeed, including 31% who say it has a major impact. Eighty percent of teachers say social class is impactful, including 40% who say it has a major impact. This potentially signals concern among parents and teachers alike that, for some children, social identities may well be a barrier to the American ideal of equal opportunity for success.
- + However, parents see identity factors as secondary to other more personal attributes. An overwhelming majority describe their children first in terms of their personalities or interests. When asked to think about their own children, parents are more likely to describe them in terms of personality than by using any of the six social identities. Eighty-seven percent of parents say their child's personality, and 81% of parents say their child's interests shape how others treat their child more than any of the six identities.
- + Parents are not, by and large, focusing family conversations on children's social identity formation. While a large majority of parents say they are comfortable talking about social identity factors, few are having discussions about identity on a regular basis. Only 10% of parents report that they often talk with their children about their race/ethnicity; another 28% say they sometimes talk about race/ethnicity with their children. Similarly, only 8% of parents report that they often discuss their socioeconomic class with their children, with another 25% sometimes talking about it. This leaves over 60% of parents rarely or never discussing race/ethnicity or social class with their children.

¹ Respondents were given the following examples of family make-up: a multigenerational household, whether you have a one-parent or two-parent household, same-sex parent^s, and so on.

Educators Are Not Given Much Direction

This report also examines how educators perceive the role of social identity in children's learning and development. Among the identities we asked about, educators see social class as a major factor in children's ability to succeed. However, they are often uncomfortable with classroom discussions that focus on economic inequality. Key findings include:

- + Classroom conversations are limited. Just 19% say they talk with their students about social class often or sometimes, and another 45% say it's not an issue they think they should discuss. Of the six social and demographic identities, teachers are the least likely to feel comfortable discussing social class.
- + School guidance is lacking. Few teachers are actively encouraged by school leadership to discuss identity with their students, though few have been actively discouraged from doing so. At least 6 in 10 teachers say their school neither encourages nor discourages discussions about each identity. Though these discussions aren't actively encouraged, 76% of teachers have received some form of training or advice in order to discuss some elements of identity with their students. Discussions about religion are more often discouraged than encouraged.

Age Differences

We looked to see whether there were differences in the emphasis parents and educators placed on social identity depending on the age of the children.

- + A common theme that ties the parent and teacher survey findings together is the importance each group places on the age of the child with respect to the appropriateness of conversations about identity.
- + As children grow older, parents place a higher level of importance on learning about diversity with regard to each of the six social and demographic identities. In fact, parents are more likely to discuss each identity (except for gender) with older children. Similarly, teachers of fourth and fifth grade (27%) and teachers of first, second, and third grade (20%) are more likely to discuss social class with their students than are teachers of preschool and kindergarten (9%).

Group Differences

Our survey enabled an analysis of group differences across key demographic and social identity categories. In general, aggregate differences across the surveys masked important group differences that may be cause for national concern.

- + Compared to other groups, Black parents are most likely to report on the importance of identity in determining children's future. For example, Black parents are much more likely to see race/ethnicity as having a major impact (49%) on children's ability to succeed in this country than White (28%), Hispanic (29%) or Asian parents (29%).
- + Negative comments and bias impact these minority groups as well. Those who have heard negative comments tend to be from minority or marginalized groups. For example, 46% of Muslim parents, 40% of Black parents and 32% of Asian parents say their child has heard a negative comment at least once. Half of parents of transgender children report that their child has heard a negative comment about their gender.
- + Parents who are unmarried, born outside of the United States, or have less than a high school degree are also more likely to report that their child has heard a negative comment about their identity.
- + Teachers are observing tensions over identity factors. About one third of teachers say that children in their classrooms have heard a negative comment based on one of the identities.
- + Negative incidents in communities and schools appear to drive family communications. Parents who are most likely to talk to children about these identities are also, on average, more likely to report that children have heard a negative comment about such identities. Whereas 37% of parents overall talk often or sometimes about their child's race/ethnicity with them, 60% of those whose child heard a negative comment do so, compared to 28% of those who report that their child has not heard such a comment. Similarly, 60% of those who report their child has heard a negative comment about their social class talk at least sometimes to their child about social class vs. 27% of those who report their child has not heard such a comment.

Implications

The findings raise several important questions about how social identity is being formed among children across the United States. A large body of existing social science research indicates that children do see identity differences and make meaning of those differences from a very early age (c.f. Aboud, 2008; Hirschfeld, 2008; Katz, 2003; Patterson & Bigler, 2006; Winkler, 2009). The research also indicates that healthy social development—including a strong appreciation of individual and group identity factors—can be influenced (both positively and negatively) by home and peer interactions, as well as in community and school experiences.

Research also indicates that Sesame Workshop, through its longstanding educational media productions, has demonstrated the importance of modeling and providing tools for parents and educators to expand their appreciation of the importance of social identity development (Cole & Lee, 2016).

These survey findings raise significant issues for parents, educators, media developers, and policymakers about how best to:

- + Mobilize public attention to social identity and enduring bias that begins in the early years. How can each of the pivotal sectors—media, industry, educators, policy, and philanthropy—stimulate a new national conversation about the importance of healthy identity? Do the infrequent conversations that parents have with their children indicate an important missed opportunity to help children learn more about themselves and about others?
- + Establish positive media depictions of diverse identities. While the study did not focus on media depictions, per se, as a key factor in promoting positive identity formation, other research indicates that children learn best from positive role models. Many scholars have indicated that a paucity of role models exist in mainstream media for certain marginalized groups.
- + Reframe identity as a key dimension of early experiences. How might our nation's educators and research community build broad-based

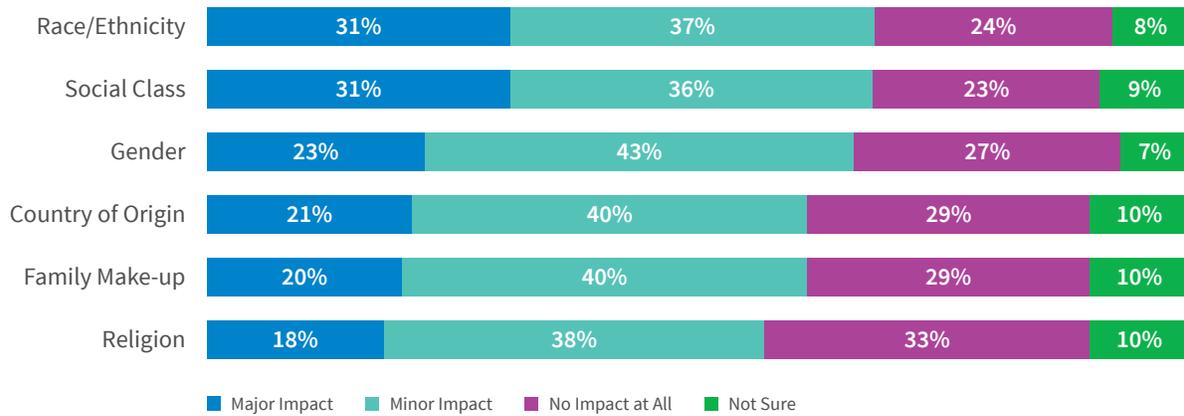
recognition of the positive value of social identity factors? Given the association between frequent conversation and negative comments, are the conversations that families and schools are having around identity occurring only when something hurtful was said, rather than spurred by pride or joy around one's heritage, color, beliefs, or family structure? How might the nation better celebrate diversity as a protective factor for children's pathways to success?

- + Acknowledge the changing demography of the United States. If conversations are happening more frequently among minority groups, what does that mean for children in majority groups? What should children from majority groups learn about their memberships in such groups? How can educational publishers, media companies, school systems, and afterschool programs help support educators in navigating these important conversations?

This report is divided into three sections. The first focuses on the total sample of parents, the second focuses on the total sample of educators. The final section takes a deeper dive into the parent data and looks at some critical between-group differences.

Overall Parent Findings

Parents are mixed about the degree to which the social identities we asked about impact children’s ability to succeed in this country, but nearly 7 in 10 parents believe a child’s race/ethnicity or social class has a major or minor impact.

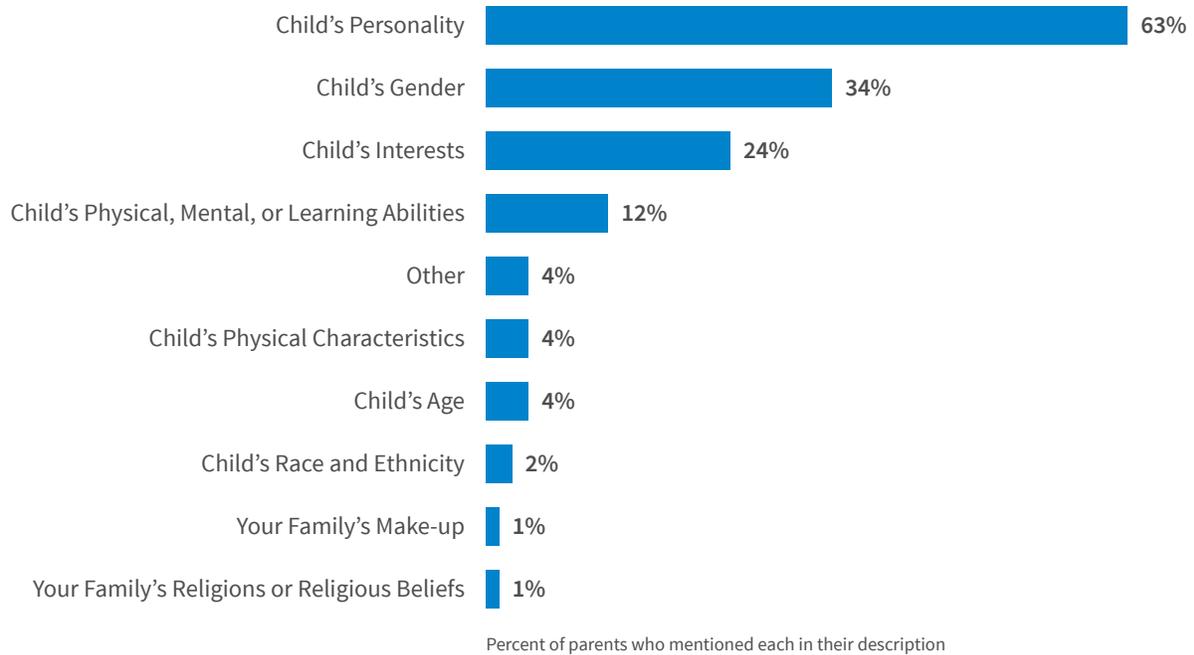


Q: Now, thinking about children in this country generally, do you think each of the following has a major impact, minor impact, or no impact at all on a child’s ability to succeed in life?

More than half of parents say each identity is determinative of a child’s success either to a minor or major degree, and they see race/ethnicity and social class as being most impactful. Sixty-eight percent of parents say a child’s race/ethnicity impacts their ability to succeed in life, including 31% who say it

has a major impact. Sixty-seven percent say a child’s family’s social class has an impact on their ability to succeed in life, including 31% who say it has a major impact. Fewer parents see gender, country of origin, family make-up, and religion as having a major impact on children’s ability to succeed in this county.

When asked to describe their own child’s identity, most parents mention their child’s personality.

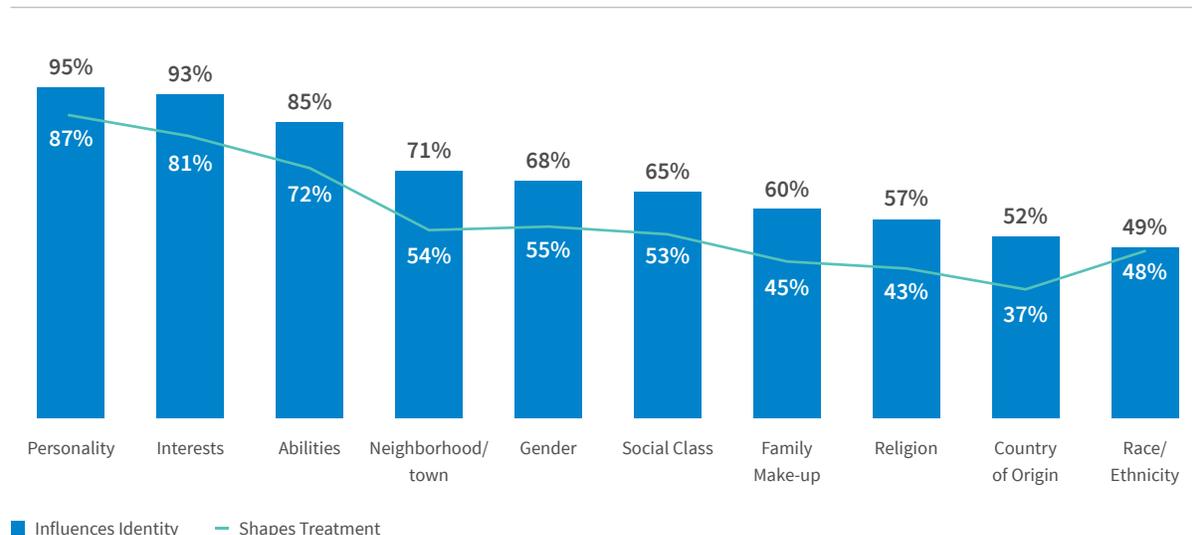


Q: *People describe who they are in different ways. These descriptions are sometimes called people’s identities. To begin, we want you to think about [child’s name]’s identity. In one sentence or less, how would you describe [child’s name]’s identity, to tell people who [he is/she is/they are] and what’s important to [him/her/them]? (Multiple mentions coded separately.)*

In an open-ended question, parents of 3-12-year-olds were asked to describe their child’s identity in one sentence or less. Most often, they mentioned an aspect of their child’s personality in their description, such as “[my child is] social” or “[my child is] easy-going.” Few parents referred to their

child’s race and ethnicity, their child’s religious faith, or their family make-up. While 34% of parents mentioned their child’s gender in their description, just 11% of parents used their child’s gender alone to describe their identity.

When asked specifically how much various factors influence their child’s identity, parents say their child’s personality and interests most shape their child’s identity and how others treat their child.



Q: Again, thinking of [child’s name], how much do you think each of the following characteristics shapes [his/her/their] identity? How much do you think each of the following characteristics shapes how other people treat [child’s name]?

Personality and interests are central to how parents view their child’s identity, as well as shaping how they think others view their child. When asked about how much a list of specific characteristics shape their child’s identity, more than 9 in 10 parents say their child’s personality and interests shape their identity a lot or some. And when it comes to how much these characteristics influence the ways other people treat their child, personality and interests again top the list. Even for various demographic subgroups, personality and interests rank above all others.

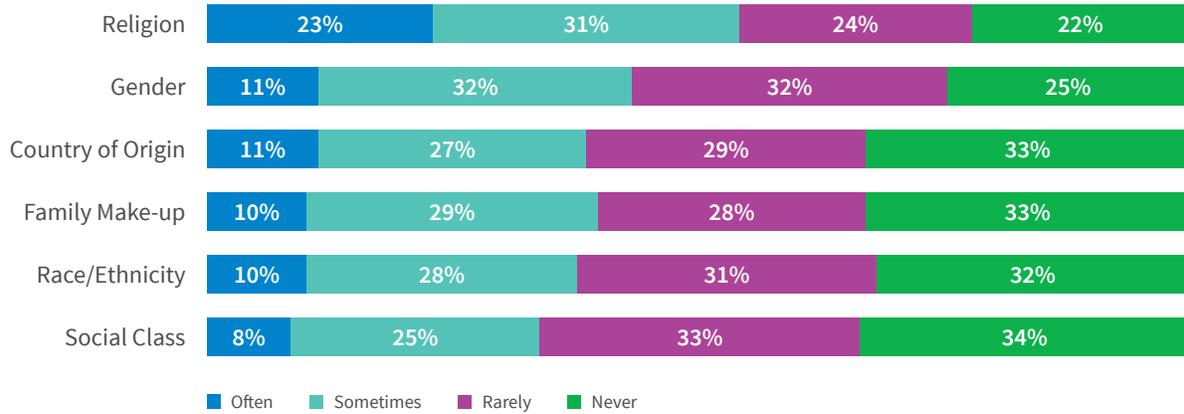
Across almost all of the characteristics queried, parents more often say each is important for shaping the child’s identity than for influencing the way the child is treated. A little more than half of parents believe that family make-up, religion, and country of origin shape their child’s identity, but fewer than half believe each shapes how others treat their child. A little less than half of parents say that race and ethnicity shape children’s identity and a similar percent say that race and ethnicity shape how other people treat their child.

Parents express a high level of comfort with talking to their children about identity. More than 7 in 10 parents say they are very comfortable talking with their children about each identity.



Q: *How comfortable are you talking with your child about the following topics in general, related to your family or others? (percentage who said extremely or very comfortable)*

But besides gender, parents rarely discuss the social identities with children.

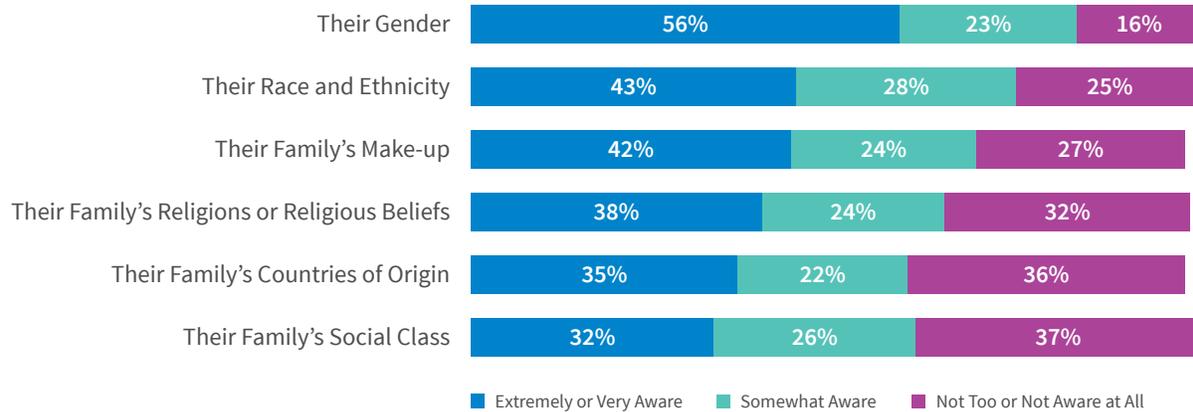


Q: Now, think about the conversations you have with your child. How often do you discuss each of the following? Your child or your family's _____ .

Twenty-three percent of parents discuss religion or religious beliefs with their children often, and another 31% do so sometimes. It was the only identity where over 50% of parents say they talk often or sometimes with their child about that identity. Conversations with older children happen more frequently than with younger children.

For example, while only 25% of parents of 3-5-year-olds discuss social class sometimes or often with their child, 35% of parents of 6-9-year-olds and 40% of parents of 10-12-year-olds do so. While only 30% of parents of 3-5-year-olds discuss race and ethnicity sometimes or often with their child, 41% of parents of 6-9-year-olds and 40% of parents of 10-12-year-olds do so.

Less than half of the parents say that their children are highly aware that they may differ from others on the basis of these characteristics. Except for gender, awareness builds with age.



Q: How aware is [child's name] that [he/she/they] may differ from others based on each of the following?

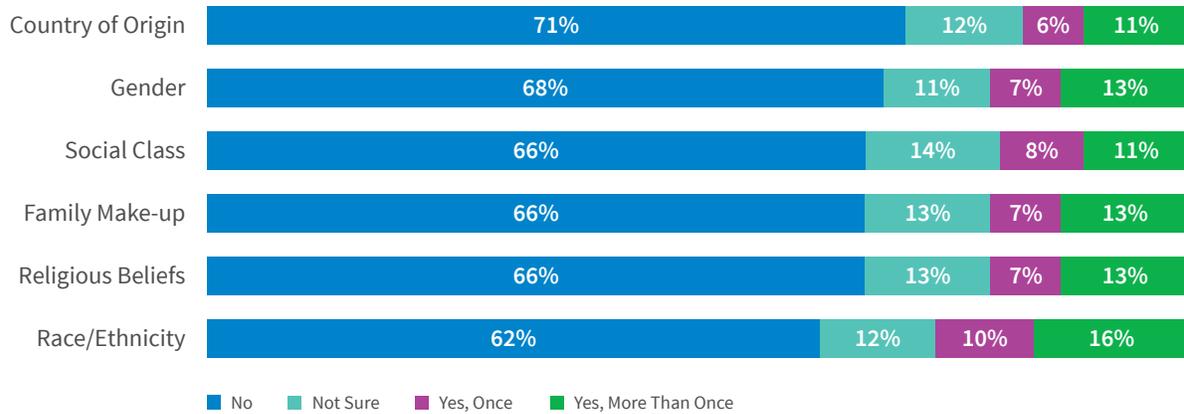
With the exception of gender, which may be the most obvious difference for young children, awareness among children that they might differ from others on several social and demographic identities is not universal, even for the identities that more than 6 in 10 parents say shape their child's identity a lot or a little. While more than 6 in 10 parents see their family's religious beliefs, social class, and family make-up as shaping their child's identity, fewer than half say their children have a high awareness that they differ from others on each.

Awareness of gender is highest, with 56% of parents saying their child is extremely or very aware they're different from others based on their gender. According to parents, children are least aware that they differ from others based on social class.

Awareness of differences increases with age. Children ages 10-12 are far more likely to be thought of as highly aware of differences on every identity in question. Even with this increased awareness, less than half of parents of this age group say their child is very aware that they differ from others based on religion or religious beliefs, countries of origin, or social class.

Fewer than half of children under the age of 10 are thought to be aware that they differ from others based on anything other than gender. For example, 26% of parents of 3-5-year-olds said their children were very or extremely aware that they differed from others on the basis of race and ethnicity, whereas 43% of parents of 6-9-year-olds and 57% of parents of 10-12 year olds said so. Similarly, 19% of parents of 3-5-year-olds said their child was very or extremely aware that they differed from others on the basis of country of origin whereas 35% of parents of 6-9-year-olds and 48% of parents of 10-12-year-olds said so.

The majority of parents report that their child has not experienced a negative comment about their social identity.



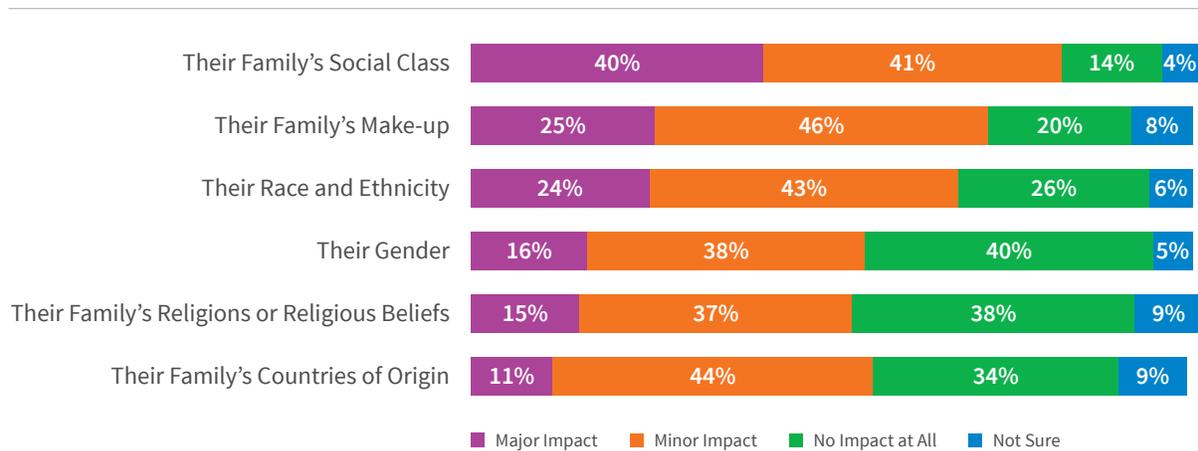
Q: As far as you know, has [child's name] ever heard anyone make a negative comment about each of the following?

Twenty-six percent say their child has heard a negative comment relating to their race and ethnicity at least once, and 19% say their child has heard a negative comment about their family's social class. The majority of children have not

heard such a comment, which, combined with low reported awareness of differences, may explain why many parents do not discuss the various social identities with their children. They may assume it is not a major issue that needs to be discussed.

Teachers

Teachers see social class as having a bigger impact on children's ability to succeed than other attributes.

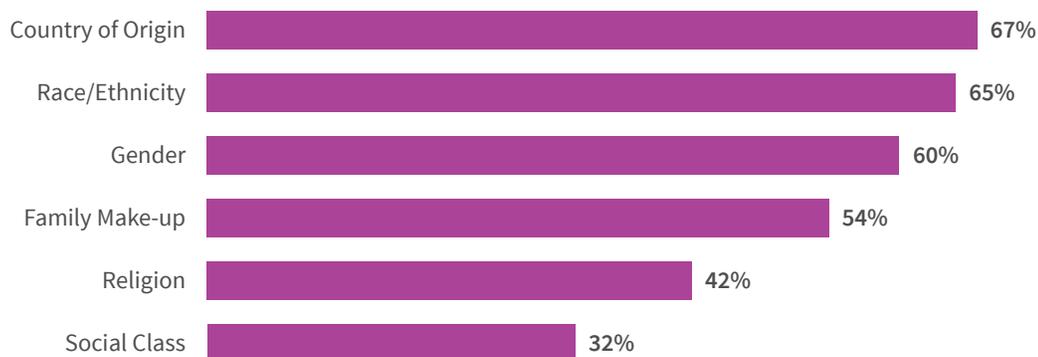


Q: Do you think each of the following has a major impact, a minor impact, or no impact at all on a child's ability to succeed in life?

It's not just parents who view these identities as determinative of a child's future. Teachers share similar views. Like parents, more than half of teachers in our survey say that each identity has an impact on a child's ability to succeed in life. Unlike parents, teachers see social class as most

determinative, followed by family make-up. Eight in 10 teachers say social class is impactful, including 4 in 10 who say it has a major impact. Seventy-two percent of teachers say a child's family make-up has an impact, including 25% who say it has a major impact.

Teachers express a high level of comfort with talking to their students about countries of origin, race and ethnicity, and gender, but are less comfortable with social class and religion.

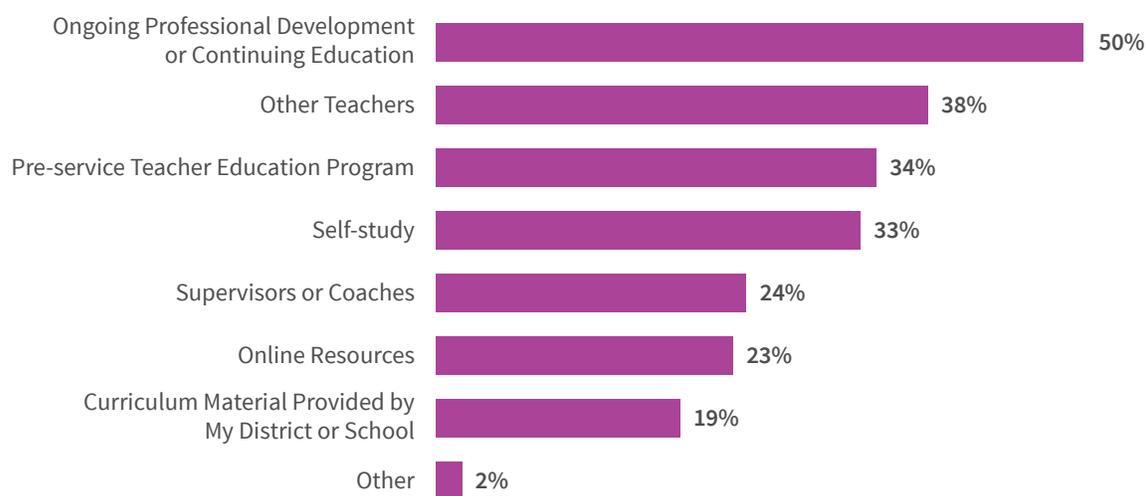


Q: *How comfortable are you talking with your students about the following topics in general? (percent of those who said extremely or very comfortable)*

Teachers express comfort with discussing most identities in general with their students. More than half say they are comfortable talking about the children's countries of origin, race and ethnicity, gender, and family make-up. They express

reservations about discussing religion and social class with their students, with almost 4 in 10 teachers saying they are not too or not at all comfortable discussing social class with their students.

Teachers say they have received training on talking to students about identity through professional development initiatives.



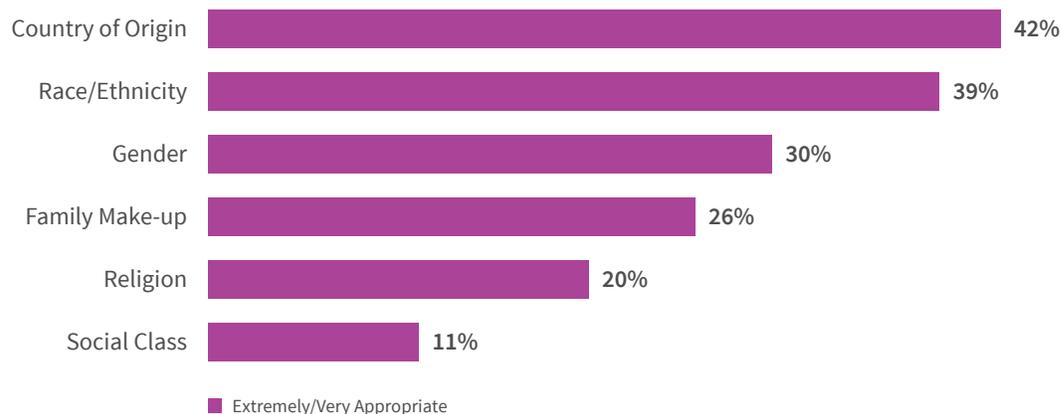
Percent of teachers who have received training or advice from each source

Q: *Have you received training or advice from any of the following in order to discuss these identities with your students?*

While schools aren't actively encouraging discussions about identity, 76% of teachers have received some form of training or advice in order to discuss at least some components of social identity with students. Most commonly, the training comes in

the form of ongoing professional development or continuing education, followed by advice from other teachers, pre-service teacher education programs, or self-study.

While they say they are comfortable and many have received training, less than half of teachers think it's highly appropriate for them to discuss various identities. Religion and social class are the identities teachers feel are least appropriate to discuss.

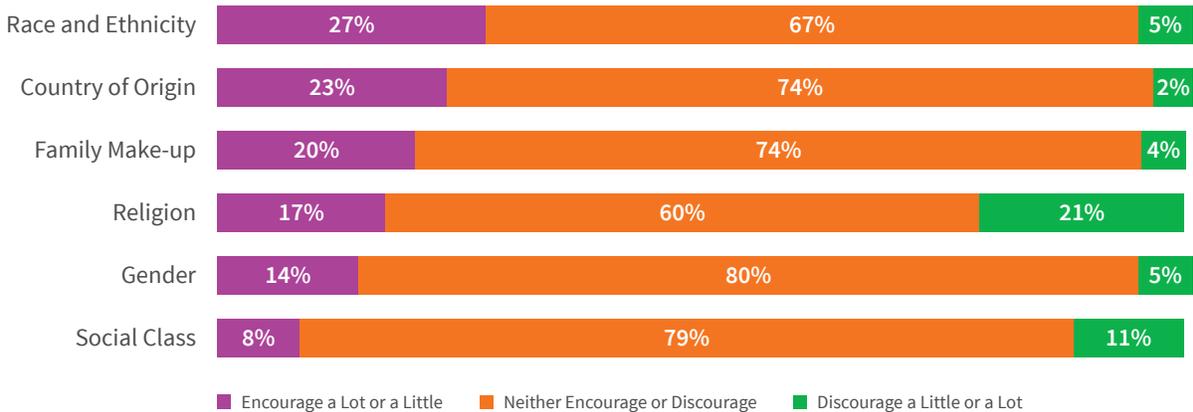


Q: How appropriate do you think it is for **you** to talk to **your students** about each of the following?

In the classroom, views on appropriateness are influenced by grade level for discussions about students' race and ethnicity, their family's countries of origin, and their family's social class.

For each of these three identities, teachers of higher grades are more likely to find these discussions appropriate for their class than teachers of younger grades.

Despite offering training, schools do not provide strong guidance in these conversations. Most teachers report that their school leadership neither encourages nor discourages them from discussing the various identities in their classrooms.

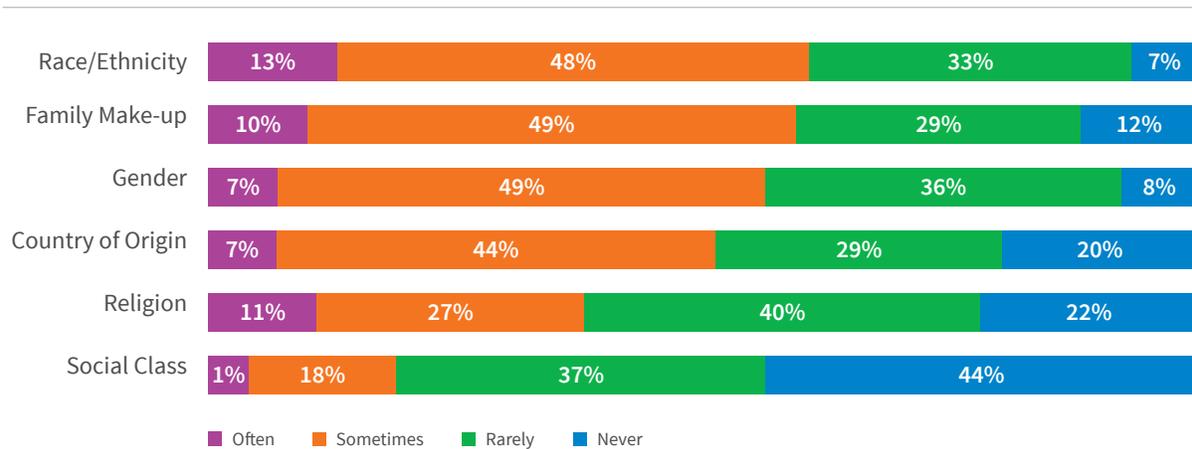


Q: Does your school's leadership encourage, discourage, or neither encourage nor discourage you from discussing each of the following with children in your class?

At least 6 in 10 teachers say their school neither encourages nor discourages discussions of each of the identities. Race and ethnicity are the most likely to be encouraged, though just 27% of teachers say leadership encourages these types of discussions.

Twenty-one percent of teachers say their school discourages classroom discussion about religion. It's the only identity asked about that more than 1 in 5 teachers say is discouraged.

Teachers are not talking frequently about social identities, although they do talk about race and ethnicity, gender, family make-up and country of origin at least sometimes. Religion and social class are least often discussed.



Q: Now, think about the discussions you have with the children in your classroom. These discussions can be part of a lesson plan or spontaneous, unstructured conversations. How often do you discuss each of the following in your classroom?

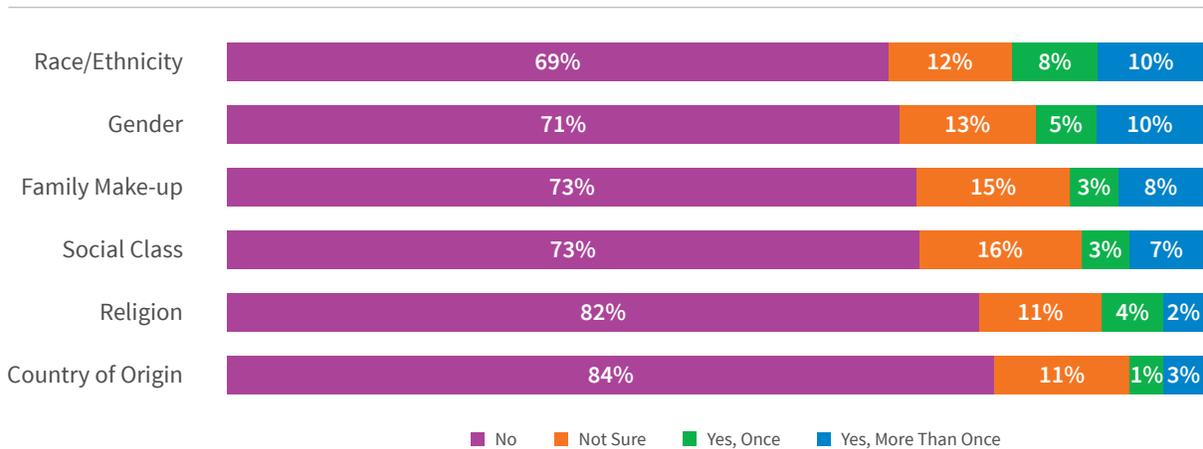
Six in 10 teachers are discussing race and ethnicity in their classroom at least sometimes (vs. the 37% of parents who are doing so at home). At least half of teachers discuss their students' family make-ups, genders, and countries of origin in their classroom.

One topic that seems to be mostly off-limits in the classroom is social class: just 1 in 5 teachers say this is regularly discussed in their classroom. This finding is despite teachers' belief that social class is the most impactful identity on later success in life.

Grade level impacts the frequency of discussions about gender and social class. Teachers of younger grades are more likely to discuss gender in their classrooms but are less likely to discuss social class than are teachers of older grades.

Discussions about race and ethnicity are more likely to occur in classrooms with higher proportions of Black and Hispanic students at least sometimes. Fifty-eight percent of teachers in classrooms with fewer than 50% Hispanic students say they often or sometimes discuss race and ethnicity, compared with 75% of teachers in classrooms with 50% or more Hispanic students. Similarly, 61% of teachers in classrooms with fewer than 50% Black students say they discuss race and ethnicity compared with 81% of teachers in classrooms with 50% or more Black students.

While most teachers report no negative comments about students' identities, about one third of teachers report that a student in their classroom has heard a negative comment about their identity at least once this school year.



Q: As far as you know, in the current school year, has any student in your classroom received a negative comment about each of the following?

Negative comments about race and ethnicity and social class are more common in classrooms with older children.

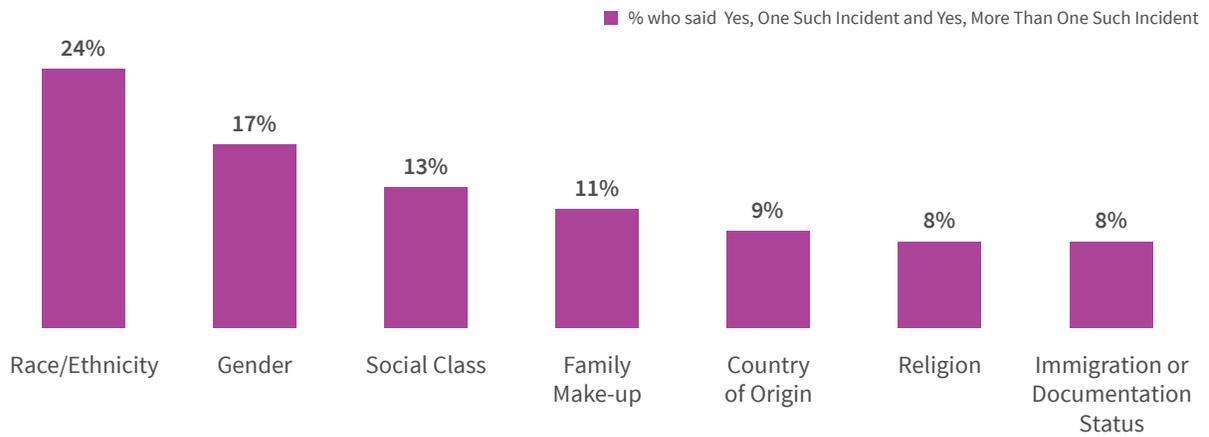
Overall, one third of early childhood to fifth grade teachers report that a child in their classroom has made a negative comment about another child's identity at least once this school year. Most often, the comment was about the student's race and ethnicity or gender. Negative comments about the other identities are a rarer occurrence, but they do happen.

As children age, they're more likely to hear negative comments in the classroom about their race and ethnicity and their social class. Just 7% of early childhood and kindergarten teachers say at least

one student has received a negative comment about their race and ethnicity in the classroom this school year. This number climbs to 33% among fifth grade teachers. A similar pattern emerges when it comes to hearing a negative comment about social class.

Teachers with a higher percentage of Black children in the classroom are more likely to report that a student has heard a negative comment about their race or ethnicity. Thirty-four percent of teachers with classrooms in which at least a quarter of the students are Black say at least one student has received a negative comment about their race or ethnicity compared with 19% of teachers with classrooms in which fewer than a quarter of the students are Black.

About a quarter of teachers report an incident involving differential treatment based on race and ethnicity in their school.



Q: *During the current school year, has there been an incident in your school where a student, student's family, or a teacher complained of being treated differently because of each of the following?*

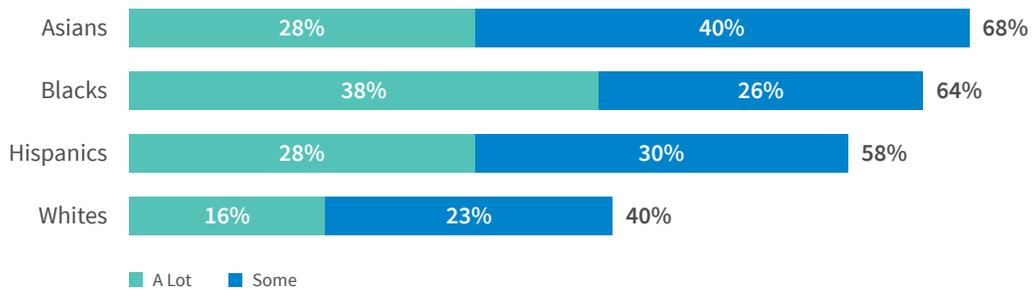
While these data indicate that teachers report that only about 25% have experienced an incident related to differential treatment, it is important to note that, when extrapolated to the general population, these data indicate that there have been tens of thousands of incidents in schools and early learning settings across the United States in the past year.

There have also been incidents in schools in which a student, a student's family member, or a teacher complained about differential treatment based on one of seven identities. Again, these incidents were most often surrounding racial and ethnic identity or gender identity.

Group Differences in the Parent Sample

The overall parent sample masks some very important group differences. There are strong racial/ethnic group differences in how much race/ethnicity shape children's identity and how others treat their children.

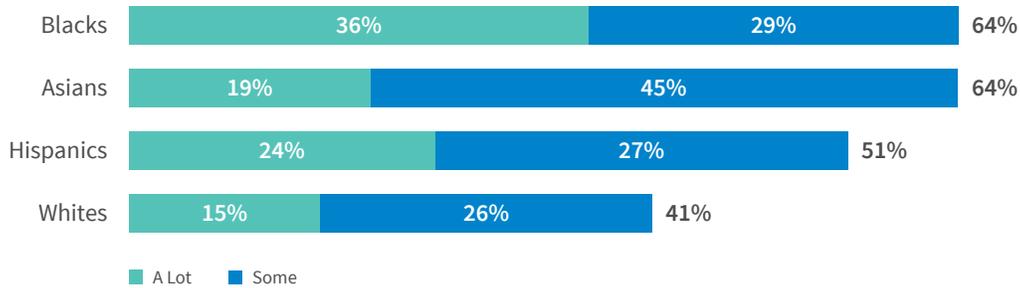
Parents of color are more likely than White parents to say that their child's race/ethnicity shapes their child's identity.



Q: Again, thinking of [child's name], how much do you think each of the following characteristics shapes [his/her/their] identity? (race/ethnicity)

Asian (68%), Black (64%), and Hispanic (58%) parents are more likely than White parents to say that race/ethnicity shapes their child's identity a lot or some, with Black parents most likely to say race/ethnicity influences their child's identity a lot.

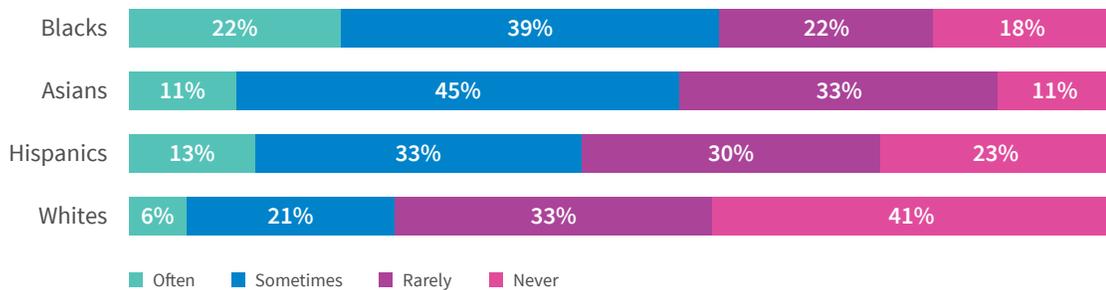
Parents of color are more likely to say that their child’s race and ethnicity shape how other people treat their children than White parents.



Q: How much do you think each of the following characteristics shapes how other people treat your child? (race/ethnicity)

Black (64%), Asian (64%), and Hispanic (51%) parents are more likely than White parents (41%) to say that race and ethnicity shape how other people treat their child a lot or some, with Black parents most likely to say race and ethnicity shape how their child is treated a lot compared to the other groups.

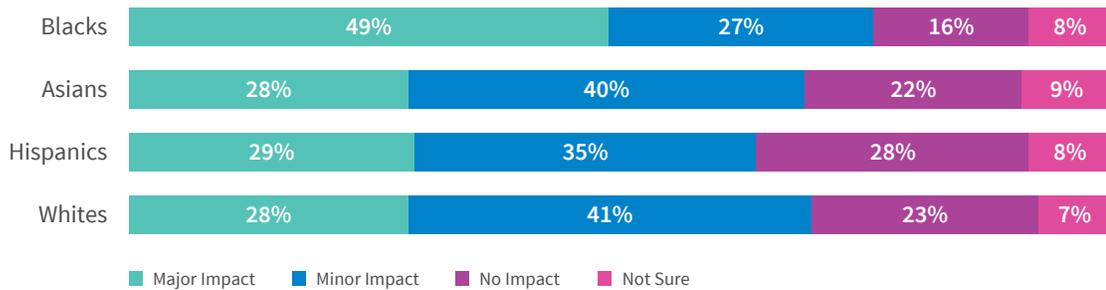
Parents of color, particularly Black parents, are more likely to discuss their child’s race/ethnicity with them compared to White parents.



Q: How often do you discuss each of the following?

The topic of race and ethnicity is more likely to be discussed by Black, Asian, or Hispanic parents than White parents (61%, 56%, 46% vs. 26%, respectively).

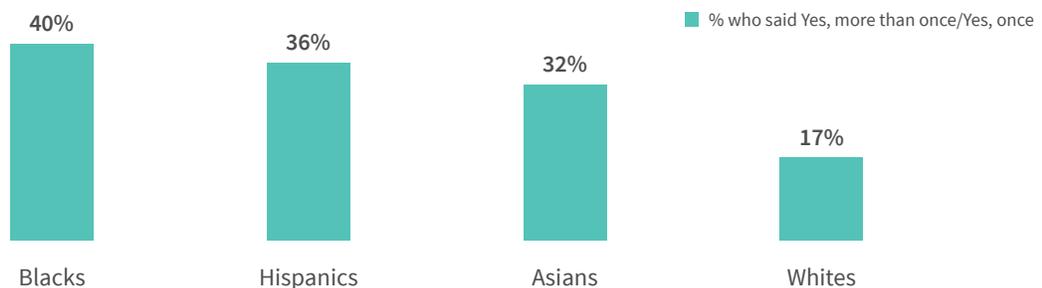
Black parents are much more likely to report that race/ethnicity has a major impact on children’s ability to succeed in this country. But Asians and Hispanics were similar to White parents in terms of how they consider the impact of race/ethnicity on success.



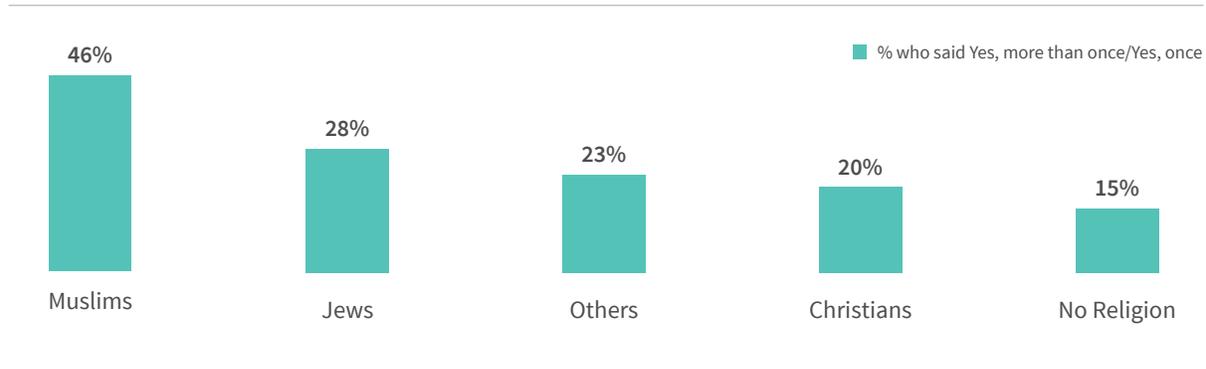
About half of Black parents say that race and ethnicity has a major impact on children's ability to succeed in this country, whereas 28% of Asian, 29% of Hispanic, and 28% of White parents do.

Another lens to look at the role of social identity in children’s lives is whether the parents note that their child has heard a negative comment about their identity.

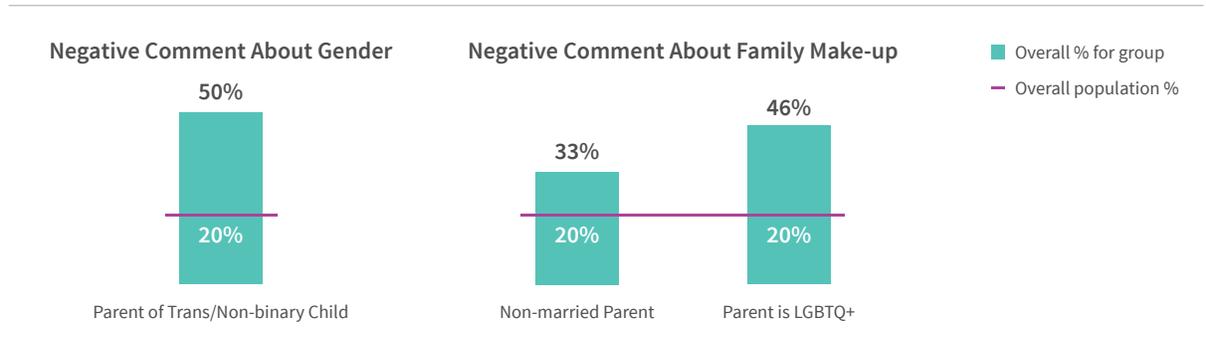
Black, Hispanic, and Asian parents are more likely to report that their child has heard a negative comment at least once about their race/ethnicity or religion than are White parents.



Muslim and Jewish parents are more likely to report that their child has heard a negative comment about their religion than are parents from other religions. Those with no religion are least likely to have heard a negative comment about their religion.



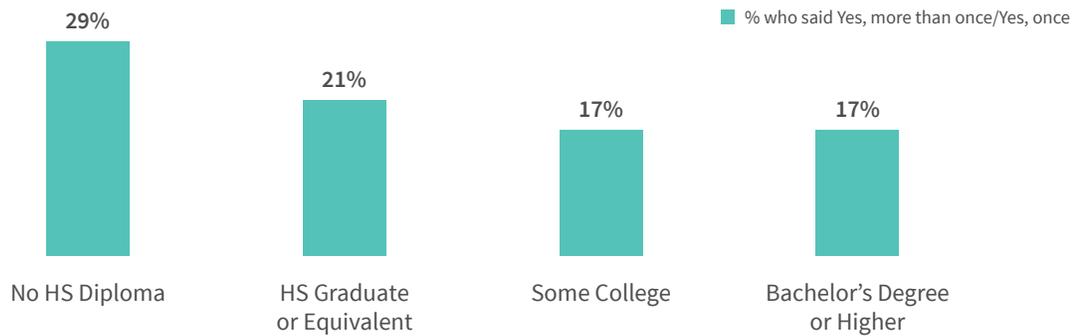
Parents with a transgender or non-binary child, LGBTQ+ parents, and non-married parents are more likely to report that their child has heard a negative comment about their gender or family make-up than are other parents.



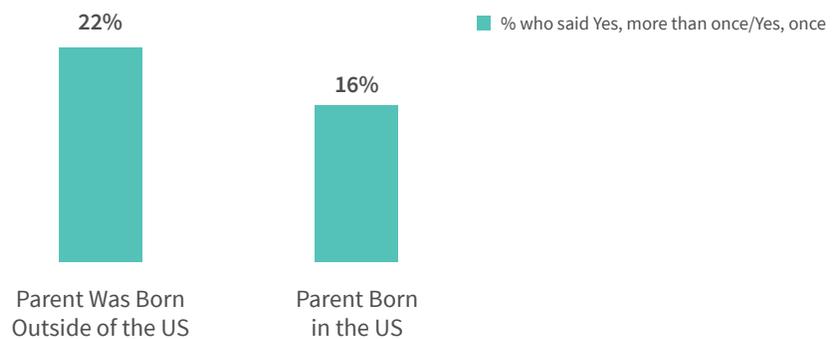
Transgender children are more than twice as likely to be aware of negative comments made about their child's gender than parents of cisgender children (50% vs. 20%). A third of non-married parents say their child has heard a negative comment about their

family make-up compared to 20% of those who are married. Parents who are LGBTQ+ are more than twice as likely to report their child has heard a negative comment about their family make-up (46%) compared to those who are not LGBTQ+ (20%).

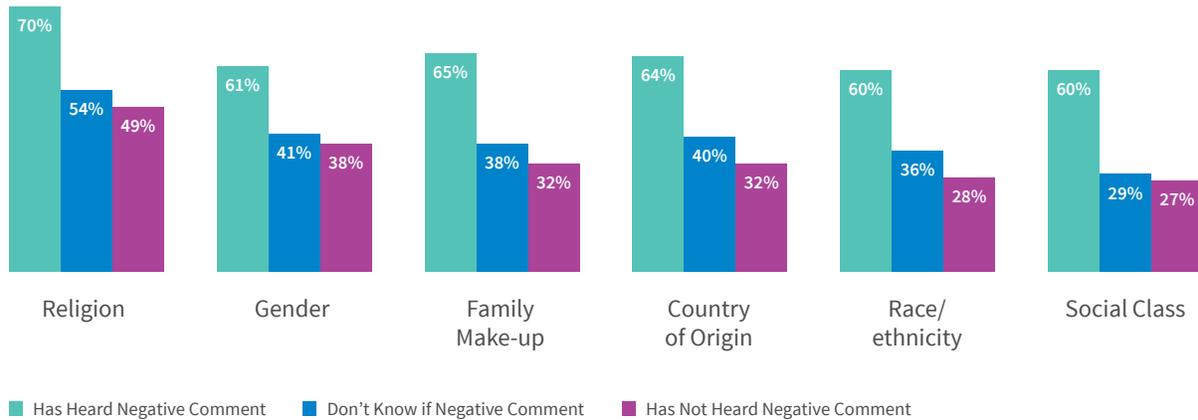
Parents with no HS diploma are more likely to report their child HAS heard a negative comment about their social class or family's country of origin compared to more educated parents or those born in the United States.



Parents who were born outside of the United States are more likely to report that their child has heard a negative comment about their family's country of origin compared to those born in the United States.



Looking across the identities, parents whose children have heard at least one negative comment about their identities talk to their children about those identities more than those who say their children have not heard a negative comment.

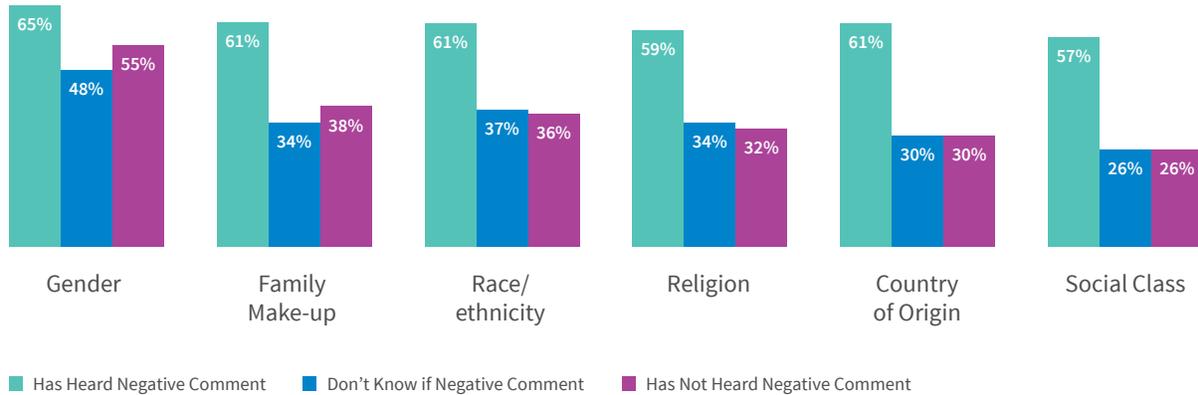


Q: Now, think about the conversations you have with your child. How often do you discuss each of the following? (Percent saying often or sometimes)

In all cases, parents who report that their child has heard a negative comment about their identity report talking to their children more frequently about the identity about which they received that negative comment. In fact, in the case of social class,

race/ethnicity, country of origin, and family make-up, those whose children have heard a negative comment are twice as likely to be speaking frequently about these issues with their children than those who have not heard a negative comment.

Parents whose children have heard at least one negative comment about their identities say their child is more aware that they may differ from others compared to those who have not heard a negative comment.

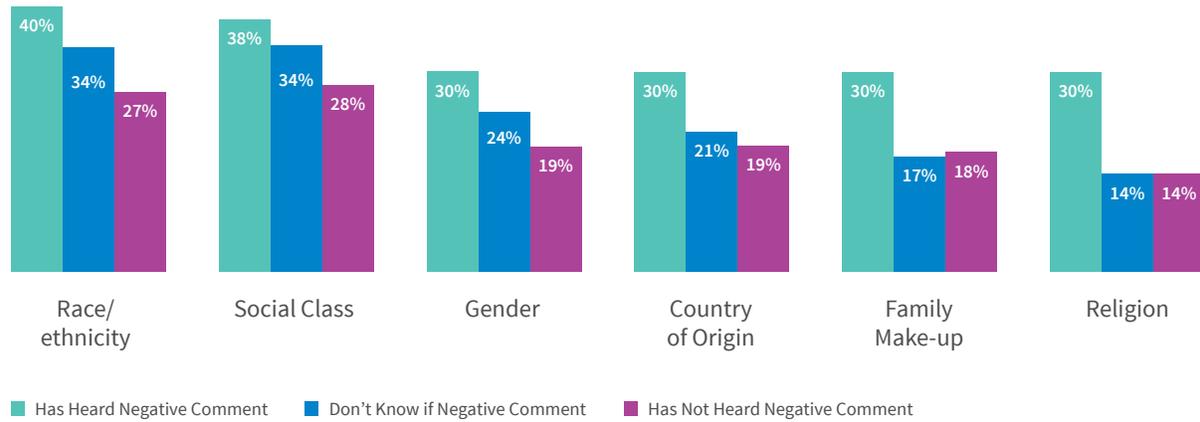


Q: How aware is your child that he/she/they may differ from others based on: (percent who are very or extremely aware of differences)

Similarly, parents who report that their child has heard a negative comment about their identity report that their child is more aware that they differ from others on the basis of the identity they've heard a negative comment about. In fact, in the case

of social class and country of origin, those parents whose children have heard a negative comment are twice as likely to be speaking frequently about these issues with their children.

Parents whose children have heard a negative comment about their identities are more likely to agree that identities have a major impact on children’s ability to succeed in this country.



Q: Thinking about children in this country generally, how much do you think social class impacts children's ability to succeed? (Percent who say: MAJOR IMPACT)

Implications for Action

The findings raise several important questions about how social identity is being formed among children across the United States. Social science research indicates that children do see differences and make meaning of those differences from a very early age. The research also indicates that healthy social development—including a strong appreciation of individual and group identity factors—can be influenced, both positively and negatively, by home and peer interactions, as well as in community and school experiences.

These survey findings raise significant issues for parents, educators, media developers, and policy-makers about how best to:

- + Mobilize public attention to social identity and enduring bias that begins in the early years. How can each of the pivotal sectors—media, industry, educators, policy and philanthropy—stimulate a new national conversation about the importance of healthy identity? Do the infrequent conversations that parents have with their children indicate an important missed opportunity to help children learn more about themselves and about others?
- + Establish positive media depictions of diverse identities. While the study did not focus on media depictions, per se, as a key factor in promoting positive identity formation, other research indicates that children learn best from positive role models. Many scholars have indicated that a paucity of role models exist in mainstream media for certain marginalized groups.
- + Reframe identity as a key dimension of early experiences. How might our nation's educators and research community build broad-based recognition of the positive value of social identity factors? Given the association between frequent conversation and negative comments,

are the conversations that families and schools are having around identity occurring only when something hurtful was said, rather than spurred by pride or joy around one's heritage, color, beliefs, or family structure? How might the nation better celebrate diversity as a protective factor for children's pathways to success?

- + Acknowledge the changing demography of the United States. If conversations are happening more frequently among minority groups, what does that mean for children in majority groups? What should children from majority groups learn about their memberships in such groups? How can educational publishers, media companies, school systems, and afterschool programs help support educators in navigating these important conversations?

Sesame Workshop, through its longstanding educational media productions, has demonstrated the importance of modeling and has provided important tools for parents and educators to expand their appreciation of the importance of social identity development. We plan to do our part moving forward to respond actively to the findings in this report. The nation's children are counting on all of us!

Study Methodology

This study was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Sesame Workshop. Staff at NORC at the University of Chicago and Sesame Workshop collaborated on all aspects of the study design.

All analyses were conducted using Stata (version 15), which allows for adjustment of standard errors for complex sample designs. All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95% level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5% (or less) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling. Additionally, bivariate differences between subgroups are only reported when they also remain robust in a multivariate model controlling for other demographic, political, and socioeconomic covariates.

Survey of Parents

Interviews for the survey of parents were conducted between February 22 and March 18, 2019, with parents of children ages 3 to 12 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on respondent preference.

The parent survey combined interviews from both probability and nonprobability sample sources. The probability interviews were conducted using AmeriSpeak®, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately

97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,779 completed the survey—1,733 completed via the web and 46 completed via telephone. The final stage completion rate is 93.1%, the weighted household panel response rate is 34.2%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.1%, for a cumulative response rate of 9.3%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Dynata, an opt-in panel, provided 4,291 nonprobability interviews. Interviews were conducted via web mode only. Because non-probability panels do not start with a frame where there is a known probability of selection, standard measures of sampling error and response rates cannot be calculated.

To produce the probability and non-probability combined sample weight, NORC used the TrueNorth calibration technique, an innovative hybrid calibration approach that incorporates small domain estimation methods in order to explicitly account for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample.

First, NORC utilized calibration to weight the nonprobability sample per state. The purpose of calibration is to adjust the weights for the nonprobability sample so as to bring weighted distributions of the nonprobability sample in line with the population distribution for characteristics

correlated with the survey variables. Such calibration adjustments help to reduce potential bias, yielding more accurate population estimates.

Second, the weighted national AmeriSpeak sample and the calibrated nonprobability sample were used to develop a small area model to support domain-level estimates, where the domains were defined by demographic variables. The dependent variable of the model were key survey variables. The model included covariates, domain-level random effects, and sampling errors. The covariates were external data available from other national surveys such as the American Community Survey (ACS).

Finally, combined AmeriSpeak and nonprobability sample weights were derived such that, for the combined sample, the weighted estimate reproduced the small domain estimates (derived using the small area model) for key survey variables.

A poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2018 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of parents of children age 3-12.

Survey of Educators

Interviews for the survey of educators were conducted between March 1 and March 13, 2019, with 1,046 teachers of prekindergarten through 5th grade representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Interviews were conducted in English on web only.

The list of public and private school educators was provided by a third-party vendor, MDR. MDR builds its K-12 teacher directory from online information posted by schools and districts and provides sample coverage of approximately 95% of the national teaching force in its directory. Those excluded from the sample include recently hired teachers and teachers for whom no contact information is

available. The sample was selected using strata based on school type and urbanicity (9 sampling strata in total). Educators who report in field their main teaching assignment as being either general elementary education or core subject-specific coursework were considered eligible.

The screener completion rate is 1.3%, the eligibility rate is 97.2%, and the final stage completion rate is 77.1%, for a cumulative response rate of 1.0 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 6.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Study-specific base sampling weights are derived from the probability of selection within each sampling stratum. Since not all sampled teachers respond to the screener interview, an adjustment is needed to account for and adjust for screener non-respondents. This adjustment decreases potential nonresponse bias associated with sampled teachers who did not complete the screener interview for the study. Furthermore, among eligible sampled teachers (as identified via the survey screener question/questions), not all complete the survey interview for the study. Thus, the screener nonresponse adjusted weights for the study are further adjusted to account for survey non-response.

A poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. A raking ratio method to grades pre-k to 5 main subject teachers population totals associated with the following socio-demographic characteristics: sex, race/Hispanic ethnicity, education, number of years teaching, Census Region, urbanicity, and type of school (public or private). The weights adjusted to the external population totals are the final study weights.

For more information, please email info@norc.org.

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The logo for Sesame Workshop features a stylized yellow arch above the text "SESAME WORKSHOP" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is underlined with a green line.

Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit media and educational organization behind Sesame Street, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We're present in more than 150 countries, serving vulnerable children through a wide range of media, formal education, and philanthropically funded social impact programs, each grounded in rigorous research and tailored to the needs and cultures of the communities we serve. For more information, please visit sesameworkshop.org.

The logo for NORC at the University of Chicago features the letters "NORC" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a stylized orange and white globe icon. Below "NORC" is the text "at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business, and policy decisions. Since 1941, NORC has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Today, government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.



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