

# Unpacking the -Isms

## Common Terms To Talk About Social Justice and Oppression

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### The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

#### Overview:

This training will unpack a concept called the -Isms, a common expression for various forms of social oppression and/or social injustice. Specifically, this training focuses on an introductory discussion of racism, sexism, nationalism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism. These six -Isms fit with the Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion model and represent the eight common categories of diversity explored through this curriculum and often found in the campus and community contexts. This training does not include an exhaustive list of the -Isms. Rather, it only serves as a guide for some common terms to discuss. Please add on any other terms you feel would be helpful or relevant to your community.

#### Category:

Diversity, Dialogue Across Difference, Community Building, and Critical Thinking

#### Level:


Introductory; good for first-year students or students new to the program.

#### Recommended

**Bonner Connections:** This training is recommended for students who are in the first year of the developmental model, Explore. This training is recommended as part of the Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 model, Stage 1: Exposure.



**First Year  
Students**

Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 Student Developmental Model			
Stage 1: Exposure	Stage 2: Understanding	Stage 3: Application and Discussion	Stage 4: Adaptation
			

### Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Participants will be introduced to, and be able to practice common language and terms used when discussing oppression (I.e. -ism's).
- Participants will begin to understand and explore broad topics of oppression and apply terminology to experiences and actions.
- Participants will begin to develop an understanding of how various beliefs represented by the -ism's are forms of oppression and injustice.
- Participants will apply newly covered terms to their own experiences and service work (reflecting on past/present/future).

### Materials:

- Discussion Questions for Activity #1
- 6 Large Post It's
- Makers/Pens/Pencils
- Terms & Definitions Handout
- Scenario Assessment Handouts (6 Individual Sheets)
- Debriefing Reflection Worksheet

### How to Prepare:

To prepare for this training, read through the trainer guide and become familiar with the content. This is an introductory training so you do not need to have any previous training prior to facilitating this training. However, below are some necessary steps to do prior to the groups arrival.

### Look through and print out all of the handouts.

(\*Please Note That The Terms Defined Handout is Two Pages.\*)

- Set up large post it's with appropriate terms written on them.
- Gather writing utensils.

- Print out a copy of all 6 scenarios.

**Brief Outline:**

The purpose of this training is not to leave participants feeling burdened with newly discussed knowledge; however, the goal is to inspire the participants to make change after learning about these new concepts. Throughout this training, participants should learn and understand new vocabulary concepts while having a space to practice expressing the newly learned words and phrases. This training is designed to run 100 minutes.

The outline has the following parts:

- |                                    |                           |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Establishing Group Expectations | suggested time 5 minutes  |
| 2) Small Group Discussion          | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 3) Developing Definitions          | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 4) Scenario Assessments            | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 5) Connecting & Reflecting         | suggested time 15 minutes |

Refrain from making someone a spokesperson for a certain group	Refrain from using one experience to explain a large group	Reform from judgement but be aware of personal biases
Do not expect everyone to know your "Story"	Do not assume that you know anyone's story	"Step Up" when you have a point to make. "Step Back" when others have something to say. If you get overwhelmed, <b>step out.</b>
Remember, you are your best advocate.	Be willing to listen to difference.	Express needs for clarification.
Be respectful.	Encourage curiosity	Use I statements & refrain from "generals"

## Your Plan

### Part 1) Establishing Group Expectations

Suggested time: 5 Minutes

During this section of the training you will establish group expectations by reading the list below. This list should be visible through out the entire training. It recommended that you transfer these points to a post it, and have it hung up while the group is in session.

Have the group go through each point by having them popcorn read each box. You can read the chart top to bottom or left to right. The order does not matter.

After establishing these group norms, move on to the next activity.

### Part 2) Opening Activity: Small Group Discussion

Suggested time: 20 Minutes

During this activity, you will be getting the group comfortable with each other. You will do this by putting participants into small groups and having them talk about the prompts you will be reading. For this activity, assign everyone into small groups comprised of 4 to 5 people per group. For larger audiences, you can choose to either (a.) have a large amount of small groups or (b.) expand the small group sizes to a size that seems reasonable based on your group size. It is not recommended that small groups exceed eight people.

Once they are in their small groups, ask them the 10 questions listed below. Ask each question one at a time, allowing time for everyone to share a brief response in their small group. The purpose of this is to allow the participants to feel safe in their small groups since the topics at hand are large, difficult issues to discuss. Following the last question, allow each group to share one answer for the last question with the large group.

- Question 1: Who is your favorite musical artist right now?
- Question 2: Where is your favorite service site?
- Question 3: What is your favorite subject to study?
- Question 4: Have you ever disagreed with someone?
- Question 5: Have you ever gotten in an argument with someone? About what?
- Question 6: Have you ever lost a friendship over an argument?

- Question 7: Have you ever felt unheard, disrespected, or ignored? What may have caused those experiences and how did they make you feel?
- Question 8: Have you ignored, hurt, or disrespected someone? If so, what led up to those actions? How did you feel afterwards?
- Question 9: Have you ever seen a group of people being ignored, unheard, or disrespected? If so, where? When? How did those situations play out?
- Question 10: During any of questions previously discussed, were there any common threads that arose in your conversations or answers?

### Part 3) Developing Definitions

Suggested time: 20 Minutes

During this activity, you will be getting the participants to think about what each definition means. They will express their thoughts by writing on several post it's, titled with each term. The goal of this activity is to allow everyone to develop some sort of idea or definition for each word.

After finishing up the opening activity, put everyone into 6 groups. The easiest way to do this is to have everyone go through and count off, starting with 1 and ending with 6. Ideally, you should have six groups comprised of three to four people. However, if you have a larger group, your six groups can be made of more than the recommended amount. If your group is small (made up of 10 people or less), this activity can be done all together.

After groups have been established, give each group a different colored marker or writing utensil. You will also need to give everyone a copy of the "Terms Defined" sheet. They can refer to this as they participate in this activity.

Having already set up the 6 posters, instruct each group to rotate around to every poster, writing thoughts, definitions, and/or feeling the group experiences regarding the word written on each post it. Give each group two to three minutes at poster. Each group should rotate 6 times, ending at the same poster they started at. This part of the activity should take no more than 12 minutes. Give each group 2 to 3 minutes at each poster and then have them switch.

After participants rotate back to starting points, have the group take 2 to 3 minutes to look at what is written on their giant post it. After looking at all the responses, gather their attention. At this point, make sure you are located beside the blank post it.

**To introduce the next portion of the activity, refer to the script below:**

*“Thank you all for participating in the first part of this activity. Now, we are going to hear from a volunteer at each Post It. As we are going through the Post It’s, we are going to discuss the definition for each word on the posters and reflect on some of the responses at each post it. ”*

Starting with group #1 (Those who had 1 when numbered off), ask each group to briefly share with the large group one thing that sticks out to the group from everyone’s responses. After hearing from the, read the definition aloud for that post it. Repeat this process for each post it. Every group should share one thing from their poster.

After this, thank them for sharing and remind them that the definitions that are on their “Terms Defined” handout will be the cornerstone for further conversations in this training. Encourage them to review them as often as needed throughout the remainder of the training. In total, this should take roughly 10 minutes.

**\*Please Note\*** At this point, some members of the group may feel like the definitions are over simplified or lacking some context. If this occurs, inform them that these definitions were made to be simple since some may have never heard them. You may want to remind everyone that these are not an exhaustive definitions. These definitions are a working definition that the group can use a place of common understanding.

#### **Part 4) Scenario Assessment**

Suggested time: 30 Minutes

During this portion of the training, you will be looking an examples of each -ism. The large group will be spilt up and assigned to look at different scenarios, highlighting the issues with each -ism.

Regather everyone’s attention. For this next activity, the group will be in small groups again.It is recommended that you keep everyone in the same groups that they were in while participating in the previous activity.

When everyone has turned their attention back to you, handout each group a scenario handout. Each group should have a different scenario. Direct the group to read the scenarios and look at the question located at the bottom of the page. Have the small groups discuss the questions and to be prepared to share with the large group. The groups will have 10 minutes to read and discuss the questions.

After the ten minutes is up, the small groups will need to share out with the large group. Have each group give a brief synopsis of the scenario and have every group share their answers to questions five, six, and seven. Upon answering question number five, you will tell them if they are correct. The scenarios and matching topics are listed below. Each group should take no more than 3 minutes to do this.

<b>Scenario #1: Racism</b>	<b>Scenario #3: Heterosexism</b>	<b>Scenario #5: Classism</b>
<b>Scenario #2 Ableism</b>	<b>Scenario #4: Sexism</b>	<b>Scenario #6: Nationalism</b>

### **Part 5) Connecting & Reflecting**

**Suggested time: 15 Minutes**

During this part of the training, you are going to bring closure to all of the activities and conversations you have participated in thus far. You will be discussing ways to move forward after this training. This will include looking at practical ways to be an advocate for these issues.

By now, the group may be feeling a range of feelings. For some, this is brand new material and can make them feel overwhelmed, guilty, or discouraged. Others may either not accept that these terms and scenarios are relevant, or have lived through these experiences and feel very passionate about the topics.

**As a facilitator, know that all of these situations are okay. If you feel it necessary, you can address these feelings with the script below.**

*“ By this point, I would expect a wide range of feelings, emotions, and responses. For some, you may not totally buy into this idea of oppression. That is okay. For some, you may have lived these experience and feel this as repetitive; and, for some, you may feel guilty for never having to live these experiences. That is also okay. The goal of this training is not to make you confirm to “politically correct” language, but to expose you to areas of prejudice and discrimination. It is hoped that you have become more aware of the prevalence of these issues and have developed a sense of desire for everyone to be treated with fairness, respect, justice.”*

Since this training is designed for a beginner’s audience, it is understood that some may still be wrestling with the presented concepts.

This is the final stage of the training. During this last part, you will be guiding the group through a reflection activity that is designed for independent reflection with an option to share with the group, if time and space permit. Share with the group that this a time for participants to reflect on this process and, if needed, have a moment to sit with their feelings.

Please pass out the Reflection Worksheet and inform the group that you will be reading off a list of questions. Encourage the group to use the bubbles provided on the sheet to map out their thoughts. As you read the questions, give time in between to let the participants write down their thoughts. The questions you will be reading are listed in the cart below.

You will read the first groups of questions, "What?". Following those questions, have the participants move to the two arrows located in the middle of the page. Ask the questions under the "Now What?" section and guide them to think about ways to they can apply these topics to other areas of interest. They should respond with answers similar to, "looking for ways that my university is being ableistic..." or things of that nature. This section is designed to abstract in order to apply to areas that are relevant to them.

Lastly, have them put one major take away in the large circle on the right side of the sheet. This should be the major thing that either learned or want to take away with them. Prompt them to think in terms of moving forward. Those questions should prompt answers like, "Be mindful of my words and actions" or "be more aware of who is being affected by local policies."

<b>What?</b>	<b>So What?</b>	<b>Now What?</b>
What were your immediate thoughts, reactions, or feelings to learning and discussing these terms and definitions?	Thinking about the scenarios we discussed, do you see any similar scenarios in local events?	What are some ways you can get involved with addressing these issues? How can your Bonner group get involved?
Did you buy into this? If not, why?	Do you see any of what we've discussed today in your academics?	If you had to share this information with anyone, who would it be? What would you share? Why would you share it with them?



Did you learn anything new? If so, what did you learn?	If you do see these topics or ones similar in any other daily activities, are they being discussed?	
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### Credits:

Developed in 2017 by Hunter Malone, a Bonner Scholar at Berea College. For more resources, check out the links provided in the footnotes on the handout *Terms Defined*.

### Followed by Handouts:

- Terms Defined
- Scenarios (All 6)
- Reflection Worksheets
  - What?
  - So What?
  - Now What?

## **Terms Defined** ***In Alphabetical Order***

When discussing language that is used to paint broad strokes over oppression and injustice, these terms and definitions will serve as a foundation for your conversations during this training. These are simple definitions, describing complex issues. Due to the complexity of the issues, these definitions may not be all-encompassing, however, they serve as a starting point for beginning conversations.

Prior to discussing types of oppression and injustice, it is important to understand these three very important terms. They will come in throughout conversation and it is important to be able to distinguish the different terms.

- **Prejudice**- a feeling about a person based on their membership in a group<sup>1</sup>.
- **Stereotype**- oversimplified mental images of a category of an object. (I.e. people, event, or ideology.<sup>2</sup>)
- **Discrimination**- an action that denies the rights of a person due to their membership in a group. This could manifest itself in denying someone the right to act/participate/ or be involved in a certain setting<sup>3</sup>.
- **Ableism**: discrimination against those who are disabled (physically, mentally, emotionally, etc.), also referred to as being differently abled. This discrimination favors those that are able-bodied, or do not have a disability<sup>4</sup>.
- **Classism**: refers to treating people unequally based on the social class in which they belong to or appear to belong to<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "Sociology 101: Intro to Soc." Online Course (Chapter 9: Race and Ethnicity in Society), Study.com, June 21, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "Social Psychology." Online Course (Chapter 8: Ableism: Definition and Examples), Study.com, June 21, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> "Topics in Sociology." Online Course ( Chapter 4: Classism In America: Definitions and Examples), Study.com, June 21, 2017.

- **Heterosexism:** the conviction that everyone in society is straight and that it is the only legitimate form of sexual orientation<sup>6</sup>.
- **Nationalism:** exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or people groups<sup>7</sup>.
- **Racism:** Based off the idea that groups of people are defined by their inherent differences (skin color, culture, appearance) and that, because of these differences, one group is seen to be better than the other, resulting in unfair treatment<sup>8</sup>  
**Sexism:** discriminatory behavior towards a someone of a certain gender or gender expression. Simply put, sexism is the general belief that one sex is superior to the other<sup>9</sup>.

**The terms listed above are the ones that are going to be covered in this training. However, other relevant terms you may also want to know are listed below.**

- Ethnocentrism: the belief that your own cultural or ethnic group is superior to other cultural or ethnic groups<sup>10</sup>.
- Islamophobia: Dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "UExcel Cultural Diversity: Study Guide & Test Prep." Online Course (Chapter 5: Heterosexism & Homophobia: Definitions and Examples). Study.com, June 21, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Nationalism." Merriam-Webster. 2017. Accessed June 21, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> "MTTC Sociology: Practice & Study Guide." Online course (Chapter 21: What is Racism?-Definitions, Examples, and History), Study.com, June 21, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> "MTTC Sociology: Practice & Study Guide." Online course (Chapter 13: Sexism & Patriarchy: Definitions and Examples), Study.com, June 21, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> "Intro to Anthropology: Help and Review." Online course (Chapter 15: Ethnocentrism in Sociology: Definitions and Examples), Study.com, June 21, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> "Islamophobia." English Oxford Living Dictionary. 2017. Accessed June 21, 2017.

## Scenario #1

An individual is waiting to get on an elevator. The elevator soon arrives and the door opens. Inside the elevator is one other person, a black male in a suit and tie. After seeing the gentleman in the elevator, the individual decides to wait and catch the next elevator.

After reading the scenario, take some time as a group to discuss the following questions:

1. Was anyone hurt, ignored, unheard, or disrespected in this scenario?
2. If so, who?
3. If so, why?
4. Was there a certain attitude suggested in the scenario?
5. Using one of the previously defined terms, which word or -ism might describe the scenario you just read about?
6. Why did you choose that word to describe your scenario?
7. If you had witnessed this event in real life, what is one way you could move forward afterwards or what is one way you could address the issue presented?
8. Do you see similar scenarios to this one anywhere else?

## Scenario #2

While going on a campus tour, a prospective student arrives at a residence hall. Before the tour, the student had endured an injury leaving them in a cast and on crutches. The dorm is newly renovated and has a set of stairs going into the building. The prospective student asks if there is an alternative entrance for students who are unable to go up and down stairs. The guide informs the student that there is not an alternative entrance, recommending that the prospective student stays outside until this portion of the tour is over. The perspective asks the guide what a student would do if they lived in this dorm and then became injured mid-semester. The guide responds by stating that a student would have to be relocated to another dorm that is more accessible.

After reading the scenario, take some time as a group to discuss the following questions:

1. Was anyone hurt, ignored, unheard, or disrespected in this scenario?
2. If so, who?
3. If so, why?
4. Was there a certain attitude suggested in the scenario?
5. Using one of the previously defined terms, which word or -ism might describe the scenario you just read about?
6. Why did you choose that word to describe your scenario?
7. If you had witnessed this event in real life, what is one way you could move forward afterwards or what is one way you could address the issue presented?
8. Do you see similar scenarios to this one anywhere else?

## Scenario #3

### Option 1:

While cleaning one of the consultation rooms, a local health clinic employee is viewing all the posters on the wall sharing information about birth control and ways for women and men to have healthy sexual interactions. The employee is not a queer individual, but notices that there are no informational posters sharing ways for queer or same sex couples to also have healthy sexual interactions. The employee also notices that the only condoms that the health department gives out are pre-lubed with spermicide, a gel that is not recommended for gay men since it is especially known to increase the risk for HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's).

### Option 2:

It is around Christmas time when a group of friends are shopping in the local department store for some last minute holiday things. While in the photo lab department, one member makes the comment, "I wish they showed gay couples on these holiday cards." Other members of the group are unsure how to respond. After an awkward moment of silence, one of the other members scoffs and says, "Why? It's not like they can get married or anything."

After reading the scenario, take some time as a group to discuss the following questions:

1. Was anyone hurt, ignored, unheard, or disrespected in this scenario?
2. If so, who?
3. If so, why?
4. Was there a certain attitude suggested in the scenario?
5. Using one of the previously defined terms, which word or -ism might describe the scenario you just read about?
6. Why did you choose that word to describe your scenario?
7. If you had witnessed this event in real life, what is one way you could move forward afterwards or what is one way you could address the issue presented?
8. Do you see similar scenarios to this one anywhere else?

## Scenario #4

A little girl and some friends are playing on the playground during recess. The girls decide they want to join some of their friends and play football. The girls ask to join the game and are promptly told no. The boys laugh and tell the girls that football is a boys' sports.

After reading the scenario, take some time as a group to discuss the following questions:

1. Was anyone hurt, ignored, unheard, or disrespected in this scenario?
2. If so, who?
3. If so, why?
4. Was there a certain attitude suggested in the scenario?
5. Using one of the previously defined terms, which word or -ism might describe the scenario you just read about?
6. Why did you choose that word to describe your scenario?
7. If you had witnessed this event in real life, what is one way you could move forward afterwards or what is one way you could address the issue presented?
8. Do you see similar scenarios to this one anywhere else?

## Scenario #5

While working at a summer of service Site, a Bonner Scholar is assigned to help plan a summer program that meets a literacy need in a low-income neighborhood. The Bonner decides to plan a trip with a few middle school students to a library and encourage them to check out books that interest them. While planning the trip, the Bonner notices that the library in the area is only open one or two days a week. The Bonner also notices that on the days that they are open, they are only open for a limited number of hours. The Bonner begins to ask around and attempts to figure out why the library is not open nearly as often as they were expecting. After hearing of the Bonner's question, an office members begins to make comments like "people around here are too poor to read" and "nobody wants to pay for books when kids like the ones around here don't know how to treat the books." After hearing these comments, the Bonner becomes upset and begins to look at funding for local programs and places, especially the library. The Bonner discovers that the library in this specific city receives less than half in local grants, than the library in the wealthier city over.

After reading the scenario, take some time as a group to discuss the following questions:

1. Was anyone hurt, ignored, unheard, or disrespected in this scenario?
2. If so, who?
3. If so, why?
4. Was there a certain attitude suggested in the scenario?
5. Using one of the previously defined terms, which word or -ism might describe the scenario you just read about?
6. Why did you choose that word to describe your scenario?
7. If you had witnessed this event in real life, what is one way you could move forward afterwards or what is one way you could address the issue presented?
8. Do you see similar scenarios to this one anywhere else?



## Scenario #6

While on an international service trip, a Bonner cohort is exploring the local city learning about the city and some local culture. While exploring, a small group of Bonners stumble upon a neighborhood that is comprised of smaller, more modest houses. The group discovers that this specific neighborhood is full of workers and is home to some more financially well-off people. After discovering this, one Bonner makes the comment, "if they have so much money, why wouldn't they move to America?"

After reading the scenario, take some time as a group to discuss the following questions:

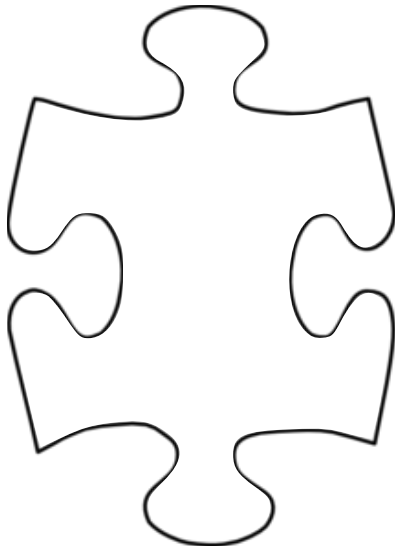
9. Was anyone hurt, ignored, unheard, or disrespected in this scenario?
10. If so, who?
11. If so, why?
12. Was there a certain attitude suggested in the scenario?
13. Using one of the previously defined terms, which word or -ism might describe the scenario you just read about?
14. Why did you choose that word to describe your scenario?
15. If you had witnessed this event in real life, what is one way you could move forward afterwards or what is one way you could address the issue presented?
16. Do you see similar scenarios to this one anywhere else?

# WHAT?

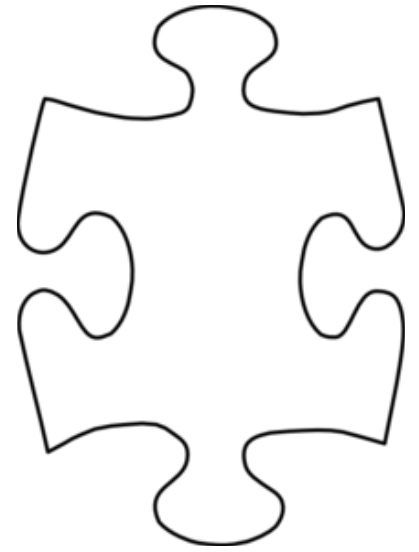
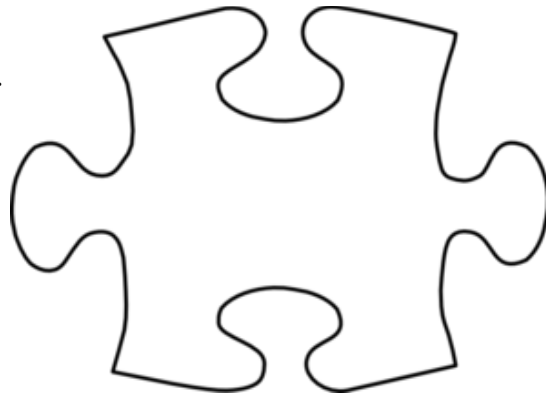


Use the thought bubbles to articulate your answers to the following reflection questions:

- What were your immediate thoughts, reactions, or feelings to learning and discussing these terms and definitions?
- Did you buy into this? If not, why?
- Did you learn anything new? If so, what did you learn?



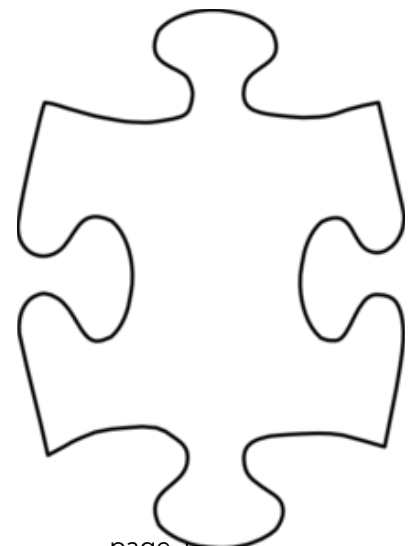
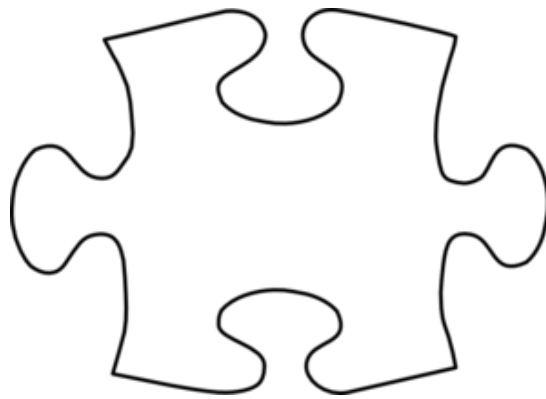
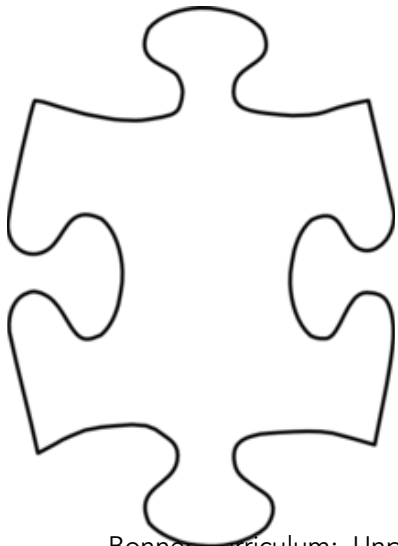
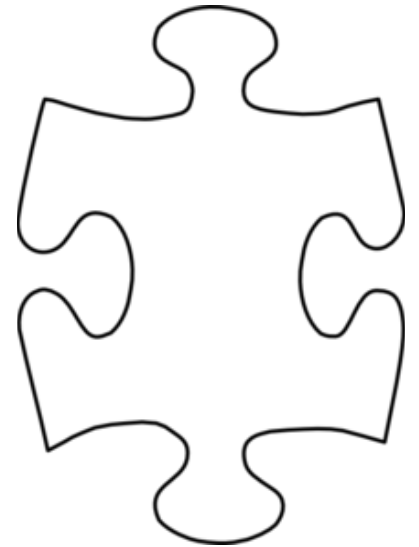
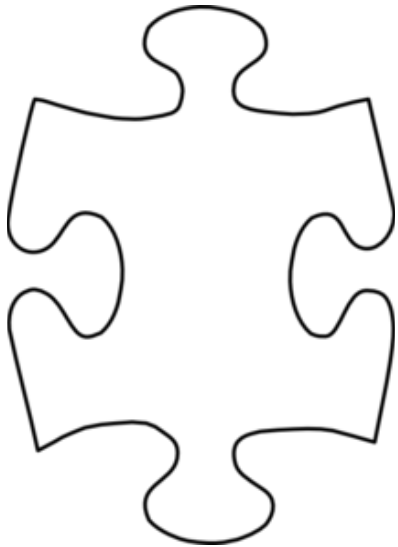
17.



## SO WHAT?

**Use the puzzle pieces to express your thoughts:**

- Thinking about the scenarios we discussed, do you see any similar scenarios in local events?
- Do you see any of what we've discussed today in your academics?
- If you do see these topics or ones similar in any other daily activities, are they being discussed?



*Use this space to reflect on the questions below:*

- What are some ways you can get involved with addressing these issues? How can your Bonner group get involved?
- If you had to share this information with anyone, who would it be? What would you share? Why would you share it with them?

See handout on the following three pages for information on this activity.



A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for reflection notes.

## NOW WHAT?

A rounded rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for notes.

A rounded rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for notes.

*What are some ways you can move forward after this training? Please be prepared to share an answer to this question with the large group.*