

Bonner Congress 2019 - Strategy Session/Workshop

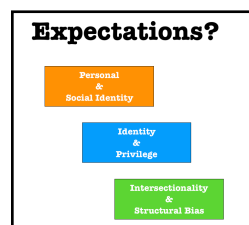
TOPIC: Understanding Identity, Intersectionality, Privileges, and Our Role in Communities

Duration: 75 Minutes

Session Description: This session is intended for participants to critically reflect on different aspects of their identity (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual affiliation etc.) and the ways in which these aspects intersect with one another. It provides a safe space to recognize areas of vulnerability as well as privileges, and engage in collective meaning-making of these experiences. The session also includes a discussion around historical policies and social contexts, which reflect structural forms of prejudice. At the end, participants share their perspectives on being cognizant of one's power and privileges and structural forms of prejudice, while working with communities (especially marginalized populations).

Activity 1: Warm-up (5-7 minutes)

Personal Identity: Use one adjective to describe yourself, briefly explain why, and how it helps you in your with community. (If it's a small group, everyone shares with whole group. If it's a big group, ask them to discuss with a partner (Pair Share), and elicit a few responses).



Clarify that this was an example of our personal identity. Today, what we are going to discuss is social identity. Ask the group to volunteer and share expectations that they have about the session.

Explain the session goals, and ask if there are any questions.

Participants will:

- Identify ways in which different aspects of their identity and experiences shape who they are
- Analyze how social norms and historical policies benefit/benefited certain groups over the other
- Acknowledge areas of vulnerability and privileges with reference to their social identity
- Demonstrate willingness to reflect on their roles as bystanders, allies, and advocates while working with communities

Activity 2: Ground Rules for respectful conversation (10 minutes)

Explain that conversations around social identity could be sensitive, especially when we talk about its connection to power and privilege. These conversations push us to examine policies and practices from diverse perspectives, and how they affect different groups (especially marginalized groups). Our conversation may not bring a concrete “Yes



or No” type solution, but has the potential to develop our ability to listen and learn, and strengthen our commitment to a just society. It is a process through which we can grow.

- How do we ensure that our conversation is respectful and that everyone feels safe to share their perspectives and experiences?
 - “I Feel safe when...” post-it note - (In other words, what expectation do I have from the group if and when I share a point of view?) OR
 - “I promise to ...” (What will I do to create a safe environment for my peers and me?)

Ground Rules for respectful dialogue:

e.g. use I statements,

I will let the other person finish (without interrupting),

I will ask questions for clarity

I will avoid blaming / judging / assuming

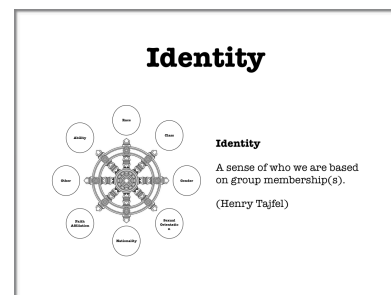
I will critique the statement not the person

I will use facts and my own experience to share my point of view

Activity 3: Social Identity Wheel (20 minutes)

Distribute (edited) copies of Social Identity Wheel. Ask if participants need explanation about or have questions about any aspects of one’s identity (race, class, gender).

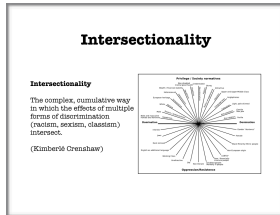
Identity Definition on the slide: A sense of who we are based on group membership(s). By Henry Tajfel



- Each identity aspect is posted on different walls of the room (race, class, gender).
- Give participants 2-3 minutes to review or fill out the worksheet (I identify as...)
- Ask participants to highlight one aspect of their identities that they think about most often, and walk to the respective poster, representing that aspect of the identity.
- Ask participants (in the same group) to discuss why they think about this aspect of their identity most often. For example, gender is the most prominent aspect of their identity, then they could discuss why they think about it most often (e.g. everyday experiences, experiences in the work place, family influence, media influence). They could also discuss group norms and “outliers.” Some groups could volunteer to share with the whole group.
- Now ask participants about an aspect of their identities that they think about the least, and explain why. Could it be because they are in positions of power in that area, and do not face struggles? Other reasons could be that despite being in a “marginalized” group, they feel safe and empowered due to having a safety net (i.e. support from friends and family) or that part of their identity is not clearly visible (e.g. religion).
- Ask them to share areas in which they feel vulnerability and the ones in which they acknowledge positions of power. Also, ask what their process is like to acknowledge and be at

peace with who they are. Some may share their experiences and some may share that they are still grappling with it. Remind them that it is okay to be where they are. It is a process to understand interconnected nature of social categorizations (race, class, gender) that contribute to our experiences (privilege or oppression).

Activity 4 - Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Oppression (20-25 minutes)

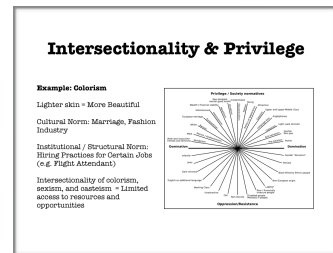


Definition of Intersectionality: The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (racism, sexism, classism) intersect. (Kimberlé Crenshaw)

Definition of privilege: Privilege is socially granted, unearned advantages accorded to some people and not others. Privilege is connected to cultural / social as well as structural forms of bias/isms.

Give examples of **Colorism and Casteism in India** to explain cultural and structural norms that reflect bias/prejudice

Cultural Norm: E.g. Lighter skin = Beauty, Norm promoted by Fashion industry

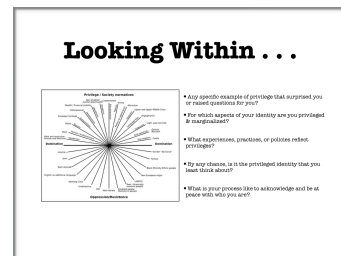


Institutional Norm for certain jobs, for example, flight attendants or fashion models = preference for individuals with lighter skin

Historical & Current policies reflecting Structural Bias in terms of Casteism: limited educational access and poor quality of education for students who identify as “Dalits.”

Institutional Policy: Today, even though it is unconstitutional to discriminate based on caste, gender, religion etc., certain companies or institutions may not hire “Dalits” or may not rent homes to minorities (Dalits or religious minorities).

Intersectionality example: In context of the above, if a person has darker skin, is a female, and identifies as “Dalit,” she may face struggles in terms of access to job opportunities and/or compensation.



Distribute copies of the worksheets - “Examples of Privilege.” Give them three to four minutes to read and highlight areas of privilege. Clarify that it is not something to be defensive about or to feel bad about. It is a process of acknowledging our privileges due to whatever social norms,

practices, and policies. Ask if there is any specific example of privilege that surprised them or raised questions.

Activity 5: Historical Policies & Practices

I. Looking Beyond . . .

Race & Immigration: Historical Policies and Social Practices

- The 1790 Naturalization Act: The law provides that “free white persons” who have resided in the United States for at least two years may be granted citizenship, so long as they demonstrate good moral character and swear allegiance to the Constitution.
- 1800s: Slavery
- 1850s: Anti-Irish Sentiments
- 1882: Chinese Exclusion Act
- 1942-45: Japanese Internment Camps

Source: Migration Policy Institute and Brookings Institution. © Brookings Institution.

- Explain that first we looked within to understand how our identities are developed. Now, we will look “beyond” to see policies and practices of the past and present.
- Give three to four examples and ask:
- How do these policies and practices shape “marginalized” groups’ experiences?

Activity 6: Bonner Students’ Experiences - How will your identity/intersectionality play a role in working with community?

Explain that when we work in communities, people will approach us differently based on their experiences and perceptions of group privileges. Ask participants to read these quotes (Bonner students’ community engagement experiences) and discuss how these students identified areas of privileges and vulnerabilities. Ask participants what they would do if they were in these situations and how they would navigate their roles as allies or advocates.

Our Role in Communities

Student A

At my site, while the goal was to help kids ‘develop’ skills to navigate an education system designed to leave them behind, we were often holding students accountable for being pushed out of school, instead of holding the systems accountable.

“It’s not okay to be encouraging people to find strength and resilience without adjusting the institutions and structural conditions that deny us the support we need.”

Our Role in Communities

Student B

One specific experience I had was during my service trip to a rural area in West Virginia. As a Latina woman, I was something that is never seen in West Virginia. I experienced judgement while there by locals, but the best part was being able to talk to them and express ourselves. They explained to me why they looked at me a certain way . . .

We were able to listen and be heard. It is something that needs to happen more often . . .

Our Role in Communities

Student C

I never really thought about where I lived. Well, that all changed when I got selected to teach my own ESL/Pre-Employment class to about 30 adult refugees. . .

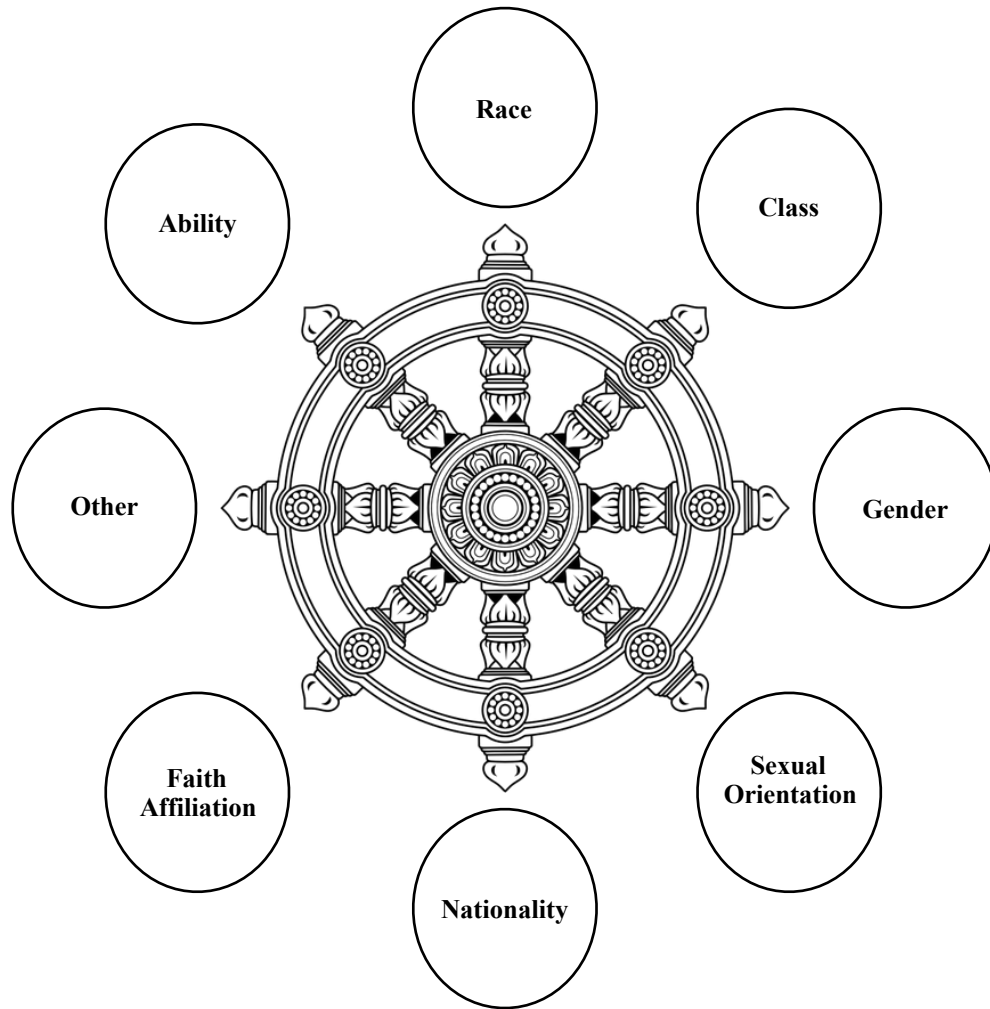
Being a child of former immigrants, I just felt connection with them. . . I felt a strong need to be an ally for them. I knew how hard it was for people to try to start their life in a country that does not truly value them yet. I started getting involved in community events, such as town hall meetings and community initiatives in order to be just a better resource for my students. I learned about the issues that they faced such as food insecurity and limited public transportation. . . I worked with city Hall as an intern . . .

Activity 7: Confronting the White Elephant

Distribute copies of the handout - “Confronting the White Elephant: White Privilege in Social Services.” It’s an excerpt from Brittany Alfarano’s article. Explain that though the article focuses on white privilege, it would be helpful to look at our positions of power and privileges from various aspects of our identity. Give participants two minutes to skim through the list, and then ask them to respond to the questions:

- Considering the community members / groups you work with, how will your positions of power influence your collaboration with them?
- What will you need to do to earn trust? (Helpful vs. harmful practices)
- In which situations would you play different roles (bystander, ally, advocate)?
- Any questions or comments?

Handout 1 Social Identity Wheel



• **Identities you think about most often:**

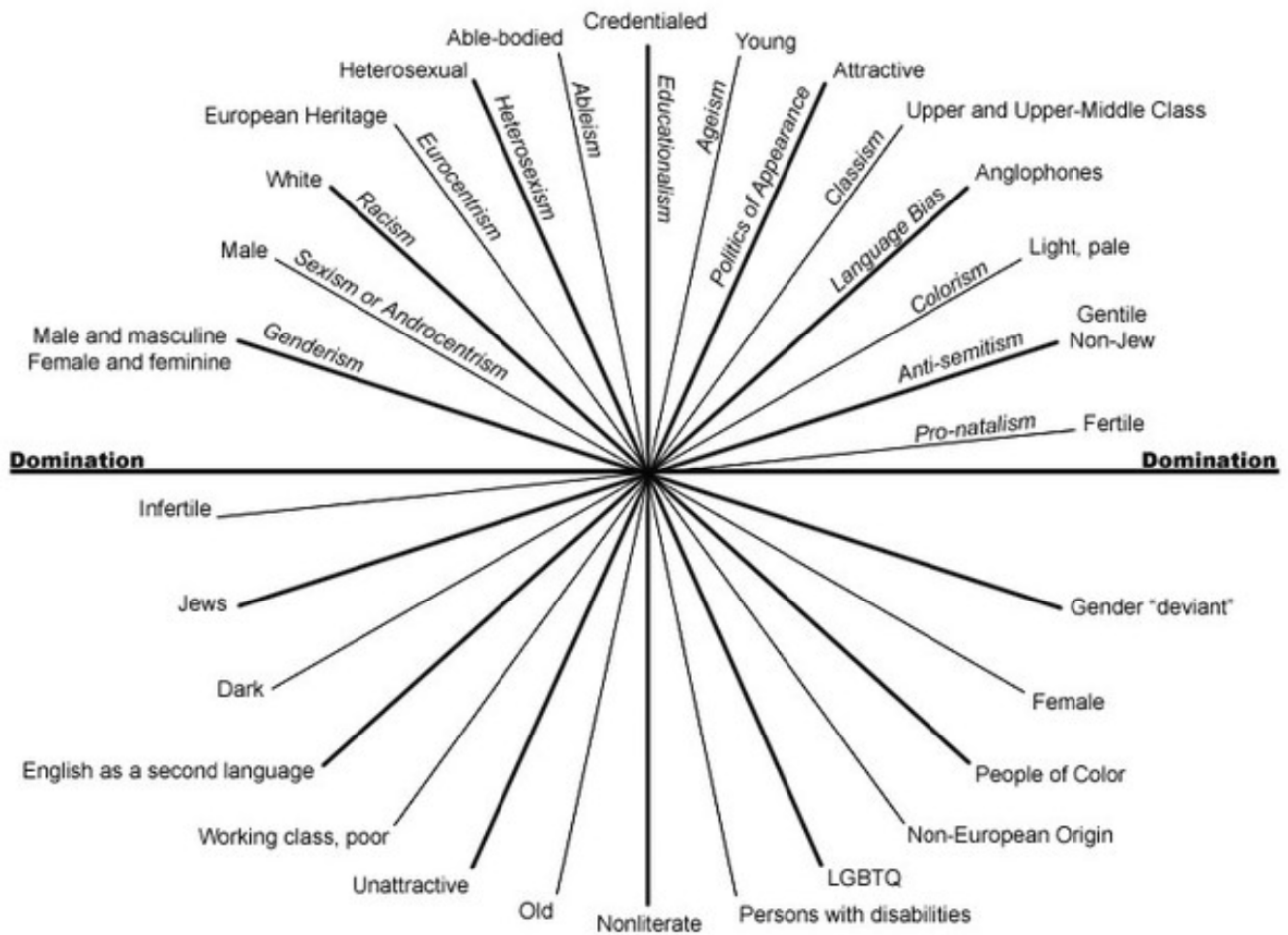
• **Identities you think about least often:**

Source: Adapted from: <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/2017/08/16/social-identity-wheel/>

Handout 2 Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Oppression

Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Oppression

*Adapted from Kathryn Pauly Morgan, "Describing the Emperor's New Clothes: Three Myths of Educational (In)Equality,"
The Gender Question in Education: Theory, Pedagogy & Politics, Ann Diller et al., Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996.*



Source: https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/139052/_PARENT/CC_layout_details/false

Handout 3

Examples of Privilege

Ability Privilege

- I can easily find housing that is accessible to me, with no barriers to my mobility.
- I can be reasonably assured that I won't be late for meetings due to mobility barriers.
- I do not have to fear being assaulted because of my ability status.
- I know that my income can increase based on my performance; I do not have to face a court battle to get an increase in my income.
- People of my disability status are not generally considered burdensome to our families or to tax-payers.
- I am never told that I should not have children lest I pass on the genes that cause them to share my ability status.

Christian Privilege in the U.S.

- I can expect to have time off work to celebrate religious holidays.
- A bumper sticker supporting my religion won't likely lead to my car being vandalized.
- I can practice my religious customs without being questioned, mocked, or inhibited.
- Politicians can make decisions citing my faith without being labeled as extremists.
- Disclosing my faith to an adoption agency will not likely prevent me from being able to adopt children.
- I can be polite, gentle, or peaceful, and not be considered an "exception" to those practicing my faith.

Cisgender Privilege

- My gender is an option on forms.
- I can use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation, or arrest.
- I can access gender exclusive spaces such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival or Greek Life, and not be excluded due to my trans status.
- I don't have to convince my parents of my true gender and/or have to earn my parents' and siblings' love and respect all over again.
- I can easily find role models and mentors to emulate who share my identity.
- I can reasonably assume that my ability to acquire a job, rent an apartment, or secure a job will not be denied on the basis of my gender identity/expression.

Socio-economic Status Privilege

- I buy what I need and want without worry. I can afford luxury items easily.
- I do not fear being hungry or homeless.
- I can live where I choose and can move when and where I choose, and expect that I will be welcomed there.
- I am believed to be innocent by the criminal justice system at least until proven guilty.
- I could probably advance my career or social contacts' career by pulling strings.
- I can get a loan / mortgage at a bank with little nuisance.

US Citizenship Privilege

- Most if not all of the time, I am able to surround myself with people who share a common or collective history, who understand the norms of U.S. society, who speak the same language that I do, and who understand my culture.
- I assume everybody wants to live in the U.S., since I have been trained to believe is the best place to live (even without universal health care).
- I can unknowingly assume everyone wants the USA to help them.
- If a police officer pulls me over, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my perceived immigration status.
- I don't have to constantly worry that a small misstep could lead to my deportation, even if I currently have legal papers to be in the U.S. I can apply for a passport that will allow me to travel back and forth to most countries in the world.
- I can think nothing of crossing the border to visit Tijuana, Mexico, for a day of shopping and sightseeing, while Mexican citizens must qualify economically to obtain even a tourist visa to enter the U.S., and there are a great many who do not qualify.

White Privilege (<http://crc-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/white-privilege.pdf>)

- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about "Civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial responsibility.
- I am never asked to speak for all of the people of my race.
- I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested and self-seeking.
- I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.

Source: <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/2017/08/24/1322/>

Handout 4

Bonner Students' Community Engagement Experiences

Student A

At my site, while the goal was to help kids 'develop' skills to navigate an education system designed to leave them behind, we were often holding students accountable for being pushed out of school, instead of holding the systems accountable.

“It’s not okay to be encouraging people to find strength and resilience without adjusting the institutions and structural conditions that deny us the support we need.”

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Student C

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Handout 5

Confronting White Elephant: White Privilege in Social Services.

It's After observing other white social workers' practices and reflecting on my own, the following is a list of some ways in which white social workers may be unintentionally perpetuating white privilege:

- by discussing only individual rather than structural acts of racism with clients and supervisors;
- by failing to acknowledge how systems are marginalizing and oppressing our clients of color and understanding the construction of these systems;
- by seeing our clients for their experiences with oppressive systems and not acknowledging the intention of oppressive systems, who oversees them, etc.;
- by thinking that by bringing this into the conversation, we are creating conflict (so we avoid it);
- by thinking that it's unprofessional to talk about this with clients and supervisors;
- by telling our clients how to act and what appropriate language to use in meetings/interviews because of what we consider the norm (enforcing assimilation);
- by speaking for our clients in professional situations because we think we will be better received;
- by working within agencies whose administrators and people in supervisory positions are mostly white;
- by blocking out the history of oppression and racism in the United States because it is uncomfortable to think about;
- by becoming offended and dismissive when clients talk about their experience with white privilege;
- by practicing ethnocentrism and determining all behaviors, beliefs, language, etc., of clients that are not the cultural norm for whites as "different" or "other"; and
- by assuming that just because we are social workers, we are doing good and have good intentions so we chose not to acknowledge privilege.

Source: Brittany Alfarano, MSW - https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/exc_0618.shtml

Discussion Questions:

- Considering the community members / groups you work with, how will your positions of power influence your collaboration with them?
- What will you need to do to earn trust? (Helpful vs. harmful practices)
- In which situations would you play different roles (bystander, ally, advocate)?
- Any questions or comments?