

Class 7 Facilitation

Goals

- To help students examine personal values, biases and attitudes that they hold about race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability and other identities and recognize how these values and attitudes influence their decision making, particularly in regard to supporting community, creating resident programs and supporting students
- To help explore and critically analyze various readings and exercises on difference/justice/injustice and apply what is learned in facilitating interactions as a staff member in residential communities.
- To explore ways that one resists talking about and seeing privilege enacted individually and in the residential communities.

Outline (30-40m):

1. Opening Circle (5m)
2. Reading Activity (15m [small] + 10m [together]?)
3. "I..." activity (10m on activity + 10-15m discussion)
4. Closing Circle (5m)

Reading: *Johnson, A. (2006). Getting off the hook: Denial and Resistance. Privilege, Power, and Difference. (pp. 108-124). New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Deny and Minimize
 - *Deny* it exists in the first place
 - "Racism and sexism used to be problems, but they aren't anymore."
 - "There are no people with disabilities where I work, so that isn't an issue here."
 - "Affirmative action has actually turned the tables"
 - *Minimize* by acknowledging it exists but then claiming it doesn't amount to much
 - Accusing women and POC of "whining"
 - Privileged people denying validity of others' experiences and imposing own views of reality
 - Ex. of child who falls & scrapes something and adult "now now, it doesn't hurt so much" seems quite good.
- Blame the victim
 - Oppression is blamed on the people who suffer most from it
 - "If black people were smarter or worked harder or got an education, they'd be okay." (and the fact that this view has cultural dominance & will be generally unchallenged).

- Woman being friendly is interpreted as her “wanting” sexual advancements
- Call it something else
 - Call oppression and privilege something else, thereby creating the appearance of being in touch with reality without having to do something about it
 - Men joking about gender inequality is more accepted than joking about racism or anti-Semitism, acc. To the author
 - Author cites another individual’s notion of a “communication struggle” & frames gender inequality being minimized as a patriarchal approach to bridging such a gap.
- It’s better this way
 - Claims that status quo is best, which makes it seem normal and legitimate
 - When POC call attention to racism, they are accused of creating divisions
 - The idea that people prefer to live with their “own kind,” in regards to residential segregation — and how this is a self-fulfilling prophecy by nature of the system, rather than an actual preference expression.
- It doesn’t count if you don’t mean it
 - Only bad intentions lead to bad consequences, and if someone had no malicious intent, there was no negative consequence/effect of their behavior
 - Holding the door for women example
 - A problem of the model where intentions correlate to actual effects; if one has good intentions they cannot be doing bad, and if a bad outcome occurs their intentions were necessarily bad.
- I’m one of the good ones
 - Condemns oppression but simultaneously distances you from/dismisses how you benefit from it
 - “Racism still exists, and it’s a shame there are still racist bigots around... but *I* don’t see color”
- Sick and Tired
 - Respond to discussions of oppression with how tired you are of being reminded of it (and your position of privilege)
 - When race is brought up, whites say they are “sick and tired of hearing about race,” and that it is “always in your face” (hence making them the victims).
- **Getting off the hook by getting on**
 - “Sooner or later, dominant groups must embrace this hook they’re on, not as some terrible affliction or occasion for guilt and shame but as a challenge and an opportunity. It’s where they’ve been, where they are, and where they’re going.”

Opening circle: “What’s one word to describe your spring break, and what’s one word to describe how you’re feeling towards the rest of the semester?”

Reading Activity:

Break up into groups of 3, and go over the reading. Discuss each example that Johnson describes about how people get “off the hook” for their privilege. Each group will focus different sections and explain it to the larger group (with their own examples). We will come back as a larger group and have volunteers briefly explain each section.

Let’s look at how these instances of privilege, power, and difference may affect dynamics in our residential communities and on campus.

Potential Activity:

Hang up different sheets of paper around the room, each with a statement on it. Students will go around and mark on their own handout with Yes or No. The answers will vary based on individual students, and the sheets of paper will have different scenarios of privilege on them. We will have all the scenarios related to college/UMich.

- Examples: *My place of work/school is closed on my major holidays, or I can walk through campus and see many other people of my race .*

Come back together. Were there any that stood out to you? Any that you haven’t thought of before? How did it make you feel? How can we, as ResStaff members, create spaces where our students feel safe and included in our residential communities when they face varying barriers on the larger campus? How can we acknowledge and act on injustice when our own identities vary with different elements of privilege and oppression?

If nothing else, we wanted this activity to show how we all have different barriers, and while some take up a lot of our everyday life, there are others that might not even cross our mind. It is important to walk through the world and question the ways in which our privilege affects our interactions with the world.

Closing circle: “What is one aspect of privilege denial you think could come up in the ResStaff role?” or “In one word, what makes a good RA?”

Statements

- Race
 - *I can walk through campus and see many other people of my race.*
 - *I can enroll in a college course and be sure that the majority of my professors will be of my race.*

- *I can socialize and count on not being the only person of my race in social settings.*
- *I can go to college without having my peers assume I got in because of affirmative action policies or my race.*
- Gender
 - *I do not worry about walking alone at night.*
 - *I do not have to consider my physical safety when going to parties or out with friends.*
 - *I can actively contribute ideas in my classes and be fully credited for them.*
 - *I can always count on finding a restroom of my preference.*
 - *I am not asked questions about my genitals by strangers and acquaintances.*
- Religion
 - *My place of work/school is closed on my major holidays.*
 - *I can easily find a place of worship in town or on campus that subscribes to my belief.*
 - *I can openly discuss my religious practices without worrying about how it will be perceived by my peers.*
 - *I can openly display religious symbols on my body without fear or harassment on campus.*
 - *I can count on the majority of my professors being informed and understanding of my religious needs.*
- Sexuality
 - *I can be pretty sure that my roommate and classmates will be accepting of my sexual orientation.*
 - *I can walk around campus with my partner and not have people stare or do double-takes.*
 - *I can have conversations with acquaintances and peers about my partner without feeling like I have to conceal their gender or my sexuality.*
 - *I can express my sexuality openly without fears of my peers questioning and scrutinizing me.*
- Class
 - *I can afford to attend college without financial aid.*
 - *I am able to purchase any textbooks and school supplies needed/recommended for my classes.*
 - *I don't have to worry about affording effective winter clothing to keep me warm in the winter at U of M.*
 - *I don't have to worry about changes in the costs of tuition.*
 - *I am not able to take a summer off to just take classes or an unpaid internship.*
- Size
 - *I can find clothes that fit my body type at most department stores around campus.*

- *I can sit at almost any desk in a classroom and still be able to write comfortably.*
- *I can eat out with friends without public scrutiny.*
- *I can go to campus gyms without potential harassment or public shaming.*
- *I can listen to lectures without feeling targeted by medicalized, scientific data (like the coverage “obesity epidemic”)*
- Ability
 - *I can easily complete a test without asking for special accommodations from my professors.*
 - *I don't have to worry about receiving comprehensive and inclusive medical care from UHS.*
 - *I can sit anywhere I want in the classroom and still be able to see.*
 - *I never have to worry about having an interpreter present in classes, lectures, and events around campus.*
 - *I do not have to worry about if the snow has been cleared off on the sidewalks to determine if I can attend class in a Michigan winter.*
- Citizenship
 - *My citizenship and immigration status will likely not be questioned in different settings around campus.*
 - *I am able to travel to see my family members during breaks*
 - *I do not need to fear threats of deportation in this political climate*
 - *I am able to focus on school in the United States without worrying about family around the world*
- Others?