

ACTIVITY: MATRIX OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL STATUSES

(ADAPTED FROM TDSJ2, CD APPENDIX 3C)

Preparatory Discussions

This activity is designed to accompany Chapter 1: Conceptual Frameworks reading selections #1 Tatum “The complexity of identity: ‘Who am I?’”, #2 Kirk and Okazawa-Rey “Identities and social locations”, and/or #4 “Theoretical/Conceptual Foundations” where social identities and social locations, positions, and statuses are discussed.

Facilitators will need to help participant students understand the social construct of “social group identity” and the ways in which everyone’s multiple social identities intersect in everyday life (for example, racial identity with class identity, religious identity with racial identity, sexual identity with gender identity, age identity with ability, etc.). As students grasp the intersections between at least 2 identities, facilitators might want to add a third (for example, racial identity with religious and class identities) and then a fourth (compounded by gender identity) and a fifth (sexual orientation).

It is helpful to note during these discussions that “disadvantaged” identities are usually more noticeable to people than “privileged” identities, since “privilege” is often accepted as the norm. This discussion provides a transition to the next step, which involves social location, position, status. Facilitators will need to provide numerous examples (based on the readings in this chapter) to explore social location, position, status, noting that these are relatively (not absolutely) privileged or disadvantaged. (Selections #3 Johnson “The social construction of difference” and #5 Young “Five faces of oppression” may be especially helpful in clarifying social location, position, status, although there are multiple examples in #1 and #2 as well.) The chart below suggests that this is a continuum and that some people see themselves in a “middle position.”

THE MATRIX OF OPPRESSION

Facilitators can use this chart to help participants locate their social identities and their relative locations or positions, as advantaged or privileged, or as disadvantaged or targeted.

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| Social Identity Categories | Privileged Social Groups | Border Social Groups | Targeted Social Groups | Ism |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|-------------------------|
| Race | White People | Biracial People (White/Latino, Black, Asian) | Asian, Black, Latino, Native People | Racism |
| Sex | Bio Men | Transsexual, Intersex People | Bio Women | Sexism |
| Gender | Gender Conforming Bio Men And Women | Gender Ambiguous Bio Men and Women | Transgender, Genderqueer, Intersex People | Transgender Oppression |
| Sexual Orientation | Heterosexual People | Bisexual People | Lesbians, Gay Men | Heterosexism |
| Class | Rich, Upper Class People | Middle Class People | Working Class, Poor People | Classism |
| Ability/Disability | Temporarily Able Bodied People | People with Temporary Disabilities | People with Disabilities | Ableism |
| Religion | Protestants | Roman Catholic (historically) | Jews, Muslims, Hindus | Religious Oppression |
| Age | Adults | Young Adults | Elders, Young People | Ageism/Adultism |
| list of social group identities | My social identities | Social status for this identity | examples | Intersections, comments |
| racial identity | | | | |
| sex | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| sexual orientation | | | | |
| class | | | | |

Matrix of Oppression

Matrix of Oppression

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My soCial iDEnTiTy Profile: ParTiCiPanT WorkshEET

Participants are asked to work along, using the following Worksheet to figure out their social group identities and their statuses, with examples. The “prompts” are in the left-hand column, with a column marked “other” so that this remains an open, not a closed, discussion.

facilitation notes: Discussions about ethnicity or national origins can be tied back to the social construction of race, whereby Irish-Americans are seen as White, Afro-Caribbeans or Latinos/as are seen as people of color, and most (Ashkenazy) Jews are White in the US (but were people of color in 19th–20th century Europe). Multiracial or bi-racial participants may be asked to consider whether multiraciality is experienced by them as a “middle position” or as an advantaged or disadvantaged identity—or whether that differs in context. It is important that participants understand the fluidity of some identities, depending on visibility and on context.

The Worksheet also asks them to provide examples of ways in which social identities may intersect in specific context—and whether those intersections involved different statuses as well—as well as add comments.

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| list of social group identities | My social identities | Social status for this identity | examples | Intersections, comments |
|--|-----------------------------|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|
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