

Appendix 2: Social Identity Worksheet

The purpose of this exercise is to map out different domains of your social identity (i.e., social group membership) and to reflect on how these domains intersect with one another to shape your life experiences. We are socialized into seeing oppressive social relations and structures (e.g., personal bias, social prejudice, institutional discrimination, inequitable social structures) based on social group memberships as natural and normal. As McIntosh (2003) describes her white privilege as, “an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p. 191), when we belong to a privileged social group, it is especially difficult to recognize our own privilege. Privilege is often unearned, unasked for, and invisible benefits and advantages available to members of the privileged group (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2007).

The goal of this exercise is not to assess how privileged or marginalized you are. The exercise does not fully capture or define who you are, and doing so is not its goal, either. Almost all of us have some experiences of privilege and some of marginalization, and these experiences are relative to context. In addition, different social identities will be perceived more or less salient to yourself and others, influencing your worldviews and interpersonal interactions, and what becomes more or less salient depends on the context (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Tharp, 2012). For example, a white working-class male may experience marginalization in Canadian society because of his socio-economic class, but his socio-economic condition may be still privileged relative to another country setting. In another setting, his race may become a more salient aspect of his identity than class.

Moreover, it is important to be mindful of the intersectional nature of our social identities (Hardiman et al., 2007; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). One aspect of our identity seldom acts independent of the other aspects. Rather, different aspects of our identity interrelate with one another to shape a unique experience for each of us. In other words, those who share one identity domain, such as all those who are male, do not necessarily experience male privilege in the same way or extent because of the other identity domains that they do not share.

Despite these complexities of our social identities, we need to begin with articulating and reflecting on implicit, as well as explicit, domains of our identity to understand how we are positioned in society and how it shapes our life experience.

Instructions

1. Write your identity in Column B corresponding to each identity domain in Column A.
2. In the top row on Column C, write the places where you live now (and lived as a child, if it is different from where you live now).
3. For each identity domain on Column B, consider if it puts you in a position of privilege or marginalization. Write “P” for privilege and “M” for marginalization on Column C.
4. Proceed to Reflection Questions.

Reflection Questions

1. Considering all your social identities listed in the table above, on a daily basis, which ones are you most aware or conscious of? You can pick more than one domain if you want.
 - a) Most aware/conscious of:

 - b) What do you appreciate about or gain from that identity?

 - c) What is the most negative or difficult thing about that identity?

2. Considering all your social identities listed in the table above, on a daily basis, which ones are you least aware or conscious of? You can pick more than one domain if you want.
 - a) Least aware/conscious of:

 - b) What do you appreciate about or gain from that identity?

 - c) What is the most negative or difficult thing about that identity?

3. What stood out most to you in this exercise? Why?

4. What would you like to know more about or explore further?

Note: These reflection questions were adopted from Diane J. Goodman (dianejgood@aol.com) and UBC Peer Program Training Modules: Diversity & Intercultural Communication 2008/09.