

Recognizing Bias and Privilege



Facilitation Protocol

Standards

Recognizing Bias and Privilege;

-> that is, perceiving one's own prejudices and cultivating the ability to identify privilege both in oneself and in others, including in everyday institutional functioning, as well as recognizing the impact of the foregoing on society and its internal dynamics and relationships.

SDG Connection: 5, 10, 16

Format

This lesson is designed for small group, and/or full class discussions to occur over 1 50-minute session.

Materials

- N/A

Purpose

It is natural to hold stereotypes about others. As we grow up in families, communities, and spaces where historical stereotypes have grown over centuries, we unknowingly internalize many beliefs about others and their culture, social norms, and way of life. In this lesson, we will examine why and how we hold biases (and how we can counteract them). Further, we'll examine power and privilege, understanding why our biases and stereotypes may be intensified toward certain groups who have historically not held power and been denied opportunities.

Empathize

To start off, let's define six key terms:

Bias: Bias is judgment or prejudice against a thing, person, or group, versus another. For example, believing that a group of people are less good or capable at something. This bias can also be reversed, believing that a group is *more* good or capable.

Stereotype: Stereotypes are widely held beliefs that oversimplify ideas and cast a wide net that everyone from a certain group acts or does a certain thing. For example, believing that all people of a certain gender are _____.

Privilege: Privilege is a certain right or advantage as a result of one's background (and the stereotypes and biases of their group). For example, wealthy people tend to have privilege as people treat them with additional respect as they tend to hold power.

Power: Power, in the context of these terms, refers to certain actions that one group can take because of their privilege. For example, being able to enter certain spaces without being questioned or stand up for oneself in a meeting without ample objection.

Allyship: Allyship is where someone who has relative power and privilege becomes a partner with those who do not. Allies take time to reflect on their privileges and seek to better understand themselves and others.

Accomplices: Accomplices are a step further than allies, putting their power and privilege at-risk to demand better conditions and treatment of those without power and privilege.

Consider...

What stereotypes exist against young people? In your life as a young person, what are stereotypes that people hold against you?

What power and privilege do you have as a young person?* Who, if anyone, has more power and privilege?

Depending on your background, you may hold less power and privilege due to other demographic groups you identify with. This concept is called **intersectionality, where certain elements of your background provide power/privilege, and others detract from it.*

What would be an example of being an ally?

E.g. taking time to learn about white privilege, recognizing that many racial groups have been discriminated against in the past (such as the legacy of slavery)

What then, would be an example of being an accomplice?

E.g. standing up for someone at school who you feel was unfairly targeted because of their race, even if it meant getting in trouble

Activity

In order to better understand the biases, power, and privileges we hold, we'll analyze different scenarios.

Note that the purpose of activities like this is *not* to feel shame for having relative power or privilege, nor to harm those who do not. These are historical concepts that are part of the human experience that *everyone* has. Instead, purposes of activities like this are to reflect on who one is so we can consider possibilities for a more just and holistic future.

In each of the following scenarios, *background* refers to demographic information about yourself, such as your race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, ethnicity, age, and more.

The following situations may be difficult to talk about with students. Students should never be forced to share or show their responses to questions like these, nor respond to prompts due to their background. (This would be against the entire point of an activity like this!) However, if students are comfortable sharing their responses and/or responses to the later questions, this will lead to a rich discussion.

Scenarios	
Growing up, did you have easy access to gifts, fun toys, and family activities?	
Have you ever felt like someone was watching you as being "out of place"? As in, they felt like you, specifically, may do something wrong?	
Is it easy for you to make friends who have similar backgrounds to you? Is it easy to find others who have similar backgrounds?	
When learning about school subjects, do you often find people like you represented?	
Have you ever been asked to provide an opinion based on your background? Such as: What would a girl think about this? What would someone from Mexico think about this? etc.	

Has someone ever assumed something about you due to your background, such as a language you speak or custom you practice?	
When talking to a superior, such as a teacher or manager at a business, are they typically someone from your background?	
Has anyone ever questioned if you should have access to a public facility, such as a restroom, drinking fountain, library, or park?	
When shopping, is it easy to find products that feature and advertise your background?	
If you ever got in trouble for something, can you assume that people would focus on the facts rather than something about your background?	

Then consider...

Why might it matter, in the context of what we're talking about in this lesson, to be able to easily find other people with similar backgrounds to yourself?

People who struggle to have others to connect with may feel isolated or alone, or may be more likely to be targeted.

Why might it matter, in the context of what we're talking about in this lesson, to not assume that someone can speak for their entire background, such as their entire race or religion?

Although sometimes well-intentioned, asking someone to speak for their entire background is an unfair presumption about the person's background and exacerbates stereotypes.

If you're answering "no" to most of these questions, and are struggling to come up with an answer, why might that be?

This is a great example of privilege – if someone rarely feels like they apply to these scenarios, that means they are privileged.

Should you feel bad about not being able to answer yes to these questions?

No! Holding privilege and power isn't a point of shame. It is an opportunity to recognize it will

be easier to help others.






Likewise, should you feel bad about being able to easily answer these questions?

No! These are historical stereotypes that are unfair and unjust, and are something we're working to solve as a society.

How does an activity like this help identify power and privilege? Why may this be good information to know?

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Reflect

How would you rate your understanding of this concept? <i>Place an "X" in the corresponding box below.</i>				
				

How has your understanding of this concept changed as a result of this lesson?

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Which individual or community actions could this activity inspire?

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What is bias? Likewise, what is privilege? Why would it matter to understand these terms?

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Take it Further

<p>Community Connection</p> <p>What local sites are vital to your own cultural heritage or those of others in your community or region? Research or visit these to understand their impact and importance!</p>	<p>Take Action</p> <p>It can be a very difficult step to analyze bias and privilege in your daily life. Take time to learn about something specific that you hold a stereotype about. Analyze why you hold these beliefs and prepare a report on how they've changed as you've investigated further.</p>	<p>Take Action</p> <p>Are there economic practices that put cultural or environmental heritage at risk of being damaged or lost? What can be done to mitigate those concerns and preserve our cultural and environmental heritage?</p>
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Media

<p><u>Advancing and Empowering the Lives of LGBTQIA+ Students</u> (Podcast)</p> <p>This podcast episode discusses current challenges LGBTQ youth are facing and what allyship looks like, especially for teachers. How can we make our schools and classrooms safe and welcoming places for LGBTQ students?</p>	<p><u>The Guide to Allyship</u> (Resource)</p> <p>An open source starter guide to help you become a more thoughtful and effective ally.</p>	<p><u>Inclusion Revolution: The Essential Guide to Dismantling Racial Inequity in the Workplace</u> (Book)</p> <p>"Racial inequality in the workplace is a problem we can solve. Inclusion Revolution offers the necessary tools for managers to address issues of race, power, and exclusion, to build change that lasts. Because through the best teams, companies can finally create a stronger future."</p>
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Extend

<p>Language Arts</p> <p>Our present conversations around race can get stuck in a reflexive defensiveness of language. What is structural racism? What is actually meant by white privilege? <u>This article</u></p>	<p>Mathematics</p> <p><u>This is a powerful article</u> from mathematics educator and author Sunil Singh on the Western narrative entrenched in mathematics education. Whose cultural</p>
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<p>from Learning for Justice unpacks the history of the term and action steps to do better.</p>	<p>narrative is the narrative of mathematics? Why do more children know about Newton than, say, Brahmagupta?</p>
<p>Science</p> <p>Consider the science of how stereotypes are formed. Are these natural occurrences? How are they unlearned? What is the purpose of stereotyping and why is it important to break away from them?</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Learn about the story of the teacher, Jane Elliot, who conducted a controversial elementary school experiment where she favored students with certain hair colors over others (and documented how the students responded).</p>
<p>Art</p> <p>Learn about how art can be used to intentionally break apart stereotypes. Music, dance, and traditional art all have the power to counteract stereotypes and make people think abstractly and critically about a multitude of issues.</p>	<p>Physical Education</p> <p>Consider the impact of stereotypes and biases in regards to gender, disability, race, religion, and more in regards to sports and competitions. Why do people hold these viewpoints? What can be done to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and justly?</p>