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**Agenda**

- Welcome/norms/expectations
- "Different worlds" activity
- Privilege activity jigsaw
- Group discussion

Content warning: sexual assault, sexism, classism, racism

**Resources**

- [Session slides](#)
- [https://www.everydaysocialjustice.com/home](https://www.everydaysocialjustice.com/home) - PCC Women's Studies faculty Jimena Alvarado's open resource materials
Session materials

Defining Privilege

The origins of the term "privilege" can be traced back to the 1930s, when WEB DuBois wrote about the "psychological wage" that allowed whites to feel superior to black people. In 1988, Peggy McIntosh fleshed out the idea of privilege in a paper called "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies."

We can define privilege as a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group. Society grants privilege to people because of certain aspects of their identity. Aspects of a person’s identity can include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, geographical location, ability, and religion, to name a few.

Jigsaw activity

We will explore the concepts of privilege more deeply together.

Getting Ready at Your Home Table:

- Assign each person at your home table a number from 1 to 5.
- You’ll see numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on tables around the room.
- When prompted, move to a table with your assigned number (be sure to join some colleagues)
- You’ll return to your home table to share what you’ve learned soon!

At Your Concept Table:

- Choose one table member to watch the time. Use a kind, supportive signal when it’s time to move on.
- [~2 min] Read your table's privilege excerpt. Write down (or type up) how that privilege concept surfaces in your personal or professional life.
- [~6 min] In turn, share at least one observation with your group. Give each other one minute each. Be sure to listen to your colleagues.
• [~4 min] As a group, discuss how you'll help your colleagues at your home table understand this idea about privilege.
  ○ Write down a takeaway for your home table.

At Your Home Table:
• Welcome back to your "home" - choose a person to manage kind, supportive timing so that all table members have an opportunity to speak and listen
• [~10 minutes] In turn, take two minutes each to share your concept table takeaway with your home table.

CONCEPTS FOR TABLES 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
These concepts are from Sian Ferguson's piece *Privilege 101*, edited for this learning activity. When you have time and energy, we recommend reading Ferguson's whole piece.

CONCEPT 1: PRIVILEGE IS THE OTHER SIDE OF OPPRESSION
It's often easier for folks to notice oppression than privilege. It's definitely easier to notice the oppression you personally experience than the privileges you experience since being mistreated is likely to leave a bigger impression on you than being treated fairly.

So consider the ways in which you are oppressed:

• How are you disadvantaged because of the way society treats aspects of your identity?
• Are you a woman?
• Are you disabled?
• Does your sexuality fall under the queer umbrella?
• Are you poor?
• Do you have a mental illness or a learning disability?
• Are you a person of color?
• Are you gender non-conforming?
All of these things could make life difficult because society disenfranchises people who fit into those social groups. We call this *oppression*.

- But what about the people society doesn’t disenfranchise?
- What about the people society empowers at our expense?

We call that *privilege*.

**CONCEPT 2: UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE IN THE CONTEXT OF POWER SYSTEMS**

Society is affected by a number of different power systems: patriarchy, white supremacy, *heterosexism*, *cissexism*, and classism — to name a few. These systems interact together in one giant system called the *kyriarchy*.

Key considerations about privilege that result from living within a kyriarchy:

- Privileged groups have power over oppressed groups.
- Privileged people are more likely to be in positions of power – for example, they’re more likely to dominate politics, be economically well-off, have influence over the media, and hold executive positions in companies.
- Privileged people can use their positions to benefit people like themselves – in other words, other privileged people.

Why is this important to understand?

- Privilege doesn’t go both ways. Female privilege does not exist because women don’t have institutional power. Similarly, Black privilege, trans privilege, and poor privilege don’t exist because those groups do not have institutional power.
- People often look at privilege individually rather than systemically. While individual experiences are important, we have to try to understand privilege in terms of systems and social patterns.

**CONCEPT 3: PRIVILEGE AND OPPRESSION AFFECT EACH OTHER, BUT THEY DON’T NEGATE EACH OTHER**

The interaction between different aspects of our identities is often referred to as an *intersection*. The term *intersectionality* was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who used it to describe the experiences of black women.

Some examples of intersectionality include:
• While all women experience sexism, the sexism that black women experience is unique in that it is informed by racism.

• Mental illness is often stigmatized. As a mentally-ill woman, [writer Sian Ferguson] was told that [her] post-traumatic stress disorder was “just PMS” and a result of “being an over-sensitive woman.” This is an intersection between ableism and misogyny.

Often, people believe that they can’t experience privilege because they also experience oppression. A common example is the idea that poor white people don’t experience white privilege because they are poor.

Let’s look at the example of people who are both poor and white:

• Being white means that you have access to resources which could help you survive. You’re more likely to have a support network of relatively well-off people. You can use these networks to look for a job.

• Being poor is an oppression, yes, but this doesn’t cancel out the fact that you can still benefit from white privilege.

• A poor black person, on the other hand, will not have access to those resources, is unlikely to be of the same race as people in power, and is more likely to be harmed by racial prejudice.

So: Being white and poor is hard, but being black and poor is harder.

As Phoenix Calida wrote:

“Privilege simply means that under the exact same set of circumstances you’re in, life would be harder without your privilege. Being poor is hard. Being poor and disabled is harder. Being a woman is hard. Being a trans woman is harder. Being a white woman is hard, being a woman of color is harder. Being a black man is hard, being a gay black man is harder.”

**CONCEPT 4: PRIVILEGE DESCRIBES WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD EXPERIENCE**

A male acquaintance of [writer Sian Ferguson] initially struggled to understand the concept of privilege. He once said to me, “Men don’t often experience gender-based street harassment, but that’s not a privilege. It’s something everyone should expect.”

Correct. Everyone should expect to be treated that way. Everyone has a right to be treated that way. The problem is that certain people aren’t treated that way.
To illustrate:

- Nobody should be treated as if they are untrustworthy based on their race.
- But often, people of color – particularly Black people – are distrusted because of prejudice towards their race.

**Concept 5: Privilege doesn’t mean you didn’t work hard**

Many people think that having privilege means you have had an easy life. As such, they feel personally attacked when people point out their privilege. To them, it feels as if someone is saying that they haven’t worked hard or endured any difficulties.

But this is not what privilege means:

- You can be privileged and still have a difficult life. Privilege doesn’t mean that your life is easy, but rather that it’s easier than others.
- Privilege simply means that you don’t have to face the obstacles others have to endure.
- It means that life is more difficult for those who don’t have the systemic privilege you have.
Social location map

Remember that these categories are social constructions, so they are completely arbitrary. For the simplicity of the map, each category is VERY oversimplified and presented in binary ways, erasing the complexities of all of them. For now, we're going to start simple to get our heads around the concepts before we bring in the complexity, but be aware that there is a lot of GREY that is erased in the black and white.

**Sometimes you may not fit neatly into either category, that’s ok.** The list is not complete, but it lets us start a conversation about patterns that will be useful for discussing other identities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Agents</th>
<th>Visible</th>
<th>Non-visible</th>
<th>Adds-up</th>
<th>Cut-off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman, Homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, Asexual</td>
<td>Man, Heterosexual</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender, non-binary, intersex</td>
<td>Cisgender, Temporarily able-bodied</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person of color</td>
<td>White, Light skin</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark skin</td>
<td>Indigenous (Native American)</td>
<td>Descendant of colonizing group</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income/ Working class</td>
<td>Middle/upper class</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st generation college graduate</td>
<td>Descendant of college graduates</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious, but non-Christian</td>
<td>Christian (any denomination that celebrates Christ)</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older adult/ child</td>
<td>Of “productive” age 20-50</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, Large size, “overweight”</td>
<td>Thin</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>US-born</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No immigration documents</td>
<td>Citizen, resident, visa</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originally from an exploited, colonized country</td>
<td>From a colonizing/rich country (USA, Europe, Canada, etc)</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English not 1st language</td>
<td>English as 1st language</td>
<td>👀</td>
<td>🙄</td>
<td>🖤</td>
<td>🖤</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The columns and symbols on the right are referring to patterns that can be similar across different oppressions. Again, they will not be identical, or apply in every scenario, but they give us a way to connect and empathize across identities. See the legend on the back of the map. **Reference: Erving Goffman’s book *Stigma.***
These are some ways that you can work with this tool. Start at the beginning, but if you feel ready to move on, keep going down the list. Take lots of notes -- your brain will TRY to forget!

1. Go through the list and notice where you are located on each of the categories. If you want to mark your identities on the sheet you can, but you don’t HAVE to. This handout is yours, please bring it back for the rest of the term. Notice which of your identities are in the left column, and which ones are on the right.

2. Gather in groups of three to talk about what you found and your impressions.

3. Choose ONE oppression in which you are ALL TARGETS (ex: if you’re all people of color you may try working with racism). If you don’t all share one, choose one in which almost all of you do (if you’re the agent: sit back and listen more). Think of 5 SUPER SPECIFIC privileges that are given to the agents of that oppression (think specific like “bandaids” not broad general stuff like “social stigma” or “discrimination”).

4. Choose ONE oppression in which you are ALL AGENTS←→(ex: if you’re all white you may try working with racism). Think of 5 SUPER SPECIFIC privileges (benefits, overadvantages, perks) that are given to the agents (You!) of that oppression. It’s probable that this will be harder for you (agent ignorance). If you’re stuck, try thinking of some of the stereotypes about the target group (Women are bad at math, people with disabilities are incompetent, etc). You can think of some of the consequences of that stereotype and flip them to notice privileges (“As a man, I am more likely to be thought of as ‘good at math’”). You can also think the ways that institutions make this oppression more difficult: jobs, social networks, media, criminal justice system, etc.

5. Work through the rest of the oppressions to come up with 5 SPECIFIC privileges for EACH of the agent identities regardless of YOUR identities. This will take a while.

6. When you’ve finished the whole list, sit back and look for patterns and similarities. What do you notice?

7. Try practicing “pitches” with each other: try explaining each of these oppressions in a simple way, with everyday words and in just a few sentences. How would you explain this to a 12-year-old? Try working on it together, go back and forth to give each other feedback and refine your talking points.

8. Think of how you might use a tool like this one when introducing these complex ideas to a beginner group. How would YOU design this activity?

9. Focus on the columns and symbols on the right of the map. Think of some of the patterns that these oppressions share, and how they differ. What are some similarities between classism, racism and religious discrimination? What does size discrimination have in common with heterosexism? Notice which ones are similar, and think of how that would affect your work as an activist. What obstacles would each of these present for your work?

**Visible**: Identities that are easily perceived by others. **Typical patterns**: Automatic associations with the group’s stereotypes. Easy to target, high risk. Everyday interactions can be draining, never know if the identity was part of the interaction. Lack of privacy, people may feel entitled to ask or discuss the identity. May need to “compensate” for the stereotypes about group, or give personal information to distance from the stereotypes about the group. May act “likeable” to cope with stigma, may need to “acknowledge” the difference to put dominant person at ease.

**NON-Visible/Passing**: Identities that are NOT easily perceived by others. **Typical patterns**: may be able to use agent privilege. Invest a lot of time into information management; may need to fabricate and conceal, deciding whether/how to disclose, coming out, trying to read cues, “testing” the waters before disclosing. Complex interactions to keep information from being shared. Isolation: not knowing who your people are, hard to organize the community. May choose to wear a visible marker (rainbow)

**Adds up, generational**: Identities that are passed down through generations, family based. **Typical patterns**: oppression accumulates and compounds over generations. Generational poverty is deeply connected to these identities. Can create chronic crisis in networks and communities. Historical repercussions, just like wealth and benefits can be inherited and accumulate over generations, oppression is inherited. The community you were born into may be able to teach you coping strategies and provide a support network.

**Cut-off, familial oppressor**: Identities that are NOT passed down through generations. **Typical patterns**: Can create family ruptures. Can interrupt life cycles and care patterns as families abandon their own. People may risk being orphaned as an adult and lose their support network by talking about their oppression. Internalized oppression takes deeper root when your loved ones are the ones inflicting the pain. The home is a particularly vulnerable space to power abuse and absolute, cruel control. Isolation: You may not know people with your identity, or be cut off from them. May never have had a conversation about own oppression, be able to name it, and have few strategies for managing it. Invest significant time/effort into re-creating a support network.

Jimena Alvarado – 2020

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What’s Really in my Backpack: Unpacking Privilege

Benjamin Aschenbrenner (he/him)
Kristina Flores (she/her)
Ralf Youtz (he/they)

Welcome!
* Please sit with *
* at least 5 colleagues *

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture.

-Peggy MacIntosh
Welcome

Presenters

- **Benjamin Aschenbrenner**
  - Associate Professor, Ivy Tech Community College, Lake County, IN
  - baschenbrenner@ivytech.edu
- **Kristina Flores**
  - Director of Research and Evaluation, Texas Success Center, Austin, TX
  - kristina.jp.flores@gmail.com
- **Ralf Youtz**
  - I teach people about statistics at Portland Community College, OR
  - ronald.youtz@pcc.edu
Session Goals

1) Give people a chance to **unpack privilege** and some of the challenging concepts

2) Give people a chance to **practice talking and listening** around issues of privilege and oppression

3) Give people **new ways to articulate** ideas of privilege

4) **Encourage people** to host their own workshops and continue the conversation at your home campus
Session Norms

From Advancing Racial Equity: Tools and Resources for Vermont's Public Schools

- Stay engaged
- Speak your truth (knowing it's only part of the truth)
- Experience discomfort
- Expect and accept non-closure
- Confidentiality

More details and ideas about these norms: http://www.racialequityvtnea.org/racial-justice-alliances/establishing-norms/
Different Worlds

Image credit: Sydney Nielsen Art
Sometimes you may not fit neatly into either category, that’s ok. The list is not complete, but it lets us start a conversation about patterns that will be useful for discussing other identities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Non-visible</th>
<th>Adds-up</th>
<th>Cut-off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, Asexual</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender, non-binary, intersex</td>
<td>Cisgender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a “disability”</td>
<td>Temporarily able-bodied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurodivergent (Depression, Autism, ADHD, Schizophrenia, Bipolar D., Borderline P.D. etc)</td>
<td>Neurotypical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person of color</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jigsaw: Getting Moving...

We will explore the concepts of privilege more deeply together.

Getting Ready:
- Assign each person at your home table a number from 1 to 5.
- You'll see numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on tables around the room.
- When prompted, move to a table with your assigned number (be sure to join some colleagues)
- You'll return to your home table to share what you’ve learned soon!
5 Privilege Concepts

1) **Privilege** is the other side of oppression

2) **Privilege** needs to be understood in the context of power systems

3) **Privilege** and oppression affect each other but don’t negate each other

4) **Privilege** describes what everyone should experience

5) **Privilege** doesn’t mean you didn’t work hard
Jigsaw: At Your Concept Table...

- Choose one table member to watch the time. Use a kind, supportive signal when it's time to move on.
- [~2 min] Read your table's privilege excerpt. Write down (or type up) how that privilege concept surfaces in your personal or professional life.
- [~6 min] In turn, share at least one observation with your group. Give each other one minute each. Be sure to listen to your colleagues, take notes on ideas that resonate for you.
- [~4 min] As a group, discuss how you'll help your colleagues at your home table understand your table’s privilege concept. Write down a takeaway for your home table.
Head On Home!
Jigsaw: Back at Your Home Table...

- Welcome back to your "home" - choose a person to manage kind, supportive timing so that all table members have an opportunity to speak and listen.
- [~10 minutes] In turn, take two minutes each to share your concept table takeaway with your home table. Again, write down ideas that resonate.
Let’s share what you’ve learned about how the different concepts of privilege surface in your classroom or college.
Next Steps and Resources

- **Session slides**
- [https://www.everydaysocialjustice.com/home](https://www.everydaysocialjustice.com/home) - PCC Women's Studies faculty Jimena Alvarado's open resource materials
- **Privilege 101** - Sian Ferguson piece from *Everyday Feminism*
- **Social locations – Finding yourself** - an excellent next lesson from Jimena Alvarado
- **White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack** - Peggy MacIntosh
THANK YOU!

Please complete the evaluation in your Whova app!

It is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily-awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base.

–Peggy MacIntosh

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