Alliances: Effective Use of Socially Constructed Privileges

Dr. Trula Nicholas
Western Washington University
Trula.Nicholas@wwu.edu
A bit about me....
Conference Theme
“Community-Campus partnerships as a Strategy for Social Justice: Where We’ve Been & Where We Need to Go” compels us to critically examine ourselves, our practices, and the systems in which we live and work as we prepare for action.”

Conference Goals
#1 Mobilize & inspire community-campus partnerships to address the root causes of inequality
#3 Connect the work of community-campus partnerships to contemporary movements for social justice and the democratization of knowledge
Welcome

to

Opportunity Town


Mayor:  The Honorable Trula Nicholas

Town Citizens: Green/Purple/Yellow/Blue
Simulation

- Look at the resources in your box
- Read your group’s directions
  - Follow directions given
  - Put your puzzle together
  - Decorate your puzzle
- CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT!!!
  - Use your resources to celebrate!
  - Let the whole town know about your accomplishment by using your musical instruments to make noise!
Opportunity Town Celebration Days!!!

• Mayor’s Speech
• Awards Ceremony
End of Simulation

Now we get to work!
1. Jot down a few words that describes what you experienced during the simulation….just the facts, not the feelings.

2. Now jot down the feelings that you experienced during the simulation…connect them to the facts if you can.

3. Jot down the thoughts and feelings you had about the people who were NOT in your group.

4. Jot down the thoughts and feelings you had about the people who were in your group.
• In your group, share what you experienced and how you felt (#1 and #3).

• Share with large group.

• 5. Jot down your thoughts and feelings as you hear what people from other groups are saying.

• Mixed groups (1 Highlight; 1-2 Middle Towners; 2-3 Strugglers; 2-3 Oh-No’s)

• Share your scripts.

• 6. Jot down your thoughts and feelings as you listen to the scripts from other groups.

• Share your thoughts and feelings with others in your mixed group.

• Share with large group.
Symbolism

Reflect on and discuss in your groups what the following objects/behaviors might symbolize outside of our imaginary town (in real life) (or the object/behavior could be a metaphor in real life):

- The balloons
- The puzzles
- The resources
- The inability to speak
- The hopping on one foot
- The signs
- The bags
- Other things you can think of

- Share in small groups
- Share with large group
Definition of ‘Privilege’

“McIntosh, who coined the phrase ‘[highlight] privilege,’ identifies the phenomenon as a systematic over-empowerment of [highlights], which confers [resources] and psychological dominance simply because of one’s [group]” (Heller, 2011, p. 112; [highlight] = white; [resources] = economic; [group] = race).

“This normalization of privilege means that members of society are judged, and succeed or fail, measured against the characteristics that are held by those privileged” (Wildman & Davis, 2011, p. 110).
A privileged status is often outside of awareness of the person possessing it” (Black, Stone, Hutchinson, & Suarez, 2007p. 17).

Black et al. (2007) concluded that there are five core components that are used to define privilege….The “second, privilege is granted, not earned or brought into being by one’s individual effort or talents” (p. 17).
Privilege is being “born on third base and going through life thinking you hit a triple” (Barry Switzer, former coach of the Dallas Cowboys).

Unpacking unearned earned privilege, of any sort, is dissonance provoking because it assails fundamental Western ideals of meritocracy and democracy” (Robinson, 1999, p. 76).

Apply to simulation…..
Paradox of Privilege

“Individuals are the ones who experience privilege or the lack of it, but individuals aren’t what is actually privileged.

I’m not race privileged because of who I am as a person. Whiteness is privileged in this society, and I have access to that privilege only when people identify me as belonging to the category ‘white’” (Johnson, 2008, p. 117).

Instead, privilege is defined in relation to a group or social category. In other words, race privilege is more about white people than it is about white people.
Structural vs. Individualized Privilege

“McIntosh, who coined the phrase ‘________ privilege,’ identifies the phenomenon as a systematic over-empowerment of ________, which confers economic and psychological dominance simply because of one’s [group]” (Heller, 2011, p. 112).

“[Highlights] assume that a higher material standard of living is evidence of superior talent and merit rather than the result of structural favoritism” (Heller, 2011, 112).
Intersectionality
Bringing it home….most of us have at least one privileged socially constructed identity…

- Race/ethnicity
- Class or socio-economic status
- DisAbility
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Criminal record

- Education
- Physical appearance
- Language
- Religion
- Age
Definition of an ally..... “a person who is a member of the ‘dominant’ or ‘majority’ group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate with or for, the oppressed population” (Evans & Wall, 1991).

Stage theory of becoming an ally.....from Metro State Ally Training Program (n.d.)
Indifference & Ignorance
• Business-as-usual attitude.
• Passive acceptance of actions by others that demean
• Ignoring the issues
• Adopting a liberal attitude…e.g. ‘I don’t see color’ or ‘What people do in the privacy of their own bedroom is their business.’

Active Oppression
• Laughing at to telling jokes
• Making fun of people that are different
• Verbal and/or physical harassment
• Supporting legislation/laws/workplace rules that works against the group
Oppression Through Lack of Action
• When a friend is telling a demeaning joke you recognize it as oppressive, you don’t laugh, but you don’t say anything either.
• Being uncomfortable but not confronting

Confronting Oppression
• Confronting demeaning jokes “That puts down _____ and is not funny.”
• Being aware of and confronting statements such as “I am not prejudice, but….”

Growing as an Ally
• Becoming aware of issues faced by the group
• Listening to music, watching movies/documentaries, attending events supporting the group
• Educate yourself; don’t rely of someone from the group to do this
• Become aware of organization, agencies, businesses that support the group
Becoming Active as an Ally
• Educate others, engage people in dialogue about the issues.
• Be willing to speak on behalf of the group being targeted.
• Recognize the efforts of others to confront inappropriate behaviors.
• Encourage and promote an atmosphere of respect

Challenging Systems
• Create a climate where individuals and diversity is recognized and celebrated.
• Work for human rights, civil rights, legislation to support the group.
• Support people who are in the oppressed group in your personal and professional life.
• Work to change discriminatory institutional practices.
Characteristics of an ‘Out’ Ally

• Work to develop and understanding of what oppression is and the needs of the group.
• Actively pursues a process of self-education
• Acknowledge and take responsibility for your own socialization, prejudices and privileges
• Expect to make some mistakes but do not use this as an excuse of non-action.
• Seek out and enlist others to be allies.
• Be willing to examine your privilege points.
• Learn about and take pride in your own identities.
• Know resources about and for oppressed groups.
• Educate others
• Take a public stand against discrimination and prejudice.
• Interrupt prejudice and take action against oppression even when people from the other group are not present.
• Risk discomfort.
• Challenge the internalized oppression of people in oppressed groups.
Goals

• Engage participants in a powerful simulation activity that uncovers the depths of privilege associated with socially constructed identities.

• Examine the power of privilege.

• Move participants from privilege paralysis (guilt) to privilege activists (allyship).
Sources


Sources


