

Exploring Complex Identities within a Social Justice Framework

The grid on the next page is used to help us think about the complexities of our social identities and how they impact our daily experiences. The first column lists various aspects of identity that are parts of who we are as whole people. The second column lists examples of some groups that are privileged in a U.S. context within the categories listed in column one. The third column lists examples of some groups that, within a U.S. context, are marginalized or experience oppression within the categories listed in column one.

One important thing to understand is that these categories are based on systems of privilege and oppression, not on individual experiences. For example, an individual can have pride in their identity as a queer woman of color, or a single parent with a disability, but they are still subject to marginalization within a U.S. context because laws, policies, media, resource distribution, social norms, and other determinants of safety and power are generally set by those who have the most privileged identities.

With this in mind, please read over the list on the next page and mark whether you currently belong to a group that is privileged or marginalized within each of the categories. When you are complete, your list may look like this example:

1 gender	Men	Women, trans, genderqueer, intersex
2 gender identity	Cisgender/Non-Trans	Transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming
3 Race	White People	People of Color
4 Age	30s to 50s	Younger or Older
5 Class	Owning Class or Middle Class	Working poor or Working Class
6 Educational Level	College Graduate	High School or Less

Once you have completed the next page, please answer the reflection questions that follow.

	<u>GROUPS THAT EXPERIENCE PRIVILEGE IN A U.S. CONTEXT</u>	<u>GROUPS THAT ARE MARGINALIZED OR OPPRESSED IN A U.S. CONTEXT</u>
1. GENDER	MEN	WOMEN; TRANS; GENDERQUEER; INTERSEX
2. GENDER IDENTITY	CISGENDER/NON-TRANS	TRANSGENDER; GENDERQUEER; GENDER NON-CONFORMING
3. RACE	WHITE PEOPLE	PEOPLE OF COLOR
4. SEXUAL ORIENTATION	HETEROSEXUAL	GAY; LESBIAN; BISEXUAL; QUEER; QUESTIONING
5. AGE	30S TO EARLY 50S	YOUNGER AND OLDER
6. CLASS	MIDDLE CLASS; OWNING CLASS	WORKING POOR; WORKING CLASS
7. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	COLLEGE GRADUATE	HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS
8. RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY	CHRISTIAN: PROTESTANT OR CATHOLIC	MUSLIM; JEWISH; BUDDHIST; HINDU; LDS; SIKH; PAGAN; AGNOSTIC; ATHEIST; ETC.
9. NATIONALITY	U.S.-BORN; BORN AS U.S. CITIZEN	BORN OUTSIDE THE U.S.; IMMIGRANT TO U.S.; UNDOCUMENTED
10. CHILDHOOD FAMILY STRUCTURE	RAISED BY BIOLOGICAL OR ADOPTIVE FAMILY IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT FELT SAFE AND WITHOUT ABUSE	RAISED IN THE FOSTER SYSTEM; RAISED WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, WITH DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE IN THE HOME, AND/OR OTHER HOME EXPERIENCES THAT FELT UNSAFE AND LACKED STABILITY
11. ABILITY/DISABILITY	TEMPORARILY ABLE-BODIED	PEOPLE WITH A PHYSICAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, OR LEARNING DISABILITY
12. ETHNICITY/CULTURE	WESTERN EUROPEAN	PUERTO RICAN, DINÉ, MEXICAN, NIGERIAN, JEWISH, RUSSIAN, CHINESE, IRANIAN, ETC.
13. SIZE/APPEARANCE	SLENDER; PERCEIVED AS ATTRACTIVE; HANDSOME; BEAUTIFUL; ETC.	OF SIZE; PARTICULARLY TALL OR SHORT; PERCEIVED AS UNATTRACTIVE; ETC.
14. USE OF ENGLISH	“PROPER” ENGLISH	ACCENTED ENGLISH; ANOTHER PRIMARY LANGUAGE
15. MARITAL/PARENTAL STATUS	MARRIED IN A HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH OR WITHOUT CHILDREN	DIVORCED; LGBTQ PARENT; DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP; SINGLE PARENT, SINGLE- NO CHILDREN
16. INDIGENOUS BACKGROUND	NON-NATIVE	NATIVE

Adopted from materials developed by Kathy Obear, Alliance for Change, and adapted by Office of Multicultural Affairs, Seattle University

Self-Reflection Questions

Take a few minutes to complete the statements below using the identities you circled on the previous page. You may find that you are a member of the privileged or oppressed/marginalized group in the majority or all of the categories. If so, pay particular attention to your feelings and reactions in noticing that pattern.

1. I am most aware of my membership in the _____ privileged group.
2. I am least aware of my membership in the _____ privileged group.
3. I have the most experience managing my membership in the _____ privileged group.
4. I have the least experience managing my membership in the _____ privileged group.
5. I am the most comfortable with my membership in the _____ privileged group.
6. I am the least comfortable with my membership in the _____ privileged group.
7. I am most aware of my membership in the _____ oppressed/marginalized group.
8. I am least aware of my membership in the _____ oppressed/marginalized group.
9. I have the most experience managing my membership in the _____ oppressed/marginalized group.
10. I have the least experience managing my membership in the _____ oppressed/marginalized group.
11. I am the most comfortable with my membership in the _____ oppressed/marginalized group.
12. I am the least comfortable with my membership in the _____ oppressed/marginalized group,