

Nosce Te Ipsum (Know Thyself):
Recognizing Privilege in Yourself and Society

Diversity and Inclusion Resource Module

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Introduction

Three years ago, Engineers Without Borders, Cal Poly invited a Boeing executive to give a keynote address to the 300+ member club. After a short introduction and a few remarks about the future of engineering, the speaker directed his comments at the audience. He noted, "Cal Poly students are some of the best trained engineers at our company. But they do NOT know how to work with people who do not look just like them." Cal Poly is the most racially homogenous public university in California ([Lopez 2014](#); [New Times 2016](#)) with approximately 57 percent claiming non-Hispanic White descent ([CSU Mentor 2017](#)). Faculty and staff are even less racially diverse. In addition to the high degree of white privilege at Cal Poly, there is also a high level of class privilege as 67 percent of students in 2013 come from the top twenty percent wealthiest households in the state ([Matsuyama 2017](#)).

To remind students of their privileges and concomitant responsibility, I greet them every class period the same way, "Good morning, future leaders of the world." I explain that they attend an excellent university, in the richest city in one of the richest counties in the richest state in the richest nation in the world and the most powerful nation in history. Compared to the billions of folks who struggle daily with discrimination due to poverty, gender, race, sexuality, religion, citizenship, disability, etc., most Cal Poly students are incredibly privileged. Yet, this privilege remains unrecognized because, for many students, everyone else looks and acts like them.

This module will enable faculty and students from across colleges to critically examine their own privileges through reading, dialogue, and Learn By Doing activities. The pragmatic focus will be on self-reflexivity and empowering users to wrestle with how their social identity provides advantages or disadvantages in each of their social relationships. It also clearly addresses two of the four of the university diversity learning objectives. On the one hand, through self-reflection about one's privileges one innately becomes aware of how privilege may shape social relationships. Ideally, this engenders empathy and consideration of other's perspectives. On the other hand, as noted in the original story, our students need to critically engage their privilege to successfully interact and collaborate with others who hold different beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Our globalized political economy demands that we prepare students to be self-reflexive.

Detailed Outline

1. Why is understanding privilege important?
 - a. Personal life
 - i. Recognizing how various privileges shape our perceptions will help us interact with others. This knowledge may help us understand our family dynamics better, negotiate conflict between friends, or have a more fulfilling experience while traveling abroad.
 - ii. It may also help us be less racist, homophobic, sexist, classist, etc.
 - b. Professional life
 - i. With an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, our students will benefit from understanding their own social identities and the advantages or disadvantages it provides to them. The previous story of the Boeing representative is particularly relevant to this point.
 - ii. According to author Steve Topak¹, of the five most important skills to develop in business, two fit this topic. The first is “critical thinking,” or challenging external and internal beliefs. The other is “being human” or enhancing the capacity to build “real” relationship. Through recognizing our unique bias and perspectives (moving beyond stereotypes) we will be able to interact as equals with those we conduct business with.

2. What is privilege?
 - a. Basic Definition—
 - i. “A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group”.²

 - b. Definition of privilege as it relates to Whiteness
 - i. “I have come to see 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. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (McIntosh 1988: 30).

¹ Topak, S. 2016. “Skills You Must Develop to Succeed in Business.” (<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/250851>)

² Meriam-Webster 2017.

- ii. This definition can be applied to other social identities such as: religion (in the U.S. Christianity is the privileged religion), citizenship, socio-economic status, gender, physical and mental ability, heterosexuality, among others.
- c. Example: Privilege at Cal Poly
 - i. Major Stereotypes and rankings
 - ii. Discussion:
 1. Is there a hierarchy of students based on major?
 2. What are the rankings by college? (Common example below)
 - a. Engineering, Architecture, Business, COSAM, CAFES, CLA
 - b. How does major stereotypes impact student's self-esteem?
 - c. See Cal Poly Student film by Melissa Giddens³ (7 mins)
 3. How may major stereotypes impact interactions between students?
 - a. Example: An English student shared that she is embarrassed to express her chosen major at a party because it was seen as less valuable and important than others
- d. Privilege is a social construct (a social mechanism, phenomenon, or category created and developed by society)
 - i. Privilege has always existed
 1. Humans have always organized themselves in a way that distributed resources unequally to different sub-groups in a tribe, community, society, or nation.
 2. Receiving more resources, especially unearned resources, is a privilege.
- e. Privileges change over time and place
 - i. Societies value certain social identities differently
 1. Examples: Matriarchal societies; Homosexuality in different locations and eras; racial definitions in different nations today⁴.
 2. This illustrates that privilege is not biological, but rather socially constructed.

³Giddens, M. 2015. "Cal Poly Major Stereotypes."
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1tszf67Fvw>

⁴ Resources about race classifications in South Africa.
<http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/multimedia.php?id=65-259-2>

- ii. Privilege is not “natural.”
 - 1. Providing advantages to a sub-group based on their identity is often detrimental to society broadly.
 - 2. Examples: U.S. Slavery, lack of women in positions of power, wealth disparities,
 - 3. Contemporary examples
 - a. See Infographics in Appendix
- iii. Since privilege is a social construct, it can be changed.
 - 1. A group can collectively decide to change how privileges are distributed.

3. Privilege is all around us

- a. Privilege/disadvantage exist in all relationships based on our social identity (Race, class, gender, sexuality, physical ability, citizenship, religion, etc.)
- b. Privilege can also be intersectional.
 - i. Intersectionality refers to the multiplication effect of having different marginalized social identities.
 - 1. An African-American woman would be disadvantaged in many situations due to the compounding impact of her race and gender.
 - 2. See examples in Appendix

4. Analyzing privilege

- a. How does privilege shape our interactions and relationships with others for better and worse?
 - i. Data brings to light the invisibility of privilege (see examples in Appendix)
 - ii. Stories, especially personal stories, contextualizes privilege.
- b. WARNING
 - i. Analyzing privilege may make some feel a sense of shame or guilt for their privileges. Others may be dismissive. Still others may already have a deep understanding of privilege having lived as one/multiple of the marginalized social identities.
 - 1. Laying the groundwork of trust and cooperation first will encourage everyone to be more open and willing to wrestle with the issues.
 - 2. Most privileges/disadvantages we are born with. It is not our fault that we have it; however, we are

responsible for how we allow it to dictate our thoughts and actions.

3. See Tips and Pitfalls

- ii. This analysis is counter to the deeply embedded narrative of the Horatio Alger myth of the American Dream wherein anyone can pull themselves up by the bootstraps and go from rags to riches. This story masks structural inequality and blames the marginalized for their lack of success.
 - 1.
 - 2. There are many resources available online about the myth of the American Dream. Here are three.
 - a. 3 min video [Pew Trust 2011](#)
 - b. 16 min podcast [Pew Trust 2017](#)
 - c. 17 min TED talk Economist [Richard Wilkinson 2011](#)

5. Self-reflexivity

a. Definition

- i. "The ability to reflect and consider who one is in relation to others is described as the reflexive self." ⁵

b. Being self-reflexive

- i. To be self-reflexive, you must consider your own social identities and position compared to others. In doing so, you may recognize potential imbalances of influence or power and can work to address them.
- ii. It is also important to challenge assumptions and beliefs about the world.
 - 1. Where do your beliefs about others come from?
 - 2. How do you stereotype other people based on their social identities?⁶
- iii. Recognize how power is present in your personal and professional relationships
 - 1. Assumptions about the world are often present in our subconscious. These beliefs shape how we interact with others. To explore these attitudes, please see the Characterizations Activity in the Appendix.
- iv. The challenge
 - 1. It is easier to walk through the world maintaining our stereotypes than it is to constantly consider the validity of these beliefs.

⁵ Falk, R, & Miller, N. 1998. "The reflexive self: A sociological perspective." *Roepers Review*.

⁶ Said, E., 1978. *Orientalism: Western representations of the Orient*. New York: Pantheon.

2. "Beginner's Mind" and the practice of [Mindfulness](#) may help⁷
 - a. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few."⁸
3. Paradigm Shift
 - a. We often prescribe to others out of our own autobiography
 - b. Example Story "Man on the Subway" by Stephen Covey⁹ (See Appendix)
 - c. Adjusting our worldview to recognize privilege and inequality do exist and constantly inform our interactions with others. Awareness is the first step toward change.
4. Practice makes perfect. Watch how you relate to others based on your or their privileges. Then, with kindness, remind yourself that it can be different.
 - a. "Be the change you wish to see in the world."
–Mohandas K. Gandhi

⁷ See videos and writings by Jon Kabat-Zinn.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmEo6RI4Wvs>)

⁸ Suzuki, S., 2010. *Zen mind, beginner's mind*. Shambhala Publications.

⁹ Covey, S.R., 1989. *The 7 habits of highly effective people*.

Annotated Bibliography for Instructors

Overview

Ore, T.E., 2000. "Constructing differences." *The social construction of difference and inequality: Race, class, gender, and sexuality*, 6th Edition. McGraw-Hill Education. pp.1-18.

This short primer provides an overview and definitions to many of the social identities in our society. It also provides useful terminology to discuss the origin, continuation, and consequence of these differences.

Disability

Fine, M. and Asch, A., 1988. Disability beyond stigma: Social interaction, discrimination, and activism. *Journal of social issues*, 44(1), pp.3-21.

One of the often-overlooked privileges is hosting an able-bodied. In this article, Fine and Asch discuss how ableism impacts the 56.7 million people (~19% of the population)¹⁰. Importantly, Fine and Asch discuss the various assumptions able-bodied folks bring to meeting the disabled as well as ways of thinking critically about how we and society can shift our perceptions to create a more equitable (and accessible) world.

Education as a means of maintaining privilege

Freire, P., 2000. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Chapters 1 & 2.

Paolo Freire is a renowned Brazilian theorist who criticizes the current banking concept of education wherein information is deposited into students and withdrawn at the end of the course. There is no real learning (*educere*), only regurgitation of what the professor (oppressor) pontificates, usually reifying the current system of inequality (*educare*). As an alternative, Freire provides a dialogic problem-posing model in which students are empowered to critically engage the material with the goal of coming up with their own understanding of the material.

Gender

Lorber, J., 1994. The social construction of gender. *Reconstructing gender: A multicultural anthology*, pp.96-103.

There are thousands of excellent articles and book chapters on gender inequality. This article focuses on gender identity construction from birth to the workplace. In the U.S., the institutions, state, economy, etc. have

¹⁰ <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html>

embedded assumptions as to the inferiority of women to men, and work, often unconsciously, to reproduce this belief.

Race

McIntosh, P., 1988. *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack*. (<https://www.pcc.edu/resources/illumination/documents/white-privilege-essay-mcintosh.pdf>)

This short essay was one of the first to highlight how white privilege is invisible and ubiquitous to Caucasians. Using dozens of examples, McIntosh demonstrates that U.S. society is set up in a way to benefit Whites without their knowledge or consent. Tim Wise¹¹ describes this as fish swimming in water.

Social Class

Ehrenreich, B., 2010. *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. Metropolitan Books.

(Excerpt can be found here: Ehrenreich, B., 1999. "Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America." *Harper's Magazine*. Pp.37-52.)

In a Learn By Doing ethnography fashion, Ehrenreich attempts to live on minimum-wage in the U.S. Her various positions--as a waitress, a maid in a cleaning service, and a Walmart sales employee—provide insight into the struggles of the working-class poor. The author also utilizes auto-ethnography to evaluate the various challenges (including the often unseen emotional and psychological tolls of the working class) to highlight the extreme difficulty situations many of our countrymen and women find themselves in.

Service and Engagement

Alaniz, R., 2012. *The Conscientious Gringo: Affecting long-term change in yourself and the world*. (<http://www.calpoly.edu/~ralaniz/gringo.html>)

This booklet, originally written for volunteers conducting development work abroad, asks critical questions about helping others. Deeply enculturated assumptions such as the White Man's Burden and Christian charity (as well as guilt) often lead volunteers to serve internationally. However, their work may do more harm than good. Drawing on vignettes from volunteers and travelers from around the world, the author poses inquiries that encourage a self-reflexive approach to social interaction and service. Although unpublished, this booklet has been used by a dozen national and

¹¹Wise, T. 2003. Whites Swim in Racial Preference. (http://www.alternet.org/story/15223/whites_swim_in_racial_preference)

international organizations as a primer for their volunteers and the recognition that change happens both for the giver and the receiver.

Annotated Bibliography for Students

Kimmel, M.S., 2004. *Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity*. in *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study*, pp.81-93.

(<https://masculinisation.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/masculinity-as-homophobia-fear-shame-and-silence-in-the-construction-of-gender-identity-michael-s-kimmel.pdf>)

Kimmel deconstructs the identity of masculinity in U.S. culture and how it is tied to homophobia. Manhood, he argues, is a dangerous but fragile gauntlet; survival necessitates denigrating women, men who act feminine, men who are not straight, and non-White men. This engaging article clearly illustrates privilege and intersectionality.

McIntosh, P., 1988. *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack*. (<https://www.pcc.edu/resources/illumination/documents/white-privilege-essay-mcintosh.pdf>)

This short essay was one of the first to highlight how white privilege is invisible and ubiquitous to Caucasians. Using dozens of examples, McIntosh demonstrates that U.S. society is set up in a way to benefit Whites without their knowledge or consent.

Miner, H. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 503-507. (<https://msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html>)

This classic anthropology reading illustrates how language broadly, and description specifically, can lead to biased interpretation of the facts. In this case, the Nacirema (backward for American) are described as silly, naïve, and uncivilized in their practices. Most students do not recognize that the description is about their practices and often have strong negative opinions about the Nacirema. However, when they realize the article is about their habits, students quickly realize their unfair judgement and othering¹² of the group.

¹² Said, E., 1979. *Orientalism*. *New York: Vintage*.

Young, I.M., 2000. "Five faces of oppression." in Ore, T.E. (ed.) *The social construction of difference and inequality: Race, class, gender, and sexuality*, pp.36-48.

Young defines the concept of oppression, often recognized as the opposite of privilege, as groups suffering from "some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, and feelings" (36). The author draws on Marxist and Feminist theory to describe how oppression is a structural issue, meaning it is embedded in the institutions, legal framework, and even culture of U.S. society. The five faces she describes include: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. This article supplements the McIntosh reading exemplifying the painful effects of privilege on marginalized groups.

Activities

Each activity is described in further detail in the appendix.

1: Downtown Social Scavenger Hunt

This activity asks students to find various items throughout downtown San Luis Obispo. Some of the items such as the largest two buildings students find easily. Others, such as a non-white model in a poster ad is difficult and sometimes non-existent. The activity is closed with a discussion about the consequences of the presence and absence of artifacts downtown and the impact this has on different social identities.

2: Step Forward Step Backward

This activity may help students understand the diverse demographics of the class and how privileges enable some to literally advance while those without privilege move back. Doing so paints a clear picture that not all students have the same background. The activity ends with a discussion of moving forward or backward and the long-term impacts these dis/advantages may have on a person's life chances.

3: Characterizations

This in-class activity asks students to draw upon their subconscious beliefs, stereotypes, opinions, and assumptions about different social identities. The class is split in two and each group is asked to yell out as many adjectives and characterizations about a social identity (such as "man" and "woman"). After a few minutes, the students rate the characterizations of the identity as either positive, negative, or neutral. The number of each are counted and then discussed based on quantity and quality (CEO vs a homemaker). A discussion about how our subconscious characterizations influences our many interactions with different people.

Media Resources

Films:

Food Chains

Race, Agriculture, Food

<http://www.foodchainsfilm.com/>

13th

Race, Criminal Justice, System

<http://www.avaduvernay.com/13th/>

Waste Land

Class, Brazil, Poverty

<http://movies.nytimes.com/2010/10/29/movies/29waste.html>

Southern Comfort

Gender, Sexuality, USA

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0276515/>

Boys Don't Cry

Gender and Sexuality, USA

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0171804/>

The Color of Fear

Race, Class, USA, White Privilege

<http://www.diversitytrainingfilms.com/films-2/films/>

Malcolm X

Race, Class, Gender, Religion, Social Movements, USA

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104797/>

Transamerica

Sexuality, Class, USA

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0407265/>

Killing Us Softly 3

Gender, Sexuality, Advertising

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0336699/>

Miss Representation

Gender, Women, Politics, Media, Education

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1784538/>

<http://vimeo.com/28066212>

Dreamworlds 3

Gender, Sexuality, Entertainment, Power

<http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=223>

The Hunting Ground

Gender, Sexuality, Power, Education

<http://thehuntinggroundfilm.com/>

Food, Inc.

Economics, Politics, USA, Food

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1286537/>

Smoke Signals

Race, Economics, Native Americans, USA

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120321/>

Documentaries

<http://sociologythroughdocumentaryfilm.pbworks.com/w/page/17194965/FrontPage>

Tips and Potential Pitfalls

Tips

1. Begin where the students are. Cal Poly has high levels of white privilege and class privilege. Arguably, due to the high distinction of the male dominated fields (engineering, agriculture, business) over other female dominated fields (CLA) , male privilege also exists. Asking students to critically engage their privilege (which many believe they do not have) is a radical request. Progress gently.
2. Use stories. The major religions of the world have utilized parables and anecdotes to ensure listeners could empathize with the protagonist, make it memorable, and provide levels of meaning for different needs (Bible; Bhagavad Gita; Quar'an; Buddhist Dharma; Torah).
3. Be genuine and vulnerable. I have found students are willing to question their own privilege when I have led by example. Deep discussions are much easier to have when faculty "go there" first, providing an anecdote of when they may have been racist, misogynist, or ignorant. This is especially valuable when students can empathize. The following story illustrates this point.
To pay Cal Poly tuition, I spent the summers working as a kayak guide in Shell Beach. Every two years I had to update my CPR/First Aid certification as part of my job. I arrive at a Red Cross training early and am greeted by the instructor. I notice another student, an African-American woman, was already seated. I nod a greeting and take a seat on the far side of the table. Upon later reflection, I realized that I had a subconscious discomfort with this woman because of her race. My sitting far away was a physical demonstration of that unquestioned (unrecognized) discomfort. I wonder how it must have made her feel to see me sit so far away from her. Reflecting on this experience uncovered that this was not an isolated incident; when I am uncomfortable with a "type" of person, I often use distance or distraction (my phone, a book) to avoid these feelings. To address this unconscious bias, I try to watch and evaluate how I interact with everyone I meet. I gently investigate my initial feelings and attempt to meet the person as a unique individual in the present moment.
4. Be patient and ready for criticism. Recognizing privilege is counter-culture and may go against what a student has learned. It is also not a short-term project. As Archbishop Romero once noted, "We plant seed of a future not our own."

5. Many students (and faculty) struggle when their deeply held beliefs about inequality and privilege are challenged. This may be reflected in changing interactions with the student or potentially negative evaluations.
6. This is hard work for everyone involved. Seek help from other faculty or university resources for support and encourage students to do the same.

Potential Pitfalls

1. A faculty must also be doing the work s/he is asking the students to do. Students can easily recognize whether the instructor is putting on a façade for the sake of diversity training or whether s/he is committed to justice and equity. If the teacher is not invested, the students will likely follow suit.
2. It is not about you. True education is about the co-production of knowledge¹³ wherein students wrestle with the material and develop their own unique understanding. The classroom must be a place of dialogue, humility, and openness. The faculty member should think of themselves as an equal participant and learner. We can all be more self-reflexive.
3. Do not avoid discomfort. Let the class sit with it. Education scholars have noted that the greatest learning happens when knowledge is “troublesome,” or in the liminal space of our consciousness¹⁴.
4. Be cognizant of the needs of everyone in the classroom. This module focuses on those who have privilege but may not recognize it. Ensure that the marginalized students also feel safe and have opportunities to engage (without putting them on the spot).

¹³ Freire, P., 2000. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

¹⁴ Meyer, J.H. and Land, R., 2005. Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (2): Epistemological considerations and a conceptual framework for teaching and learning. *Higher education*, 49(3), pp.373-388.

Appendix

Activities

Downtown Scavenger Hunt

Logistics

Time: 2 hours

This is an activity that is conducted in downtown SLO.

10-50 students

Students are asked to meet downtown SLO in Mission Plaza. They will have ~50 minutes to complete the scavenger hunt. The hunt will be followed by a 30 minute discussion about the deeper meaning and symbolism of what they found. Time should be given to arrive to and from Cal Poly.

Directions

In downtown San Luis Obispo, please find examples of the following issues from the reading and class discussion. Please explain the situation to a theme, concept, or theory.

1. Start at Mission Plaza. Describe the two statues (the young indigenous girl and Fr. Junipero Serra) including their positioning, size, placement, gender, etc. How does this reinforce beliefs about the Chumash and Spanish history of SLO?
2. A birthday card for a father that has flowers on it. Why do greeting cards for men usually have dark colors, sports, and outdoorsy stuff on them?
3. Ask around until you find someone who knows what *Higuera* and *Pismo* means. Think about how this illustrates our understanding (or lack of?) local history and culture. What does this demonstrate about how history is socially constructed?
4. Five examples of items that contribute to the reinforcement of "gender." Examples could include how public spaces are created, gender-specific consumer goods [pink/blue], traditional employment, gender roles or performance, etc.
5. An advertisement that either shows an African-American or Latin@ person as a model. Please describe what the ad is selling, how the person or people are positioned, etc. If you were this person, what message would you be receiving from this ad?
6. An example of wealth and an example of poverty. Please describe below.
7. An example of how informal negative informal sanctions (a look, a comment, a raised eyebrow, body language, talking behind someone's back, etc.) maintains certain behavior. Look for it in an interaction.
8. An example of the public acceptability of LGBTQIA (e.g. two men holding hands). How does the low or high number of examples illustrate SLO's culture?

9. Five examples of how being white is normative (e.g. “nude” color make up is for light skin color).

10. What are two of the largest buildings in downtown San Luis Obispo? How does this represent power, property, and prestige? What does this illustrate about our culture and values?

11. An example of how language *and* symbols shape our perspective and may combat or reinforce stereotypes (e.g. San Luis Obispo; the Chumash child).

12. Please find and describe an advertisement in Spanish. ~25% of the population in SLO county is Latin@. Is SLO welcoming to this demographic based on the quantity and quality of advertising.

13. Please provide examples of how power is performed in the situations below:

- a. in a two-person relationship
- b. between a customer and a business employee
- c. between someone who appears wealthy and someone who appears

poor

14. Sit somewhere and people watch for five minutes. Please count the number of these people who walk by:

- a. lower, middle and upper class people
(a2. How do you know they are from this social class?)
- b. different races (African-American, Native American, White, Latin@, Asian, other)
- c. Male, Female, Other.

What does this illustrate to us about normativity, class, race, and gender in SLO?

15. Walk five blocks and count how many stores are for essential products (grocery stores, basic needs, educational, etc.) and how many are non-essential (jewelry, bars, cafes, expensive clothing, etc.). What does this teach us about downtown?

16. Please find an example of someone or a group engaged in social change (e.g. someone using extra-legal methods to enact change—often seen as deviant). Is this common? How does the lack of social change reinforce the status quo?

Discussion Questions

What surprised you about what you found or did not find?

Were certain social identities over- or under-represented?

Latin@s make up approximately 25% of the population in SLO county?

If you were Latin@, how would you feel about visiting San Luis Obispo?

How can we interpret SLO residents understanding and representation of the native Chumash and colonial Spanish histories?

How might the SLO city council work for a more inclusive downtown?

Step Forward/Step Backward

Logistics

Time: ~30-40 minutes depending on discussion

This is an outside activity as you will need space to move forward and backward.

10-40 students depending on space

This video illustrates the activity

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ&sns=em>)

Confidentiality is important in this exercise. Students must feel safe in participating. Additionally, when a given statement is read students can choose to step forward or backward. They do not have to step if they do not feel comfortable.

Read the statements below one at a time and everyone who that statement pertains to will step forward or backward (if comfortable). For example, a facilitator might read, "is a woman" and all the women in the room will step forward. The statements below cover a few of the many types of social identities (e.g. gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic class, ability level, sexual orientation, religion, age, rural and urban backgrounds, involvements such as an athlete or an artist). The identities should match course learning objectives.

Directions for students

Have students stand in a straight line and refrain from speaking during the exercise.

Optional: Place a twenty dollar bill about 50 feet in front of the line. Tell the students that after a few questions there will be a race to win the \$20.

- If your ancestors were forced to come to the USA, not by choice, take one step back.
- If your primary ethnic identity is American, take one step forward.
- If you were ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If there were people of color who worked in your household as servants, gardeners, etc., take one step forward.
- If your parents were professional, doctors, lawyers, etc., take one step forward.
- If you were raised in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, gangs, etc. take one step back.
- If you ever tried to change you appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step back.

- If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.
- If you went to a school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.
- If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward.
- If you ever had to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food when you were growing up, take one step back.
- If you were brought to art galleries, museums, or plays by your parents, take one step forward.
- If one of your parents were unemployed or laid off, not by choice, take one step back.
- If you received help in preparing for the SAT, ACT or college application, take one step forward.
- If your family ever had to move because they could not afford the rent, take one step back.
- If you were told that you were beautiful, smart, and capable by your parents, take one step forward.
- If you were ever discouraged from academic or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever encouraged to attend a college by your parents, take one step forward.
- If prior to age 18, you took a vacation out of the country, take one step forward.
- If one of your parents did not go to college, take one step back.
- If your family owns the house they live in, take one step forward.
- If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation were portrayed on television in degrading roles, take one step back.
- If you were ever offered a good job because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.
- If you were ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever paid less, treated less fairly because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you believe you will inherit money or property in the future, take a step forward.
- If you had to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

- If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, take one step forward.
- If you ever felt uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever a victim of violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step back.
- If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, take one step forward.

If you have added the \$20 race, now say "OK, race to the \$20." Often only the front few run. Many participants look demoralized and do not even try. Potential questions: Why did some of you run and others did not? Does this reflect broader society? Can a representative from the front, middle and back share what it felt like to be in the position? What does the \$20 represent?

Discussion Questions

Ask participants to look at their position in the space in relation to the positions of others.

What are your thoughts and feelings about this exercise?

Is this activity representative of broader U.S. society? Why or why not?

Would your placement have been different if the exercise included questions about disability, citizenship, or religion?

How do we address these disparities as individuals and as a community?

Thank students for their participation in the activity and the discussion.

Characterizations Activity

Logistics

Time: ~30-40 minutes depending on discussion

This is an in-class activity

12 to 120 students

Directions:

Split students into two or three groups. Have students come up with a name and choose a recorder who will write the groups comments on the board. Explain that the goal of this exercise is to yell out as many adjectives or characterizations about a certain social identity as possible in three minutes. Students should share all types of characterizations and not try to be politically correct. Say whatever comes to mind. Whichever group has the most on the board will win.

Before starting I often give the example of a Latin@:

Students might say, illegal, hard worker, field laborer, accent, poor, good soccer player, uneducated, etc.

While each group is deciding upon a name, take the recorders outside and discuss what they will do as well as assign them a social identity.

Recorder Instructions: At the same time as the other recorder (who will write "Man") you will write down "Woman" (as a social identity example) on the board. Then write down as many examples being yelled from the group as possible on the board. At the end of three minutes, you will be asked to tally each word and whether it was a positive, negative, or neutral representation of a "Woman." *Students from the opposite group* will help you identify each by showing a thumbs up for positive, thumbs down for negative, or thumb sideways for neutral. Then add up the total for each and write it at the top next to the word "Woman."

Discussion Questions

Initial reactions?

Which social identity would you rather be based on these characterizations?

Why?

How does the quality of the words (CEO vs. homemaker) illustrate deeper stereotypes about each identity?

Where did we learn these from? Are they still reproduced in the media and society today?

What strategies can we utilize to overcome these subconscious biases?

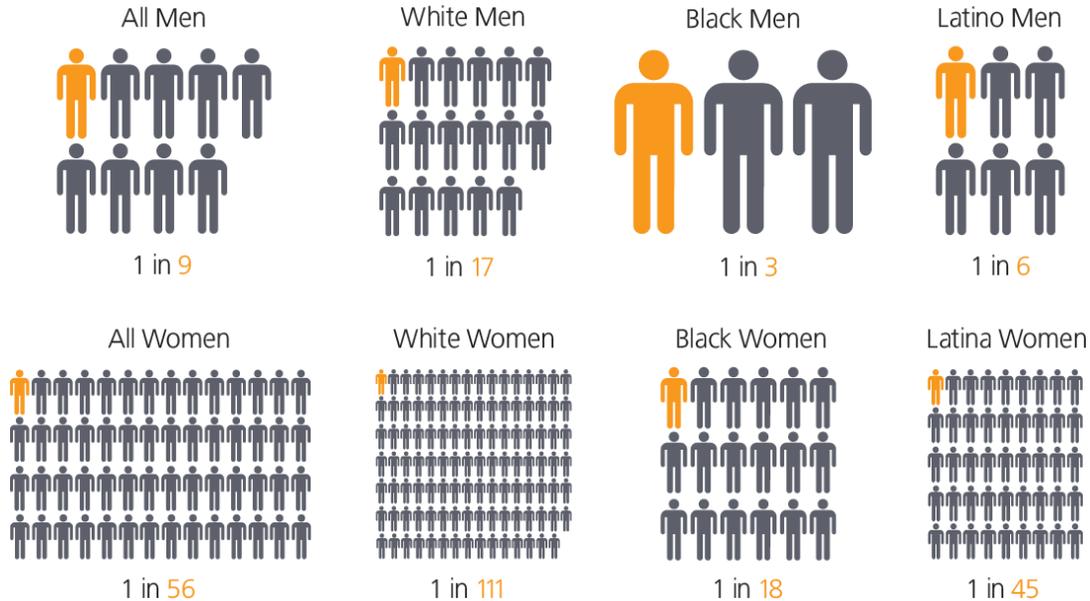
How are these stereotypes perpetuated at Cal Poly?

Optional: Tell students you want to see how many of these characterizations actually fit who they are. So, ask the women to raise their hand if 100% of the terms represent them. Then go down to 90%, 80%, 70%, etc. Have them keep their hands raised. I have found that the characterizations are often around 40%-60%. Then discuss the consequences of using these characterizations when we encounter a new female faculty member, a woman at a party, or a female boss. How does this "baggage" shape our interactions with each in comparison to a man?

Infographics

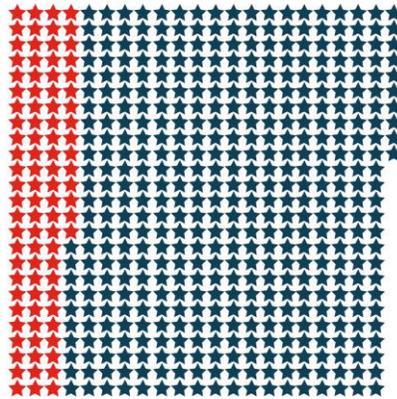
White men are much less likely to be imprisoned even though they commit similar levels of crime.

Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment for U.S. Residents Born in 2001¹⁵



Women Underrepresented in Politics¹⁶

**Women make up 51% of
the population but:**



only 19% of Congress.

SOURCE: RUTGERS

USA TODAY

¹⁵ <http://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/>

¹⁶ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/03/01/2017-womens-history-month/98247518/>

The Man on the Subway

"I remember a mini-paradigm shift I experienced one Sunday morning on a subway in New York. People were sitting quietly – some reading newspapers, some lost in thought, some resting with their eyes closed. It was a calm, peaceful scene.

Then suddenly, a man and his children entered the subway car. The children were so loud and rambunctious that instantly the whole climate changed.

The man sat down next to me and closed his eyes, apparently oblivious to the situation. The children were yelling back and forth, throwing things, even grabbing people's papers. It was very disturbing. And yet, the man sitting next to me did nothing.

It was difficult not to feel irritated. I could not believe that he could be so insensitive as to let his children run wild like that and do nothing about it, taking no responsibility at all. It was easy to see that everyone else on the subway felt irritated, too. So finally, with what I felt like was unusual patience and restraint, I turned to him and said, "Sir, your children are really disturbing a lot of people. I wonder if you couldn't control them a little more?"

The man lifted his gaze as if to come to a consciousness of the situation for the first time and said softly, "Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what do think, and I guess they don't know who to handle it either."

Can you imagine what I felt at that moment? My paradigm shifted. Suddenly I saw things differently, and because I saw differently, I thought differently, I felt differently, I behaved differently. My irritation vanished. I didn't have to worry about controlling my attitude or my behavior; my heart was filled with the man's pain. Feelings of sympathy and compassion flowed freely. "Your wife just died? Oh I'm so sorry! Can you tell me about it? What can I do to help?" Everything changed in an instant."