

Positions of Privilege

Witnessing Whiteness Chapter 5

Workshop 5

Dear Facilitator(s),

This workshop series was carefully crafted, reviewed (by a multiracial team), and revised with several important issues in mind.

The series is intended to...

1. **Offer an 11 part, sequential process that corresponds to the reading of the book, Witnessing Whiteness, 2nd Edition.** Understandably, facilitators, for various reasons, might decide to use one or more of the workshops as stand alone events without sufficient time for participants to a) read the corresponding book chapters or b) move through the entire series. Yet, please understand that **moving through these workshops without having read the corresponding book chapter will markedly reduce its effectiveness. It will make moving through the workshop more challenging and is NOT recommended.** Understandings gained from one workshop are also important for subsequent workshops.
2. **Respond to particular group needs.** Recognizing that some groups may not be able to implement each workshop for the entire time suggested, some approved modifications can be found at the end of each workshop agenda. Only modify these workshops when absolutely required.
3. **Create a welcoming, inviting space where participants feel free to speak the truth of their experience without fear of shaming or reprisal.** It is essential for facilitators to understand that even when participants hold views that are counter to the themes in the book/series, a hallmark of both the book and the series is that people should be gently led into a new way of seeing.
4. **Follow logical threads of understanding related to each theme.** The language provided in the “scripts” that both precede and follow each section of the workshops are very important. Deviating from the essential themes and tone in those statements may create confusion and undercut the building nature of each individual workshop.
5. **Enhance leadership capacity within the community.** Detailed facilitator notes are provided for each activity so that one or more members of the group can practice their facilitation while leading this workshop series. A few notes of caution: a) the same facilitation team should run the entire series, b) the team should read the entire book in advance of leading any of the workshops, and c) sufficient debrief opportunities should be created to discuss how each workshop went so that facilitators’ skills can be developed.
6. **Provide community building opportunities for either racially caucused white groups OR multiracial groups.** Although still focused on whiteness in general, the series seeks to frame activities and questions in ways that allow people of color to benefit from the experience.

Best wishes,
Shelly Tochluk

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Workshop 5

Goals:

- Explore our areas of privilege and oppression within the context of our multiple identities
- Discuss the effects white privilege has on our daily lives
- Consider the degree to which we can dismantle and/or resist white privilege or other dominant member privilege

Materials:

- Multiple Social Positions (Handout 5.1)
- Target/Non-target (Handout 5.2)
- Butcher paper
- Pens
- Resources for Disrupting White Privilege and Racism (Handout 5.3) (distribute at facilitator's discretion)
- List of Terms/Context (Handout 5.4) (distribute at facilitator's discretion)

Book Anchor Quote: (Can be read aloud or distributed to the group during opening if desired.)

For those who see race as continuing to make a meaningful difference in our lives, far and away the most common meaning associated with being white is privilege....

Lorraine: The first thing that comes to my mind is privilege. I have a hard time answering that question outside of the context of my everyday world that I am totally immersed in because I'm dealing with, my professional life has been dedicated to, eliminating disparities and everything that I'm reading constantly just reinforces the gap that exists between white people and Black people and particularly when it comes to Black women. We are at the very bottom of every index compared not only to white women but in many cases to Black men. So, you know, when you ask me what that means, it means access, it means less stresses, it means a totally different existence.

SESSION 6 – Positions of Privilege

2 hrs 30 min

Section I

(20 min)

OPENING

Materials: Small/soft ball, Goals for day written out and communication guidelines posted ([download with discussion guide](#)) butcher paper and markers

Purpose of piece:

To discuss communication guidelines and review the goals for the workshop

Instructions: Facilitators introduce themselves, ask participants to go around in a circle and say their name. Ask participants to read the discussion guidelines posted on the wall. Ask participants what questions they have. Invite participants to add to the list any additional discussion guidelines they think would be helpful. Write them on the piece of butcher paper. Use this modified list for all future workshops.

Then introduce a small object, like a nerf ball, and ask participants to say, My name is _____ and I am a _____ (insert one group or role that describes you, such as your family position, gender, hobby, etc.) and then throw the ball to someone else in the circle. Example: "My name is Gloria and I am an athlete." Continue until everyone has had a chance to participate one or two times.

Wrap Up: We started off with this little icebreaker today because we want to highlight right at the beginning that we each have many different aspects to our lives. We are not simply our racial background. And while we intend to recognize our whole, complete selves here today, we are going to focus on race.

Section II

(15 min)

My Multiple Social Identity Positions

Materials: Multiple Social Positions (Handout 5.1), pens

Purpose of piece:

To identify our multiple identities and whether or not they are target or non-target positions

Say to group: As we said, we want to recognize that we each occupy a lot of social positions that affect how we experience the world. Some of those positions can offer us certain advantages, while others can cause us to face increased challenges.

- Some people use the terms "target" and "non-target" positions.
 - A "target" would refer to a group that has historically or generally been subject to discrimination.
 - The "non-target" group would be the dominant group, the one that has historically or generally received advantages in the society.
 - For example, in our society, when we talk about gender we would say that men have been in the non-target position, while women and transgender people have been in the target position. They have been "targets" of discrimination. Are there any questions about that?
- To begin the day, we'd like to take a few minutes to reflect on the various social positions we each occupy and whether we are in the target or non-target positions for each of them.

Distribute Multiple Social Positions (Handout 5.1)

Take a few minutes to fill in each of the categories. Also, be sure to note whether or not your position is historically or generally considered a "target" or "non-target" position. (5 minutes)

Large group check in: (8 minutes if needed)

1. Did any questions arise regarding the categories on the sheets and what you should write in?
2. What questions remain about which groups are considered targets and non-targets?

Wrap Up: This activity is a place for us to start. It allows us an opportunity to acknowledge in a very general way where our advantages and challenges may arise.

- It also lets us consider how our experience is shaped by our group membership, and how that membership can result in the construction of a certain lens, or filter, through which we see interactions with people from our and other groups.

- Now, we are going to take this one step further and ask each of us to consider some specific advantages or disadvantages we might deal with based upon our social positions.

Section III

(35 min)

MULTIPLE MODES OF PRIVILEGE

Materials: Target/Non-target (Handout 5.2)

Purpose of piece:

To explore our areas of privilege and oppression within the context of our multiple identities

Say to group: Now we are going to get really specific and explore various ways we might receive privilege based upon our social positions.

- Although we are going to involve multiple social positions in this exercise, race will play the largest role.
- We are now going to hand out a worksheet. Everyone will need either a pen or pencil.
- Get settled in your seat and take a deep breath. This is going to be a quiet exercise.
- I am going to read a series of statements.
- After each statement you'll make a mark in the appropriate column.

Distribute Target/Non-target note sheet

Read the following statements slowly, say each one twice. (10 minutes)

Facilitator's Note: *Do not read the category aloud, that is just a note for the facilitator, 6 of 18 are based in race*

1. If you believe you have been followed around a store while you shopped because of your race, put a mark on the target side. If this has not been your experience, put a mark on the non-target side.
RACE
2. If you learned to speak English as a first language, put a mark on the non-target side. If your first language was another language, put a mark on the target side. IMMIGRATION/ASSIMILATION
3. If, as a child, you had a room of your own with a door, put a mark on the non-target side. If you had to share a bedroom or sleep in a room that doubled as another room, put a mark on the target side.
CLASS
4. If you were raised to believe people will assume your behavior is a reflection of your race as a whole, put a mark on the target side. If you were not raised to believe people will assume your behavior is a reflection of your race as a whole worry, put a mark on the non-target side. RACE
5. If you, or either of your parents, own a home, put a mark on the non-target side. If neither you nor either of your parents own a home, put a mark on the target side. CLASS
6. If you have worried that you might get paid less by your employer because of your gender, put a mark on the target side. If you have never worried that you would get paid less by your employer because of your gender, put a mark on the non-target side. GENDER
7. If you do not have to consider if a workplace, restaurant, bank, or friend's home is physically accessible to you, put a mark on the non-target side. If you do have to consider this, place a mark on the target side. DISABILITY

8. If the books you read in school largely featured people of your race, put a mark on the non-target side. If the books you read did not largely feature people of your race, put a mark on the target side.
RACE
9. If you have to worry about being hurt or harassed when holding your partner's hand in public, put a mark on the target side. If you do not have to worry about this, put a mark on the non-target side.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION
10. If your elected or appointed officials are comprised primarily of people of your race, put a mark on the non-target side. If this is not the case, put a mark on the target side. RACE
11. If the religious or cultural holidays your family celebrates are normally recognized as official holidays by most schools and employers indicated by either a day off or increased pay for working those days, put a mark on the non-target side. If the religious or cultural holidays your family celebrates are not normally recognized as holidays by most of these institutions, put a mark on the target side.
RELIGION
12. If you worry about racial profiling by the police because of your race, put a mark on the target side. If you do not worry about this, put a mark on the non-target side. RACE
13. If the union between you and your partner is or would be recognized by the federal government, put a mark on the non-target side. If your union would not be recognized, put a mark on the target side. SEXUAL ORIENTATION
14. If your parents could afford to take your family out to eat at least at a nice, sit-down restaurant a few times per month, put a mark on the non-target side. If your parents could not afford to do this, put a mark on the non-target side. CLASS
15. If, when you are told about our national heritage or about "civilization," you are shown that people of your race made it what it is, put a mark on the non-target side. If this is not your experience, put a mark on the target side. RACE
16. If you have to worry about a member of your family being deported if arrested by the police, put a mark on the target side. If you do not have to worry about this, put a mark on the non-target side.
IMMIGRATION
17. If people question you whether you're a man or a woman, put a mark on the target side. If you are never questioned about this, put a mark on the non-target side. GENDER
18. If, when growing up, there were 10 or more books in your family's home, put a mark on the non-target side. If this was not your experience, put a mark on the target side.
EDUCATION/LITERACY/CLASS

Facilitator's Note: After statements are read, ask people to look at their sheets and tell them that the non-target side represents experiences of privilege, and the target side represents experiences of oppression.

- Ask them to take a moment to notice how many marks they have on each side.
- Ask them to consider if they think their responses are consistent with patterns associated with the typical experience of the various social positions they represent? Why or why not? (For example, if the participant is a female, does she believe her experience regarding gender or gender bias is typical.)

Say to Group:

We recognize that we have weighted the list of statements to focus more on race, while trying to acknowledge our multiple social identities.

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- We did this purposefully as a way of doing two things simultaneously.
 - We need to always recognize that we are complex people with many different aspects to our life experience.
 - AND, we need to spend some time paying attention to white skin privilege because it is an issue that is very frequently swept under the rug.
- We'd now like to invite you to share with a partner. Please spend just 5 minutes talking with a person sitting next to you about the following questions.

Pair Share – (5 minutes)

1. Was there anything surprising that you noticed while we did this exercise?
2. In what ways does this exercise challenge US cultural values of meritocracy and individualism?

Debrief – large group (15 min)

1. How did it feel to do this exercise? What emotions came up for you?
2. What does it mean for us to have the areas of privilege that we do?
3. How do your areas of oppression affect you? How might your areas of oppression affect your awareness of your areas of privilege?
4. How do we hold both as true? In other words, how do we accept that although we might feel oppressed in one area of our lives, we still may be advantaged in another? How can you continue to attend to this reality?

Wrap Up: This exercise was designed to help us see that although most of us might have areas where we feel targeted, white people are granted privileges due to their race.

- This is something we have to talk about in a concentrated way, even more than was done today.
- A challenge is that a lot of emotion often comes up when we speak about privilege.
- It's easy to concentrate on the areas where we feel like we're targets.
- It's much more challenging to take up responsibility for dismantling privilege in areas where we are part of the dominant group.
- Part of the issue is the resistance that often arises.
- We need to say explicitly that the point of this activity was not to make people feel guilty for being a person of their background.
- In fact, a common issue is that a deep sense of guilt can inadvertently make us less effective allies for those who are targets.
- We'll now take a 15-minute break, and when we come back together we will look more closely at how we deal with issues of white privilege.

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 minutes

BREAK 15 min

Section IV

(55 min)

DAILY EXPERIENCES WITH PRIVILEGE

Materials: Butcher paper with small group questions posted, Butcher paper sheets for each group, Markers, Handout 5.3 (Resources for Disrupting White Privilege and Racism)

Purpose of piece:

To discuss the effects privilege has on our daily lives and to consider the degree to which we can dismantle and/or resist privilege

Instructions: Get participants into groups of between 3 and 5 persons. **For consideration:** Depending upon group composition, this small group activity can be shifted (if desired) so that white participants gather together in small groups to consider the questions specific to white privilege. If there are sufficient numbers

of people of color to make a group(s), they might discuss ways they experience privilege and what that means for their lives, communities, and institutions.

Say to group: We are now going to ask you to focus on the following three questions (posted on the wall) for the next 25 minutes.

- Please take notes on the butcher paper provided, as we will share with the larger group when we're finished.
- White participants should focus on ways they experience white privilege, and people of color should choose a way they experience privilege in the world (perhaps via their gender, class, sexual orientation, ability position, etc.).

Small group questions: (25 minutes)

1. In what ways do we experience privilege?
2. How do those manifestations of privilege affect our daily lives?
3. What can we do to try and dismantle and/or resist the privilege that occurs in our lives, communities, and institutions?
4. In what ways are we unable to dismantle and/or resist the privilege that occurs in our lives, communities, and institutions?

Facilitator's Notes: Important for small group question 3 - PLEASE SEE HANDOUT 5.3, RESOURCES, FOR SOME EXAMPLES BROKEN DOWN BY CATEGORY THAT CAN SUPPORT THE DISCUSSION

Large group debrief: (30 minutes)

1. What important ideas came up in your group?
2. Recognizing how entrenched the systemic nature of white privilege is, what can we do, as individuals and/or as a group, to move forward without feeling overwhelmed or helpless?

Facilitator's Notes: Important for question 2 is that we attempt to get white people to see that simply deciding that they are against white privilege is actually not enough to change the basic structure and systemic nature of it.

- *It is important to do our individual work. The idea is not to dismiss this valuable activity, especially for those people who are brand new to the idea. But, we want to highlight that we need to do more.*
- *There are two essential ideas here:*
 - 1) *to acknowledge that even if we do our individual work, there is still going to be a need for people to work collectively in political ways to help change the system. White people need to be a part of that.*
 - 2) *The reality is that creating a personal anti-racist practice does not stop us from being complicit within a racist society.*
- *White people benefit in so many ways (even without asking for it), that we will have to grapple with what it feels like to know that no matter what we do, we are still a part of a racist system, and we benefit from it regardless of our wishes. Use these notes to help orient the conversation toward the end of this section.*

Wrap Up: What we have seen here is that white privilege is pervasive and affects people's lives in many ways. It is really important to try to resist white privilege as much as possible, and there are lots of ideas on how to do that.

- But, what we also want to acknowledge is that for white people, the benefits come even if when not invited.
- Yes, white people can try and resist the privileges.
- But, no matter what, white people will need to hold the tension between the facts that:

- 3) on one hand creating an anti-racist practice that names and resists privilege is essential and this can support positive self-regard, and
- 4) on the other hand, white people's anti-racist practice do not fully stop the benefits that come from white privilege.

Section V

(10 min)

Closing

Materials: None

Purpose of piece:

To acknowledge what we did today, bridge to next workshop, and allow people to check-out of the space

Workshop Wrap Up: Thank you for your honest sharing today. This topic is one of the most challenging and raises many questions and emotions. We encourage you to follow up with us if there are any lingering feelings or concerns. Ultimately, we'd like to leave you with a few ideas:

1. Most of us experience life as targets in some way or another.
2. It's much easier to only concentrate on the ways we feel targeted or oppressed.
3. Investigating how we benefit from the ways we are in dominant positions can help us become allies for people in targeted groups.
4. White privilege is so pernicious in our society that even when white people actively try to resist it, there are ways where white people continue to benefit from a racist system. This can create an emotional tension when it is realized that white people remain complicit in a racist system even in the face of anti-racism efforts.
5. Staying in the conversation with one another to support each other's efforts is essential.

Say to group: As we leave today, we would like you to name 1) one thing you've realized today about how privilege affects your life, and 2) one way you would like to be able to resist and/or dismantle it.

WORKSHOP 5 MODIFICATIONS

Suggested

If you are unable to complete the entire 2hr 30-minute workshop, here are some alterations that could satisfy some goals:

- **1 hour 30 min option**
 - Opening without thorough processing of discussion guidelines except agreement around confidentiality (reduces by 5 minutes)
 - Eliminate section IV (reduces by 55 minutes)
 - Eliminate break, but use those minutes for a more thorough discussion of section III
- **1 hour option**
 - Opening only 5 minutes – no processing discussion guidelines and no ice breaker
 - Complete sections II and III
 - Close only 5 minutes - ask participants only to name one thing they've realized about how privilege affects their lives.