Discovering Your Identities

HOW TO BE AN ALLY FOR YOUR STUDENTS

PRECIOUS PORRAS
Objectives

- Participants will explore their own privileged and targeted identities as outlined in the Matrix of Oppression
- Participants will review a 3 stage model of ally development
- Participants will identify strategies to become better social justice allies
- Share knowledge, peer to peer
Why this presentation?

- The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Competencies
  - create learning environments that are enriched with diverse views and people.
  - articulate one's own differences and similarities with others
  - recognize social systems and their influence on people of diverse backgrounds

- Diversity, Equity & Access (CAS General Standards)
  - Within the context of each institution’s unique mission and in accordance with institutional policies and all applicable codes and laws, programs and services must create and maintain educational and work environments that are welcoming, accessible, and inclusive to persons of diverse backgrounds, equitable and non-discriminatory, free from harassment
  - Programs and services must
    - advocate for greater sensitivity to multicultural and social justice concerns by the institution and its personnel
    - modify or remove policies, practices, facilities, structures, systems, and technologies that limit access, discriminate, or produce inequities
    - include diversity, equity, and access initiatives within their strategic plans
    - foster communication that deepens understanding of identity, culture, self-expression, and heritage
    - provide staff members with access to multicultural training and hold staff members accountable for integrating the training into their work
Diversity at Pitt State

- As volunteers, we members of the Pittsburg State University Tilford Group seek to:
  - Uphold the high ideals personified by Professor Tilford;
  - Recognize, promote, respect and appreciate diversity and multiculturalism in our community both local and global; and,
  - Educate faculty, staff, students and citizens to accept diversity and multiculturalism in its many and varied forms while developing economic, practical and social competencies enabling each of us to live a productive, successful life.
What is social justice?

"The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure"

- A social justice approach to education focused on social change is in the best interest of all members of society
- Encouraging a social change approach is necessary to change structures
- Developing social justice allies is a key component of working towards social change

Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007
Social justice allies are “members of dominant groups who are working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on social-group membership.”

Since allies are part of dominant social groups by definition, it is helpful to examine identities of those with privileged social group identities:

- Privilege - unearned, unasked for, often invisible benefits and advantages not available to members of targeted groups
- Oppression - systematic subjugation of target groups by those with social power (privileged groups)
- “The simple truth is that [social justice] can’t be solved unless people who are heterosexual or male or Anglo or White or economically comfortable feel obligated to make the problem of privilege their problem and to do something about it.” Allan Johnson, 2002
## Matrix of Oppression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Identity</th>
<th>Privileged Social Group</th>
<th>Border Social Group</th>
<th>Oppressed Social Group</th>
<th>Ism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White People</td>
<td>Biracial People (White/Latino, Black, Asian)</td>
<td>Asian, Black, Latino, Native People</td>
<td>Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Bio Men</td>
<td>Transsexual Intersex People</td>
<td>Bio Women</td>
<td>Sexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender Conforming Bio Men and Women</td>
<td>Gender Ambiguous Bio Men and Women</td>
<td>Transgender, Genderqueer, Intersex People</td>
<td>Transgender Oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexual People</td>
<td>Bisexual People</td>
<td>Lesbians, Gay Men</td>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Rich, Upper Class People</td>
<td>Middle Class People</td>
<td>Working Class, Poor People</td>
<td>Classism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability/Disability</td>
<td>Temporarily Abled-Bodied</td>
<td>People with Temporary Disabilities</td>
<td>People with Disabilities</td>
<td>Ableism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>Roman Catholic (historically)</td>
<td>Jews, Muslims, Hindus</td>
<td>Religious Oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Young People</td>
<td>Elders, Young People</td>
<td>Ageism/Adultism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Identity Development of Aspiring Social Justice Allies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aspiring Ally for Self-Interest</th>
<th>Aspiring Ally for Altruism</th>
<th>Ally for Social Justice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Selfish— for the people I know and care about</td>
<td>Other—I do it for them</td>
<td>Combined selfishness—I do this for us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ally to</strong></td>
<td>Ally to a person</td>
<td>Ally to a target group</td>
<td>Ally to an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship with Members of Oppressed Groups</strong></td>
<td>Working over members of target groups</td>
<td>Working for members of target groups</td>
<td>Working with members of target groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of Problem</strong></td>
<td>Individuals—overt perpetrators</td>
<td>Others from dominant group</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View of Justice</strong></td>
<td>These incidents of hate are exceptions to the system</td>
<td>We need justice for them</td>
<td>We need justice for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>I’m powerful/protective</td>
<td>I empower target group members/They need me</td>
<td>Empower us all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mistakes</strong></td>
<td>I don’t make mistakes, I’m a good person, perpetrators are just bad people</td>
<td>Difficulty admitting mistakes to self or others; struggles with critique, exploring own issues. Highly defensive when confronted with own behavior</td>
<td>Seeks critique as first and admits mistakes as part of doing the work, has accepted own isms and seeks help in uncovering them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Privilege</strong></td>
<td>Doesn’t see privilege</td>
<td>Feels guilty about privilege, tries to distance self from privilege</td>
<td>Sees illumination of privilege as liberating and consciously uses privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to the System</strong></td>
<td>Not interested in the system—just stopping the bad people</td>
<td>Aims to be an exception from the system, yet ultimately perpetuates they system</td>
<td>Seeks to escape, impede, amend, redefine, and destroy the system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Edwards, K.E., 2006
Aspiring Ally for Self-Interest

- May not call themselves an ally, but a “good friend”
- See themselves as protectors who intervene on behalf of a specific individual from an oppressed group, but do so without contacting him/her
- Fail to recognize their own privilege
- Fail to connect individual acts of oppression to the system, or acknowledge their own behaviors that perpetuate the system
Aspiring Ally for Altruism

- Awareness of privilege begins to develop, and you seek to engage in ally behavior as a means of dealing with guilt
- You see the system intellectually, but focus on other dominant group members as the perpetrators, distancing yourself from others to minimize guilt
- May become highly defensive or have difficulty admitting mistakes
- Fail to recognize that one “must speak with the oppressed without speaking for the oppressed”
- Burnout is common because of the energy needed to maintain status as exceptional member of dominant group
- View your efforts as selfless and altruistic efforts that should be welcomed with praise and approval from the subordinate group
Ally for Social Justice

- Not just allies for individuals, but to issues
- Work with oppressed groups in collaboration and partnership to end the system of oppression
- Connect and take responsibility for working with other dominant group members, rather than seeking to separate from them
- The collaborative and systemic aspects of how you view yourself is congruent with definitions of social justice allies
- By working towards social justice, allies are seeking not only to free the oppressed, but also to liberate themselves and reconnect to their own full humanity

Edwards, K.E., 2006
Strategies for Social Justice Allies

- Self Understanding
- Inspiring & Educating Dominant Group Members
- Creating Institutional & Cultural Change
- Supporting Target Group Members

"Social Justice is not a single act but a way of life. It is the conscious decision to challenge oneself and others to refrain from participating in systems of oppression that help to maintain inequity and the status quo."

-Annice Fisher

Resources

Questions?

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