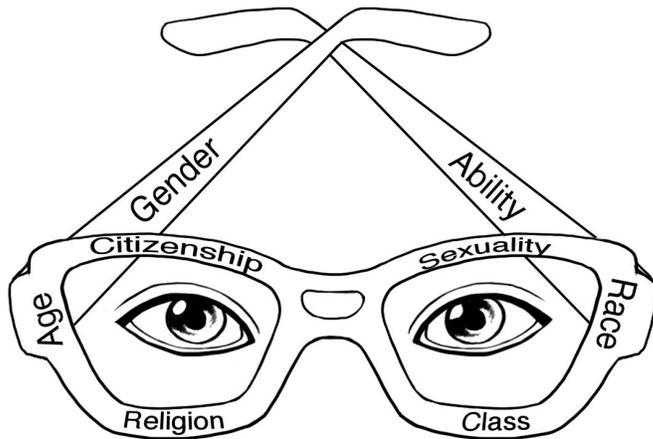


Frame of Reference Exercise



Purpose:

- To begin the process of identifying and articulating our frames/lenses and considering those of others
- To lay a foundation for understanding personal subjectivity and multiple perspective
- To clarify that communication across differences requires awareness of our own frames/lenses and those of other's
- To demonstrate the inseparability of perception and social location
- To invest each of us in the group as a whole through the process of sharing

First, spend a few minutes thinking about your frames/lenses. Some overall questions to consider: a) How have these lenses shaped how you view yourself and others? b) what might your lenses lead you NOT to notice as well as what they lead you TO notice? c) how might these lenses shape your expectations in life, and what you do or don't take for granted? Below are some possible dimensions to explore

The Process: I will begin in order to model the exercise for you, but of course you do not have to choose the same things to share that I do.

- This is a listening exercise. Please don't ask questions, make comments, call out jokes, etc. Just be as attentive and respectful as possible.
- Time: Each of us will have 2-3 minutes. When the timer goes off, please just finish your sentence and we will go automatically to the person next to you.
- Wrap-up: After we have gone around the room, we'll spend some time reflecting on the exercise.

Place: How did the region/neighborhood/country(s) in which you lived influence how you see the world? What language(s) did you speak and how did your first language influence how others perceived you? Have you always lived in the same country and if so, how does this shape what you see? How diverse was your neighborhood(s) growing up? What messages did your neighborhood(s) give you about your value?

Class: How did your class background (i.e. poor, working class, middle class, upper class) shape your expectations about your future? Where you believe you can go? What resources you have access to? How you view those in different class groups? How you view yourself? How you talk, dress, eat, play, etc.?

Religion: Were you raised with a certain religious tradition? How did it shape you? What kind of framework did (does) it provide for you? What is the relationship between your religion and the dominant religion of the culture you are in? What privileges do you or don't you have due to that relationship?

Race: Did you grow up with a sense of yourself as a member of a racial group? Did other people respond to you that way? How did it shape your sense of place in the world? If you did not have a sense of yourself as member of a racial group, how did that shape your identity? Who did you learn had these identities if you didn't? How did you learn this?

Body: How do aspects of your body influence your orientation to the world? How others treat you? How do definitions of normalcy shape your identity in relation to your body? How about your skin color? Ability? Age? Health? Size? Definitions of attractiveness?

Gender: What messages did you get about what it meant to be your assigned gender? What roles and expectations did others have for you based on gender (one way to surface gender socialization is to consider the consequences of being perceived as acting "too much" like the other gender)? What appears to be "open" to you based on gender? How does your gender identity shape your daily experience and routine?

Sexuality: How does your sexuality shape how you see the world? How you define yourself? Your expectations for your life, your partners, your family? How others see you? What rights and privileges you do or don't have access to?

Family: How did your family shape you? Consider birth order, how you define family, changes in your family make-up over time, etc.

Experiences: Are there key experiences you have had that shape how you see the world?