

“Resisting Marginalization”

A workshop facilitated by Joe Minarik and Joycelyn Landrum-Brown at First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana on January 28, 2018, 3-6pm.

Privileging Exercise

For reference:

1. Attached handout (p. 3) by Joe Minarik mapping the impacts of privilege
2. Attached article (pp. 4+) by Joe Minarik, “Privilege as Privileging”
3. Link: [“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh, 1989](#))

Focusing on white privilege as a probabilistic reality, these are the group’s brainstorm:

1. White privilege offers or permits access to:
 - Freedom from: violence; harassment; being followed
 - Freedom of: movement
 - Trust to: not steal; be honest; have money; be “clean”; be a good person; be well-intentioned; receive the benefit of the doubt
 - Grace
 - Others relating to you because they know you, are familiar, and talk with you
 - Assumed familiarity: networks provide job opportunities, higher salaries, supports, allow asset building, grant safety in travel (Mennonite Your Way)
 - Sense of belonging
 - Opportunities like education
2. White privilege permits escape from:
 - Consequences of lack of knowledge about another
 - Negative stereotypes
 - Lack of mobility
 - Restrictive choices / opportunities / language
 - Having to justify speech
 - Having to Code Switch
 - Judgment
 - Extra scrutiny
 - Suspicion
 - Automatic distrust
 - Consequences of ignorance
 - Possibility of humiliation
 - Discomfort
 - Expenditure of energy / stress
 - Efforts to find resources
 - Scapegoating by legal system
 - Surveillance
 - Not given credit for ideas

Responding to Racist Uncle Joe

The family reunion is coming up and you know that Uncle Joe will be there. He always tells a racist joke. The group workshoped the following questions:

1. What is at risk if you decide to respond?
 - Ruin the reunion; create disunity
 - Sides are drawn
 - Won't like you
 - Uncle Joe is loaded – lose access to inheritance & network
 - Driving wedges in other relationships
 - Increase conflict
 - Increase blood pressure / stress
 - Tears
 - Embarrassment if I don't make my point well or it's not received well
 - Uncle Joe goes on a tirade; it may get worse
 - You get singled out – lose your welcome

2. What is at risk if you decide not to respond?
 - Seen as agreeing / complicit with Uncle Joe
 - Personal integrity; conflict with own values & norms
 - Perpetuating
 - Grandchildren think it's OK
 - Lost opportunity to model defending the voiceless
 - Evil triumphs
 - Invites other disparaging remarks (“open door”)

3. What are ways you could respond?
 - Get allies; develop strategy in advance; prepare statement
 - Make a joke back
 - “I have a good friend and it hurts me to hear that”
 - Use ‘I’ statements; share own perspective
 - Don't get the joke (“I don't get it...”)
 - Exit / Exit with voice
 - Sever the relationship
 - “Why do you believe that?”
 - Address it privately before public confrontation (“We need to talk”)
 - Ask for clarification (“Are you saying...?” “Let's explore that”)
 - Start with something positive (“I know you like to share humor, but...”)
 - Watch _____ (suggest a resource)
 - “If somebody said that about us, you'd hurt a lot”
 - Leave in a hurry
 - Talk to the “host”
 - Not judge – see them as human

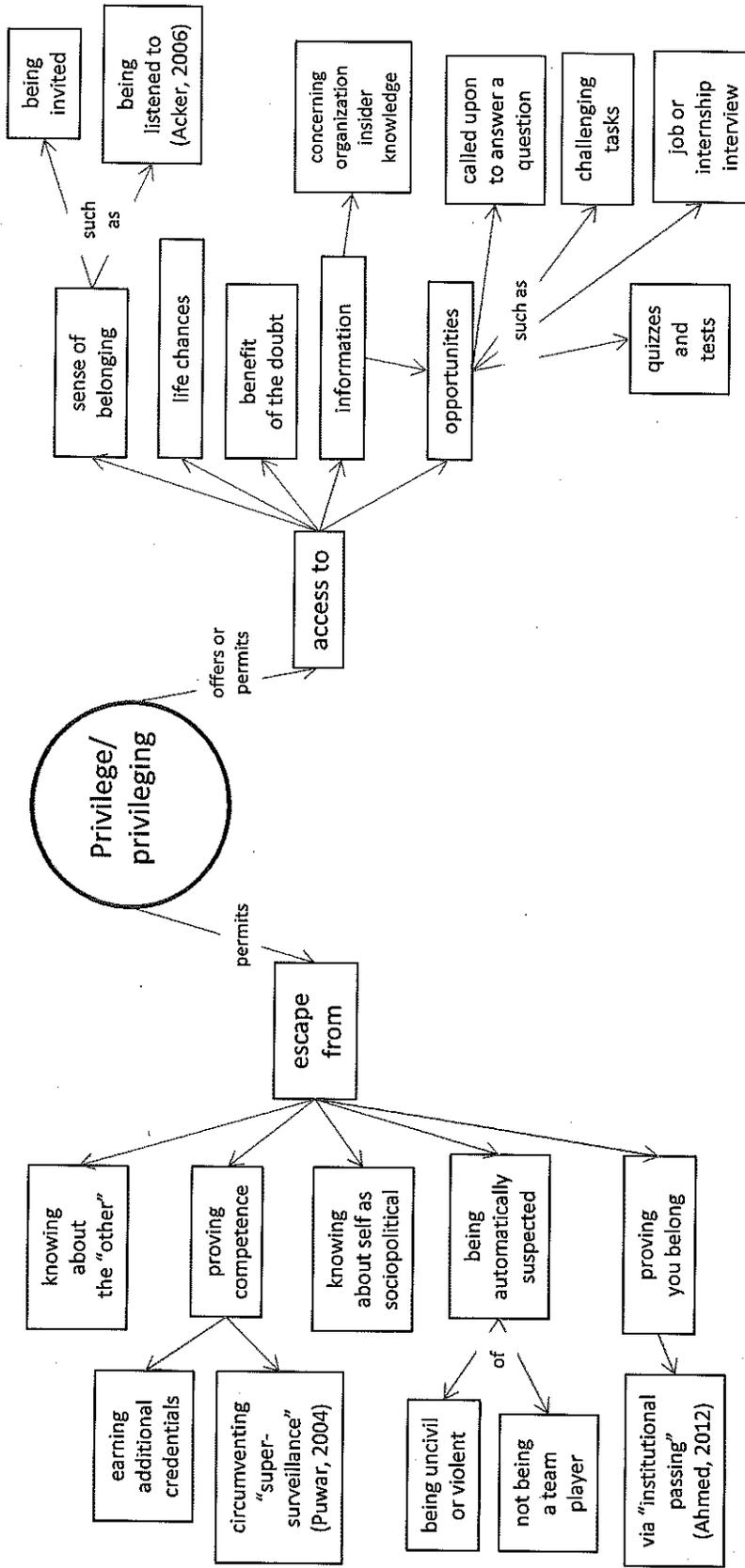
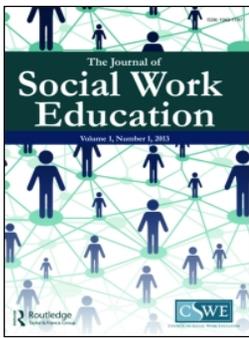


Figure 1. Privileging Concept Map. The concept map was initially based on the assertions made by McIntosh (1988), where high-status group members are permitted to access various resources, including being given the benefit of the doubt and information, and to escape other phenomena, such as being automatically suspected, and being obliged to know about the experiences, perspectives, etc. of low-status social identity group members. The concept map can be expanded, in order to include examples of different concepts (such as with "opportunities" and "sense of belonging"), experiences from one's own life, and other sources (e.g., empirical findings). Learners can be encouraged to use the Privileging Concept Map as a worksheet, and directed to identify their own examples of the mechanisms of differential advantage. In this way, learners can generate a contemporary visualization of categories and mechanisms of privileging and exclusion, and that may be used to note interconnections between the processes of privileging and marginalization. Social work students should also be encouraged to note the relationship between privileging and cultural incompetence, stemming from being permitted to escape knowing about the low-status "other."



Privilege as Privileging: Making the Dynamic and Complex Nature of Privilege and Marginalization Accessible

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Privilege as Privileging: Making the Dynamic and Complex Nature of Privilege and Marginalization Accessible

Joseph D. Minarik

ABSTRACT

Privilege is one of the central constructs social work educators reference to increase self-awareness and concern about inequality, but it is often oversimplified. This article argues how the concept of privilege can be made more credible to learners by anchoring it to everyday business-as-usual decision making, stereotyping, and various ideologies. Using a modified definition of privilege as privileging, and elaborating the definition of opportunity, the article describes the connections between opportunity distribution decisions, content of stereotypes, and belief systems, showing how educators can help students connect privileging at the individual and interpersonal levels to group-based inequality and sociocultural phenomena. The article also shows how using the privileging concept map can help students identify subtler contemporary examples of privileging and marginalization.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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Privilege is one of the most powerful concepts used in social work education on diversity (Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Loya, 2011; Mullaly, 2010; Walls et al., 2009), in social justice and antioppression work as well as in developing cultural competence (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Estrada, Poulsen, Cannon, & Wiggins, 2013). Although many have explored the idea of privilege (Case, 2013b; Goodman, 2011; Jensen, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Sullivan, 2006), McIntosh (1988) has been central to making it accessible to many. She wrote about her exploration of her own whiteness, drawing connections between her White privilege as an academic to the experiences she critiqued of men being able to rely on their male privilege to provide unearned benefits not available to women. McIntosh's article, originally appearing as a working paper, has been cited thousands of times, and its briefer version, often referred to as "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (McIntosh, 1989), has likewise been used extensively in the course of workshops, training programs, and diversity programs in higher education and elsewhere.

In terms of justice, it is possible that social identity-based inequality has not improved and perhaps has actually worsened in certain ways. Substantial differences between Whites and people of color persist in terms of wealth and poverty levels and in health outcomes (Barkan, 2010). And although shifts in social norms have resulted in more overt forms of bigotry (i.e., old-fashioned sexism) becoming objectionable or socially undesirable, subtler forms are less readily detected (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Niemonen, 2007). Evidence also suggests that certain kinds of oppression are being seen as normal by those being targeted, as in the case of young women in relation to sexualized violence and harassment (Hlavka, 2014). Other processes, such as microaggressions (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007) and problematizing (Essed, 1990, 2002) are even subtler in nature and challenging to confront given their subtlety and ambiguity when stripped out of context. In fact, particular forms of microaggression, that of microinsult and microinvalidation, although usually present in workplaces where microassault is taking place, by themselves are not sufficiently persuasive to judges and others that discrimination has occurred (King et al., 2011).

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Stereotyping in the workplace based on race and gender persists as well (Kaufman, 2002). Occupational segregation research also indicates that the advantage of being White in the workplace has likely increased over time in the United States (Mintz & Krymkowski, 2010), with status and access to power being distributed unfairly (DiTomaso, Post, & Parks-Yancy, 2007). Meanwhile, improvements concerning gender discrimination in the workplace appear to have leveled off over the past decade (Cohen, 2013). Empirical evidence also suggests that in the case of race, more Whites believe they are being discriminated against more than African Americans (Norton & Sommers, 2011). This is so even in the face of strong empirical evidence attesting to the persistence of discrimination in the workplace, including rates of employment terminations (Byron, 2010). Educators whose work seeks to address social justice by trying to address privilege are in fact addressing the dual processes of advantage and disadvantage. And based on findings from studies such as these, the need to increase understanding and application of privilege will become more important and more difficult in the future.

The attractiveness of McIntosh's (1989, 1999) ideas is no doubt in part because of the specificity of her claims, captured in one way by the list of concrete, everyday examples she provides in these two works. Those examples have in turn been extracted and used for experiential activities, variously titled the Privilege Walk or the Level Playing Field (e.g. Rozas, 2007). Some have adapted the original set of items to draw attention to other forms of advantage and disadvantage, including heterosexual privilege and homophobia (Blumer, Green, Thomte, & Green, 2013). Others have used the same format of lists reflecting high- and low-status social identity group member experiences in self-administered inventories, the results of which are often then discussed in a group context. Some also add items reflecting elements that emphasize privilege or target experiences based on other aspects of social identity, such as sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, disability status, age, and religion (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007). Such exercises are often mainstays of teachers, trainers, and others seeking to raise awareness of privilege and increase empathy for those who are disadvantaged, the latter of which is a key linchpin of prejudice reduction (Paluck & Green, 2009). Such exercises and inventories are often emotionally provocative as well, which can offer participants insight into the depth of feelings associated with unearned advantage and disadvantage. (See Mullaly [2010] for a useful typology of privileges based on different social identity types.)

Helping learners come to understand privilege is no easy matter. It is considered more difficult to specify than other processes, such as discrimination (Case, 2013a), and is lost to many through conflation with other constructs such as power (McIntosh, 2013). Other social scientists are bringing to light the even subtler and more complex ways unfairness and unearned advantage are manifesting themselves within various systems (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009), including employment (DiTomaso et al., 2007; Tilly, 1998), government (Puwar, 2004), and colleges and universities (Ahmed, 2012), to name just a few.

Making sense of the rejection of the idea of privilege

Educators who try to address the subject of social identity group-based privilege whether in a classroom or elsewhere will probably recognize the following reaction: "You say that because I am a White male, that I am privileged—but I don't feel privileged or special—I have had to work for everything I have ever gotten." How might one interpret and respond to such an assertion if one was seeking to help a group of people understand privilege, including people who occupy high-status social identity group positions of advantage or privilege?

One interpretation is that the White male is being "resistant," "in denial," "ignorant," or "dismissive" of the marginalization of people of color and women, or otherwise (e.g. Case & Cole, 2013)—that is, that he is wrong. Or one might contend he is trying to act color blind. It is certainly possible that some or all these reasons might be true about him and that what he has said is a manifestation of White male supremacist sense making. Sufficient evidence exists to support these kinds of interpretations, including the idea that those in positions of advantage have the greatest investment in the belief that the system of rewards and penalties is fair and legitimate (McCoy & Major, 2007), although this belief is in no way

limited to those who benefit from the status quo (McCoy & Major, 2007; McCoy, Wellman, Cosley, Saslow, & Epel, 2013). Perceptions in system stability have also been demonstrated to support the belief that the status quo is fair and just (Laurin, Gaucher, & Kay, 2013).

Let us assume, however, that this is a case of a White male who doesn't deny the existence of racism or sexism and who actually listens to women and people of color with empathy. He also recognizes the impact of these experiences on their lives and is relatively well informed about the prevalence of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and so on. And this White male even believes that privilege does exist but still does not see himself as privileged. This is the type of learner who also believes there are structural reasons for inequality in society. Now what?

In this case, one could make sense of this type of reaction by speculating that this White male has been marginalized too but based on other social identities—for example, his low socioeconomic class, age, disability, or religion—and that these have created disadvantages for him, undermining his advantages based on race and gender, and that the intersectionality of his identities (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1984) has made life hard. But if we rule those out, then how might we interpret his reaction? That is, even if he is also heterosexual, able bodied, Christian, nonworking class or non-poor, and so forth, how can an educator continue to believe in the phenomenon of privilege and not dismiss this White male's perspective of his own life and experiences as not feeling privileged or special and feeling like he has worked for what he has accomplished?

This scenario is one of the most vexing I have faced as an instructor of intergroup dialogues and arises regularly among dialogue facilitators I train and supervise in a large midwestern university in undergraduate courses about race, socioeconomic class, disability, gender, and other social identity constructs. Educators need to be prepared to work with learners who actually agree with all the other fundamental tenets of social justice education, such as oppression operating at individual and structural levels with power distributed unfairly because of social identity differences (Acker, 1990; DiTomaso et al., 2007). These learners also believe that privilege plays a central role in how systems of oppression are perpetuated, but they do not see the concept of privilege as applicable to themselves. Such learners argue that accusations of privilege are unrealistic, go too far, and promote unfairness toward well-meaning, well-intentioned individuals who have worked hard and earned their achievements legitimately.

The aim of this article is not to address the often plausible roles that various cognitive defenses or intersectionality of social identities might be playing that result in a White male rejecting the applicability of privilege to his life experiences. Rather than place the responsibility for such rejection solely on the shoulders of a learner, this article argues that the problem can also be located in the oversimplification by educators of the construct of privilege that limits such learners from being able to recognize the role of privilege in their personal life stories and trajectories. By framing privilege as the active process of privileging, elaborating on opportunity, and by explicitly showing the connections between privileging and other important microlevel interactions—including stereotyping and making decisions—this article seeks to offer a way of thinking and talking about privilege with learners that facilitates a more robust and dynamic understanding and that helps learners connect the dots to their own personal narratives of success (and failure). What is offered in this article, then, is a both-and solution to this particularly challenging type of rejection of privilege: that how the White male views his life can be true and that his life experiences could also reflect privileging in action.

The article also presents a theory of privileging, initially based on McIntosh (1988), using concept mapping to facilitate such a reconceptualization. Helping educators go beyond experiential exercises such as the Level Playing Field, this article concludes with a review of how the concept map can be used as a tool to invite learners to generate updated models or images of privileging based on their own experiences. A brief examination of subtler processes of privileging and marginalization is also included to help explain how even progressive individuals and organizations attempting to promote diversity and equality could end up perpetuating inequality and privilege.

Redefining privilege and elaborating on opportunity

Privilege as privileging

The first step for educators interested in working with privilege is to draw attention to the dynamic (rather than static) nature of the phenomenon. In its usual conceptualization, privilege connotes a static state or state of being (i.e., one has privilege, one is privileged, etc.). McIntosh (1988), for example, refers to privilege as unearned “circumstances and conditions” (p. 96) that one is trained to be oblivious toward. Derived in part from McIntosh, Case (2013a) defines privilege as “automatic unearned benefits bestowed upon perceived members of dominant groups based on social identity” (p. 2). And Mullaly (2010) proposes that privilege is something that is “given to us by society” (p. 287). But if one sees privilege as an active process, that of privileging, the phenomenon can be viewed as not given but continually enacted, a process performed between people, and thus seen as being continuously socially constructed. Moreover, emphasis can then be placed on discovering not just the products of privileging but the mechanisms in everyday events producing advantage, including decisions people make concerning distribution of various resources such as opportunities.

Elaborating on opportunity

The idea of opportunity also needs to be redefined by educators or at least elaborated on. Colloquially, the idea of opportunity can seem like a singular, special event, as in the expressions, “the opportunity of a lifetime” and “opportunity knocks but once.” Educators whose focus is on social justice are also susceptible to glossing over the concept as if everyone knew what an opportunity looks like in concrete terms. This might stem in part from the common usage in terms such as *equal opportunity*, which is an idea that has undergone multiple incarnations among human resource personnel over decades as they have sought to address discrimination in the workplace (Dobbin, 2009).

But a more effective, elaborated definition of opportunity would include events that might not immediately come to mind among learners. For example, in addition to being offered a job interview, opportunities should include actions such as assigning hard tasks or demanding projects, giving (homework) assignments, giving tests, asking challenging questions, even being called on to answer a question in class (van der Valk, 2014). It is important to note that these discrete events might or might not be zero sum, but they depend on a decision maker’s discretion in determining to whom something will be made more available. Moreover, to the extent that opportunities are seen as life chances, learners can be prompted to understand that the distribution of opportunities is also informed by chance or probability. Privileging, then, can be recognized as a process where chances or odds of being offered an opportunity are altered or skewed to the advantage of members of certain groups (and to the disadvantage of members of other groups) rather than as automatic events leading inevitably to outcomes of individual success. Redefining privilege as privileging, coupled with an elaborated definition of opportunity, also helps learners see privilege as complex and dynamic rather than static.

Concept mapping for making sense of privileging

Concept mapping offers a way to create visualizations of complex constructs, including the relationships between related concepts, which may be updated over time as learning and understanding continues to grow and develop (Novak & Cañas, 2006, 2008). I created a concept map first to explain the theory of privilege generated by McIntosh (1988), and then I altered, expanded, and refined it as I reviewed and integrated the perspectives of other authors on the subject of privilege (Black & Stone, 2005; Goodman, 2011; Johnson, 2001; McIntosh, 1988). (The map continues to be altered and updated, as my own understanding grows and changes.) The latest iteration of this concept map is offered in [Figure 1](#) and serves as the reference point for the next section of this article.

The privileging concept map

The privileging concept map in [Figure 1](#) reflects the two primary assertions made by McIntosh (1988): Those with privilege have permission to access certain advantages, and they have permission to escape other phenomena including various disadvantages and certain expectations. The different advantages and benefits are then sorted and aligned in the columns on the right, whereas the burdens, disadvantages, and expectations one is permitted to evade or escape as a result of privileging are in the columns on the left. The various concepts in each column represent examples drawn directly from McIntosh (1988), categories based on assertions she makes therein, and concepts that have been added over time and from other sources, including the literature (e.g., Acker, 2006; Puwar, 2004).

As can be seen in [Figure 1](#), advantages include permission to access information, a sense of belonging, life chances, the benefit of the doubt, and the elaborated version of opportunities as being assigned challenging tasks, tests, and projects. The different disadvantages, burdens, and expectations one is also permitted to escape include life chance restrictions, proving one's own competence, being automatically suspected, proving one belongs, knowing about the other, and knowing about the self as sociopolitical.

Some of these can be seen as mirror opposites of each other, such as life chances and restricted life chances, a theme well recognized by McIntosh (1988) and others. This can also be seen in a sense of belonging on the right and proving you belong on the left. The relationships between other pairs are less straightforward. For example, privileging by others can mean one has the benefit of the doubt on his or her competence or human potential and at the same time is allowed to evade the suspicion of others that he or she is incompetent and incapable. Puwar (2004, pp. 58–61) offers an important elaboration on this idea when noting that those being privileged are offered opportunities not because of past accomplishments per se but because of the potential that others believe they possess. At the same time, those who are marginalized but are included will experience “super-surveillance” (p. 61), needing to remain hypervigilant to make no mistakes lest their competence again be called into question (Puwar, 2004).

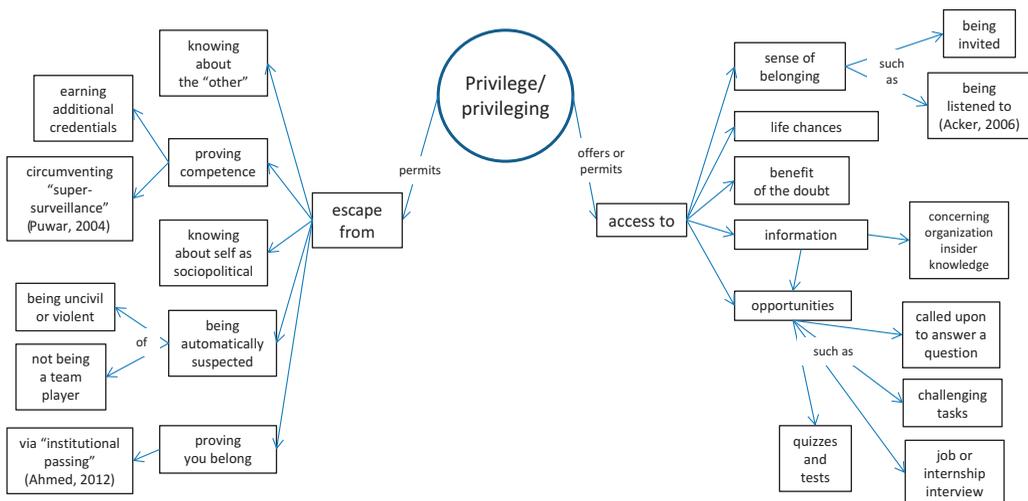


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Still other examples are unique to one side or the other. For instance, privileging means that one is more likely to be permitted access to information, including information about opportunities (such as job openings) or other resources that have freed up and are available. DiTomaso (2012) notes how information conveyed through social networks of family and friends can even offset deficits in human capital of White working-class and working poor people seeking jobs. In fact, DiTomaso's (2012) work helps define the role played by social identity similarity and centrality in networks and reflects arguments made more than a decade earlier concerning factors and forces that make inequality so intractable, including through the process of opportunity hoarding (Tilly, 1998, 2001).

Knowing about the other, placed in the column of items one is permitted to escape, is particularly worth noting. This concept is meant to draw attention to a subtle and increasingly important phenomenon of privileging that figures into other phenomena, including stereotyping, overgeneralization, cultural competence, and opportunity distribution decision making. Knowing about the other means having accurate, evidence-based information, knowledge, and understanding of whatever low-status out group one is not part of. So, White people are permitted to not know about people of color, males are allowed to escape learning about the experiences of women, temporarily able-bodied people are permitted to not acquire accurate information about people with disabilities, and so on.

To the extent that perspective taking continues to be a fundamental factor in improved intergroup relations (Paluck & Green, 2009), not needing to know about those who are marginalized, tied as it is to privileging, should be seen as a key in the maintenance of the status quo. In the case of race, it has been framed as a lack of racial literacy (Warren, 2014). Mayo (2004) argues that White people do not have to have accurate knowledge about people of color, for example, because White privilege supports them in believing they already have sufficient knowledge. This lack of knowledge is further compounded when privileging allows high-status group members to not listen to low-status others, for instance, in meetings, or "not inviting them to join a group going out for a drink after work, [and] not seeking their opinions on workplace problems" (Acker, 2006, p. 448). And in the absence of accurate knowledge about low-status groups, decision makers who are thus oblivious will still make decisions, but they will be based instead on the pseudo knowledge of stereotypes, low-contact information, or overgeneralizations from isolated experiences. Various authors (Jensen, 2005; Mayo, 2004) also contend that obliviousness from privileging can include being allowed to escape knowing about oneself within the larger sociopolitical context. This exists, for example, when White people are allowed to avoid knowing the impact of their White racial identity in a White supremacist society.

An important caveat to this description of the privileging concept map is that those experiencing privileging are permitted to escape these various expectations or burdens without being penalized. That is, White people who choose to not know about the lived experiences of people of color in a White supremacist society are not penalized for this lack of knowledge, even though it could be interpreted as a form of cultural incompetence. Rather, if a White person does develop substantive critical knowledge and understanding of the role of power and domination of people of color by White people in a White supremacist society, instead of considering such knowledge as a fundamental expectation, it is often interpreted as exceptional, and the White person might actually be lauded for such expertise and insight.

This is exactly the opposite for members of low-status social identity groups that are at risk because they do not know about the high-status other. So people of color in a White supremacist society who are unaware of how White supremacy operates or of which White people are more dangerous risk discrimination, violence, and other forms of targeting. And women who do not know about the ways male violence is practiced by men similarly risk discrimination, exploitation, or assault.

Well-intentioned high-status group members might attempt to address this incompetence in a way that maintains their privilege of not having to know by placing members of marginalized groups in positions of being experts on (and spokespersons for) their marginalized groups. Usually without additional compensation, low-status group members are given the role of diversity consultant, supplying individuals or the organization with desired knowledge, and the high-status person is permitted to remain unknowledgeable. Taking advantage of the expertise of marginalized others on the one hand

might appear to be an important part of progress for high-status group members toward critical consciousness. But when high-status group members continually depend on the unpaid expertise and labor of low-status group members to compensate for their own cultural incompetence, then this reflects an albeit subtle form of exploitation (Tilly, 1998) and preserves privileging.

Providing this description of the privileging concept map based on McIntosh (1988), places me in a better position to offer a more nuanced understanding of privileging. But this still falls short of being able to make sense of the White male able-bodied learner who can acknowledge the existence of racism, sexism, and ableism but still balks at the idea that he should feel special and hasn't earned or deserves what he has accomplished in his life. Part of this disconnect might be addressed by drawing the learner's attention to how people make decisions about resource allocations, some of the factors influencing such distribution decisions, and the probabilistic effects of such decisions proximally, immediately, and cumulatively.

Decision making, stereotyping, and privileging

Decision making under uncertainty, and stereotypes as pseudo knowledge

According to the theory of bounded rationality, decision makers use information for making allocation decisions (e.g., who will be given opportunities) under imperfect information and uncertainty (Hoffrage & Reimer, 2004; Ostrom, 1991, 1998). Based on the theory of new institutionalism, decision making can follow informal strategies, crafted over time, that have worked in the past to achieve particular goals within a system (Ostrom, 2009). Such strategies are supported by social norms as well as mores, codes of conduct (or the rules in use), and beliefs, which reflect dominant categorizations and practices while adapting to emergent changes, for example, at the constitutional level of laws and statutes (Tilly, 1998). Decision makers seek to reduce the costs or effort required in making decisions, such as whom to hire, by relying on word-of-mouth, for example (DiTomaso et al., 2007).

But when all possible recipients of opportunity are relative strangers to the decision maker who has little or no direct knowledge of those recipients, how might costs be reduced in coming to a decision? It is argued here that decisions about whom should be offered a particular opportunity can be informed and determined by beliefs and heuristics, including stereotypes (Graham, 2013).

Stereotypes are not necessarily consciously accessed, nor do they need to stem from employer animus (Skaggs & Bridges, 2013). But they can still serve as knowledge for decision makers about qualities and capabilities of potential recipients. Stereotypes have been shown to contain information concerning the attributes of those who are objects of such stereotypes, including information about warmth and competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Even when employers seek to use criteria of competence in making hiring decisions, such criteria are seldom race or gender neutral but instead require the decision maker's judgment (Acker, 2006). Stereotypes have also been found to serve particular functions, including explanation and justification (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002). Gender stereotyping, for example, can be perpetuated by same-gender preferences and gender stereotypicality of selection criteria in certain organizations, such as law firms (Gorman, 2005), perpetuating employment segregation. Along with the discretionary use of organizational policies, stereotypes are an integral part of the processes of discrimination (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011) including promotion decisions (Dobbin, 2009). In fact, empirical evidence strongly supports the contention that stereotyping African American men and women and White women are stronger predictors of job segregation than any other predictors (Kaufman, 2002). Whether stereotypes are serving as pseudo knowledge to decrease uncertainty, or operate in more blatant ways to discriminate, their role during decision making as critical counterparts to privileging is unequivocal.

Educators can link privileging with decision making by inviting learners to examine the role played by stereotype beliefs held by a decision maker, even one who wants to act fairly but has been allowed to escape knowing about particular social identity others through privileging. Taking this approach means

the decision maker considers some recipients more readily than members of low-status groups, and if this occurs regularly, it can indicate that this decision process is a strategy that has become habituated (Ahmed, 2012; Harvey, 2010) and skewed.

Cumulative advantage, disadvantage, and aggregate impact

The individual who is offered an opportunity has a role to play in whether (and the degree to which) he or she succeeds or fails, including exerting the effort and due diligence (i.e., working) to accomplish the task successfully (Jensen, 2005). From this perspective, privileging does not necessarily mean high-status group members are simply granted success (i.e., handed bags of gold) but rather have had to choose to accept the opportunity once it was offered and then (most likely) had to exert the effort to transform that chance into a success. When college students are asked if they felt they had worked to prepare for a test, most will immediately answer yes. Likewise, asking a group of professionals if they have ever been assigned a difficult project by a supervisor, and if on accepting they worked to complete that project, again most will readily say yes. It is also important to recognize explicitly the opportunity costs for such choices. For example, by studying for the test, a student might have had to give up three hours of playing a favorite video game, which the student would consider as a type of sacrifice.

Along with requiring work, accepting and succeeding at a challenging task does not mean automatic ascendancy in an organization's hierarchy. A single success might indeed serve to signal an increase in human capital but will not likely result in an employee's becoming the company's chief executive officer. Rather, rising in an organization's hierarchy requires multiple iterations of opportunities offered and choices made to access the opportunities, with each instance conceivably also including work and successful performance over time. In cumulative advantage, ostensibly small advantages, such as those stemming from social identity group membership, can lead to large differences among individuals over time. Such differences are in part because of the exponential rather than additive nature of such exchanges and efforts (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006).

Educators also have an opportunity to link the idea of cumulative advantage (through privileging) to its counterpart, or what high-status group members may avoid: cumulative disadvantage through -marginalization. Discrimination and other processes in the workplace (e.g., decisions made at the point of hiring, during performance evaluations, and concerning advancement opportunities) increasingly are seen by researchers as important to the maintenance of inequality (Skaggs & Bridges, 2013). Educators might frame these for learners as related to cumulative disadvantage with corresponding costs. Perspective taking can also be facilitated by asking learners to think about how much psychological preparation they imagine low-status group members probably must invest (as opportunity costs) to overcome all the barriers they are not allowed to escape. Learners can then be encouraged to recognize how investing time and attention in overcoming barriers reduces one's capacity during task performance.

Although the focus of privileging has been at the individual level and how it can accumulate over time affecting individual status and power within systems, learners also need to recognize the impact of privileging on aggregate-level phenomena. This can be facilitated by asking learners what they would expect to see in terms of wealth accumulation by high-status compared to low-status social identity groups if individual-level phenomena are replicated among hundreds of thousands of high-status group members over decades and played out over generations. The educator could also remind learners that aggregate differences in wealth reflect group members distributed over a continuum in the shape of a bell curve, and that the distribution of a low-status group could overlap that of the corresponding high-status group, but the means and medians of those distributions will not coincide. Illustrating that wealth is distributed among group members helps learners make sense of the fact that some high-status individuals could nonetheless have little wealth and that some low-status group members as individuals could still have amassed significant assets without either being sufficient evidence of equality or the end of oppression. Further, privileging can then be seen as probabilistic in essence rather than deterministic.

Acceptance of privileging and how learners feel about themselves

The argument thus far emphasizes the need to elaborate on opportunity and privileging and how they operate during decision making to create cumulative advantage. Educators can also use recent empirical findings in structuring their learning activities to further reduce the likelihood of learners' rejecting the validity of privileging as a source of inequality. In a series of experiments with business school students, Lowery, Knowles, and Unzueta (2007) found that Whites whose sense of self-worth is threatened were more likely to believe in the existence of anti-Black discrimination but not in White privilege. The researchers also found that Whites who first self-affirmed were not only more likely to recognize White privilege but also more likely to support policies promoting equality. Rejection of privilege was also increased by identification with the White in group but did not diminish White study participants' beliefs that anti-Black discrimination exists. Also, the researchers found no difference based on participants' gender.

Even though discomfort can facilitate learning among such individuals (Goodman, 2011; Warren, 2014), these findings suggest that Whites' acceptance of privileging might require privileging to be presented in a manner that does not unnecessarily increase learner discomfort or challenge the self-worth of high-status group members. One way to accomplish this is by explicitly stating that (by and large) individuals who are presented with an opportunity will still have to work or expend their efforts to transform the opportunity into a success. The fact that those individuals also had a greater probability of getting the shot at success in the first place could then be reiterated. The preliminary empirical findings of Lowery et al. (2007), who see this as an issue of framing, are important, but one should be cautious, however, in overextending the findings from this one study to different kinds of social identities.

The challenge to ideologies of meritocracy, individualism, and system legitimacy

By clarifying the connections between opportunity distributions skewed by decision makers privileging high-status group members and the kinds of disadvantages those group members are permitted to escape, the educator will be challenging fundamental tenets of society: individualism, meritocracy, and system fairness or legitimacy. But the need to believe that the system is fair is not easily shaken (Laurin et al., 2013; McCoy & Major, 2007; McCoy et al., 2013). And the extent to which individuals adhere to other beliefs, such as free choice, can also limit the degree to which they accept the existence of discrimination (Savani & Rattan, 2012; Stephens & Levine, 2011). But helping illustrate the fundamentally different experiences of high-status group members compared to those being marginalized is fundamental to the structural explanation of success and failure. Learners must be encouraged to recognize that more than just individual effort results in success and that individual failure likewise cannot be assumed to rest solely in the hands of the individual.

Belonging doesn't mean feeling celebrated

Finally, why might a White male in a discussion about White privilege contend that he does not feel special? This might occur if the educator somehow communicates the idea that people with privilege are being treated as if they were special, implying that they should all feel better because of it. If this were the case, however, what would those interactions look like in reality? That is, is there evidence that a White male who walks into a room where his superiors are meeting is made to feel special by those others? Is he receiving signals and cues (Bird & Smith, 2005) that he is being celebrated by those others? Not necessarily.

Educators need to point out that privileging does not mean, for example, that White males entering a room filled with other White people will be made to feel special but instead that they will be able to escape feeling like outcasts. That is, they will feel like they belong because they are not being made to feel that others see them as suspicious. Privileging means that when they enter the room, if they are noticed at all, they will not be seeing puzzled looks, side glances questioning whether they are in the right room, or

looks of surprise. Privileging means they are more likely to blend in rather than feel as if they were sticking out. Moreover, it is also possible they will be viewed as having potential (Puwar, 2004). And in contrast to low-status group members, they will be listened to, included, and more likely to be invited to participate in important processes (Acker, 2006). That is, to the extent that privilege can be reframed as not necessarily signaling certain people being automatically celebrated but instead manifests itself as the absence of being suspected (of incompetence, incivility, not belonging, etc.), then the misconception that privileging includes being made to feel special can be corrected.

The privileging concept map as an experiential exercise

Promoting understanding of privileging is founded on making the mechanisms of privileging explicit as well as making the exploration a personal one for learners (Platt, 2013). The privileging concept map is a tool that invites learners to explore their personal experiences as recipients and distributors of opportunities and their knowledge of the corresponding and unique types and mechanisms of disadvantage they also know of or have experienced. Using the concept map can also facilitate an exploration of the role that systems, including social networks, play in the distribution of opportunities. That is, by including the significance of relationships and social network centrality to privileging, learners can be guided to think beyond the individual and consider how systems of collective action are operating to maintain privileging and oppression.

As recommended by others (Abrams & Gibson, 2007), I have usually given learners the assignment to read McIntosh (1988) and sometimes included a blank version of the concept map for students to use as they read the article prior to discussion. Learners have also been assigned the task of coming up with their own ideas of what one is allowed to access, or permitted to escape, based either on McIntosh (1988) or their own experiences and ideas prior to discussion. They are invited to also note any examples they are not certain about but speculate might somehow be related to privileging.

During the group discussion, learners are asked to first describe what McIntosh (1988) is arguing before interpreting or evaluating her perspective. The description process then focuses on listing on a dry erase board as many examples of things that privileging permits one to access. Additional categories are added that learners have overlooked from the McIntosh article, followed by a discussion. Immediately afterward, the learners are invited to list as many different examples of things one is permitted to escape as a result of privileging, which are then written to the left of the other set. Patterns, themes, and insights are then discussed. The map that emerges is a product of collective, collaborative exploration, as in intergroup dialogues that address privilege (Dessel, Massé, & Walker, 2013). By presenting the information visually and showing examples of advantaging and marginalizing next to each other, learners are encouraged to recognize the inextricable interrelationship between the two.

Educators can also add to the group's privileging concept map by offering examples that learners have missed or overlooked as well as examples that are particularly subtle. For example, I often ask certain learners to develop a more elaborated definition of opportunity that includes events that might feel burdensome, such as taking a test in a classroom or being assigned a challenging project by a supervisor, and how those connect to other phenomena over the long run, such as cumulative advantage (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006). Facilitating a discussion about that particular experience gives one the chance to interject the understanding that taking a test can involve hard work in the form of preparing and studying and so on. At this time, one can also point out that privileging might not make a person feel particularly special nor will it inevitably lead to automatic success.

Two other examples learners need to understand are being permitted to escape knowing about the other and knowing about the sociopolitical self. Educators must be ready to interject these examples if learners do not. One can also point out that this facet of obliviousness carries little or no sort of penalty for the high-status group member. Ramifications of such permitted ignorance can be further enhanced by pointing out, for example, how well-meaning, well-intentioned liberals can maintain their privileged status quo of not knowing while promoting equality simply through acts like commodification of the other (e.g., employing unpaid diversity consultants, as noted earlier).

Such ignorance can also be expressed through tokenism in the form of diversity hires. Although very subtle, these processes reflect some of the ways organizations seeking to promote equality are instead increasing inequality (Ahmed, 2012). And it is precisely these sorts of well-intended but misguided actions that should be of particular concern to those seeking effective strategies for promoting fairness and equality in systems.

Conclusion

According to Mullaly (2010), privilege should be seen as the counterpart to oppression, but it has not been given the same attention in the social work literature as oppression. Loya (2011) argues that social work education appears to help students understand the structural nature of oppression but is not as effective in helping students recognize the role that privilege plays, including concerning culturally competent practice. This article seeks to address this deficit by encouraging social work educators to offer a model of privilege that is simple but not simplistic. Privilege is situated in the mundane and in business as usual, reflected in many of the hundreds of decisions made by individuals every day and over years, including decisions about who should be assigned to do what. These decisions, serving as the mediators of life chances, can and must be seen within their larger interpersonal, organizational, cultural, and societal contexts.

This article shows how such oversimplification can be circumvented through an expanded conceptualization of privileging within the context of individual agency (choice); human, social, and economic capital development; an instrumental view of stereotyping and decision making; and ideologies such as individualism and meritocracy. By inviting learners to see the connections among these processes, based on interpreting their own experiences in the world, social work educators will be more able to help shed light on the accumulation of advantage facilitated by privileging. And concept mapping of privileging can help learners develop greater insights into the mechanisms of unfairness reflected in the literature and in their own lives (Reskin, 2000, 2008). To the extent that educators also have examples of subtle processes that appear to promote equality but in fact perpetuate the privileging status quo, learners will be challenged and supported in recognizing the adaptive nature of privileging.

Although this article looks specifically at the value of redefining privilege as an active process that is enacted regularly, it is important for learners to be encouraged to recognize the relationship between privileging and status (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Learners should also be encouraged to notice how various forms of microaggression might not only be personal affronts but in fact serve to maintain the status quo (Sue et al., 2007). Attention also needs to be drawn to the mechanisms taking place on an everyday basis (Essed, 1990, 2002) that serve to promote selective or conditional inclusion of certain group members and the exclusion of others (Ahmed, 2012; Ravaud & Stiker, 2001). Finally, given the ever more sophisticated subtler forms of marginalization and privileging, educators must prepare social work students to notice these mechanisms more readily if we hope to see greater social justice in the future (Reskin, 2008).

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