

Class: Social Studies – Grade 9

Date: March 1st, 2019

Title: Considering Privilege

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Objective of Lesson / Enduring Understanding:

To have the students gain an understanding of privilege related to race, sex, gender, sexual orientation and other relevant factors in the context of a market or mixed economy.

Learner Outcomes (Program of Studies): 9.2.4 compare and contrast the principles and practices of market and mixed economies 9.2.6 assess, critically, the interrelationship between political decisions and economic systems. (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 16-17) Values and Attitudes (Program of Studies): -demonstrate social compassion, fairness and justice -appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, shape Canada's political, socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural realities (Alberta Education, 2005, p.3) Social Justice Standards: ID.9-12.3-ID.9-12.5 DI.9-12.7- DI.9-12.10 (Teaching Tolerance, 2017, p.10)	Plan for Differentiation / Inclusion: -Distribution of “privilege walk” question handout to address any auditory or verbal language comprehension concerns. -Inclusion of students own identity in second reading of the “privilege walk”. -Second reading of “privilege walk” assessing privilege using own identity kept private to avoid singling out students. -Use of the written calculation option for students with reduced mobility if they wish. -Assessment strategy permits both verbal and written expression of knowledge.
Prerequisite Knowledge, Skills, Strategies and Attitudes -Developing understanding of mixed and market economies, and the potential for “winners and losers” in those systems. -Conceptual understanding of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and discriminatory practices. -Prior exposure to critical thinking frameworks. -High level of student-teacher and teacher-teacher trust and mutual respect. -Well established norms for respectful classroom dialog.	Preliminary Matters (Announcements, etc.) -Students must have a notebook and writing utensil.

	Time	Teaching Strategy	Student Activity	Resources	Assessment
Intro	10 min	Presentation	Teacher reviews principles of market economies, particularly as it pertains to profit incentive and underlying assumption of equal opportunity for	Classroom or Gymnasium as available	

			success or meritocracy – “consider the perception of American Dream”. Teacher engages in some discussions to trouble the idea that every member of society has equal opportunities to succeed, which implies not that less privileged individuals cannot succeed, simply that it may be more difficult in certain contexts. Teacher prompts students to consider a broad range of factors that may help or hinder an individual’s success in a market or mixed economy to include: -Education/Upbringing -Privilege -Racism/Sexism/Ableism -Homophobia/Transphobia -Associated self-esteem and psychological considerations.		4 Questions to students – 1. Definitions of: -Racism -Sexism -Ableism 2. Differences between market and mixed economy.
Activity Sequence	20 min	Presentation	Teacher distributes identity cards, and organizes the students into a line. Next, the teacher reads the “privilege walk” questions to the students. Students take the physical steps forward in a gymnasium-like facility or record the steps forward and backward for their identified character. Students are prompted to put themselves in the position of their character in assessing their answers. In the case of a physical “walk”, students are asked to place their card on the ground, then walk around to see the placement of other cards. If a gymnasium is not available, the teacher will create a graph on a chalkboard with a zero at the center, and hash marks for a range of steps forward and backwards. After reading the questions, students will be asked to add up the number of steps forward or backward and place their identity card on the graph. After everyone has placed their cards, students will be asked walk up to the board to view the placement of other cards.	Identity Card Handouts Gymnasium (preferred) Classroom with blackboard and sticky tack to stick identity cards to a blackboard. (alternate)	

	15 min	Discussion	Students are organized into groups of 3, and asked to discuss their characters' possibility for success in a market or mixed economy. What challenges and advantages did their character possess that would impact their possibilities for success? To what extend are these individuals "self-made"?		Teacher circulates to observe groups, and confirms at least one guiding question asked and answered.
	10 Min	Presentation	Teacher reads the "privilege walk" questions again with students counting their steps forward and backward based on their own identity. Teacher prompts students to compare and contrast the relative advantage of their assigned personality to their own number of "steps forward", and those of others they have discussed in their groups.		
Closure	5 min	Presentation	Teacher challenges the myth of the "self-made" person and meritocracy in the context of a market economy and encourages students to consider the overall equity and "fairness" of such a system, whether fairness is desired, and to evaluate potential solutions that might make it more fair.		Students are prompted to list on an exit slip three differences in the privileges found in their own life, and the life associated with their assigned identity card.

Teacher Notes:

In order to have the students gain an understanding of privilege related to race, sex, gender, sexual orientation and other relevant factors in the context of a market or mixed economy, we have adapted and refined a “privilege walk” technique intended for use with older youth and adults. In making these refinements, the overall approach takes the form of a combination of game based and story-based pedagogy. The question set was reduced relative to the original version by removing questions not applicable to younger students, and some that were very similar to others in order to reduce the time necessary to read the list. To unpack our use of story-based pedagogy, the identity cards represent a combination of stock and concealed stories that provide the narrative for both dominant and non-dominant groups (Bell, Rosemarie, Kayhan, & Brett, 2008, p. 8). The use of game-based pedagogies in this case is somewhat more limited, as the game is simply one of chance. However, the requirement for the student to interact with the “walk” by taking forward steps forward or backward as directed, or calculating steps forward or backward on paper will still facilitate engagement by requiring the students to take positive action during the lesson.

We elected to conduct the second, personal privilege walks as a purely written activity, allowing the students to keep the results private. We felt that this would prevent specific children from being singled out on both ends of the spectrum and would provide them with the opportunity to reflect on their privilege without feeling compelled to defend their position in society to the broader class.

A key component of this lecture is to challenge the underlying assumption of the “self-made person” or “meritocracy” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 226) necessary to make a market economy appear equitable. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) also debunk this narrative in their examination of class and oppression (p.156-160). However, in this context, it is primarily through the story-based pedagogy that we debunk this commonly held myth.

While this lesson could occur at many points in a unit examining market and mixed economies, it is important that students have some understanding of those economies, and the basic incentives prior to this lesson. Additionally, the concepts of privilege and ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia and other discriminatory practices would have to be introduced prior to this class. If the textbooks or dictionaries employed in the classroom make use of a more traditional notion of racism/sexism/ableism based on individual interactions, rather than the contextual definitions focused on power relations found in Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012, p. 221-228), it would be necessary to trouble those definitions prior to this lecture, encouraging students to consider those broader institutional contexts. Consequently, I would not recommend this lesson as a unit opening activity.

The assessment strategy focuses on the formative element, and following the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, students are given multiple venues to demonstrate their knowledge as they have the possibility of doing so verbally in the group discussion or in written form through the exit slip. Additionally, the action of placing the students in another person's identity and seeing them do well or poorly in the walk can have the effect of stimulating the students' affective response to the material, conveying to them the importance of privilege in a very personal way (Cast, 2015).

Lastly, this lesson could serve as an entry point to deeper understandings on the topics of privilege in relations to economic systems through a more complex game simulating life in a market economy, or a "Veil of Ignorance" experiment where students are asked to design a society without knowing their role within it, which would be a good lead in to social activism on the part of students who might act as allies of marginalized groups, and adopt active anti-racist strategies in their own lives (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 211-215).

Appendix 1 – Privilege Walk Conduct

Adapted From - <https://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml>

the privilege walk [complete]:

The typical classroom version of this activity involves between 10-40 participants. Throughout the privilege walk, the following statements are read by the facilitator and the participants are asked to take a step forward or backward based on their responses. This activity forces participants to confront the ways in which society privileges some individuals over others. It is designed to get participants to reflect on the different areas in their lives where they have privilege as well as the areas where they don't.

The following is the complete set of questions from the classroom version of this activity.

- If your primary ethnic identity is "Canadian," 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 who worked for your family as servants, gardeners, nannies, etc. take one step forward.
- If you were ever ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, etc. take one step back.
- If one or both of your parents were "white collar" professionals: doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc., take one step forward.
- If you were raised in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, etc., take one step back.
- If you ever tried to change your 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 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 attended summer camp, 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 encouraged to attend college by your parents, take one step forward.

- If you have a disability take one step backward.
- If you were raised in a single parent household, take one step back.
- If your family owned the house where you grew up, take one step forward.
- If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles, take one step back.
- If your parents own a car take one step forward.
- If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you or your family have to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.
- If you attended private school at any point in your life take one step forward.
- 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 your parents own their own business take one step forward.
- If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation but felt unsafe to confront the situation, take one step back.
- If you were ever the victim of violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If your parents did not grow up in Canada, take one step back.
- If your parents attended college take one step forward.
- If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, take one step forward.

Appendix 2 - Example Student Identity Cards:

Stephanie

Stephanie was born in Canada in 2004, and grew up a suburban, middle class household. She received lots of attention from doting parents, including a father who owns his own dental practice, a mother who does not work outside of the home, and a brother two years older than her. As a young child she was read to frequently, and had the opportunity to participate in activities such as ringette and Brownies, which she enjoyed. As she entered her teenage years, she became aware that was not attracted to members of the opposite sex. While she has not assigned a label to her sexual orientation, she has told her parents and some friends about her feelings on this matter, and has joined a gay-straight alliance at the public school she attends.

Jose

Jose immigrated to Canada from Honduras with his parents in 2010 at the age of 7, and has been attending public school in Canada since. His father works as a short haul truck driver during the day, and as a security guard at night. His mother passed away shortly before the family immigrated to Honduras. As a result, Jose is often left on his own in the home in the evenings, and he is required to look after his two younger siblings during this time.

Jamal

Jamal was born in Nigeria in 2006 and his first language was Hausa. He completed 6 six years of schooling in Nigeria and then immigrated to Canada with his parents in his Grade 7 year. In Canada, his father is a warehouse worker and mother is a cook at a restaurant. He has encountered challenges with communicating in English since he has arrived in Canada. After two years of schooling in a classroom composed entirely of ELL students, he has recently entered a conventional grade 9 classroom.

Andrew

Andrew was born in Calgary in 2004 to parents of European descent. His father is an engineer who owns his own firm, and his mother works in the Human Resources department of an oil and gas company. Though his mother returned to work at the end of her maternity leave, Andrews parents read to him almost every night, and he was enrolled in high quality daycare and pre-school programs. He currently plays hockey as part of a recreational league twice per week, and is involved with boy scouts.

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