Socially Inclusive Research

Using The Wheel of Power to Navigate Power, Privilege and Intersectionality within Communities

COLLABORATING | Inclusive Mindset and Intercultural Competence

What you will need:

- Up to 30
- Workshop, groups, pairs, individual & embodied exercise
- 1.5 hours preparation
- 3 - 4 hours execution
- Handouts, envelopes, sticky notes, A3 paper, coloured pens

Related Tools:

- Exchanging Perspectives
- Inclusive Decision-Making

Menu:

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II. Learning Activity
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"Explore the idea that others may be just as complex and extraordinary as you are. Knowing nobody can be reduced to a single aspect of their identity and that society is a tug-of-war of privilege and power, you will emerge with a more inclusive and curious mindset. "

—Philippa Collin

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I. Overview

In applied research across various community settings, successful outreach, communication with participants and an understanding of power dynamics and privilege are essential for researchers.

Truly inclusive social design is only feasible when respondents are closely and respectfully integrated at every stage of the research process. This necessitates a sharp awareness of power relations, for example in neighbourhoods where gentrification occurs.

This tool equips students to recognise both the subtle and overt manifestations of power that contribute to varying levels of marginalisation and privilege, thereby fostering their development into more inclusive and socially attuned researchers.

Learning outcome

- The student is able to apply their understanding of power, privilege and positionality to develop and implement practical research guidelines that ensure inclusivity in research design

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II. Learning Activity

Students are guided through phases of self-awareness, sharing insights, and gaining an understanding of their research demographic, their individual position on 'the Wheel of Power' and the implications for them as a researcher. To ensure full engagement, it is recommended that students minimise distractions by setting aside electronic devices such as phones and laptops.



1. Power & Me

30 mins

Introduce the concepts of social identity, intersectionality and Duckworth's 'Wheel of Power'. The Wheel provides a way to recognise that individuals have many social identities, such as gender, social class and ethnicity. These identities may or may not be visibly apparent to others, yet they can significantly influence experiences and interactions.

Distribute the Wheel of Power handout and ask the students to individually reflect on the elements of the Wheel and think of their identities using the reflective questions.

Tip: note that the Wheel is rooted in North American societal norms, which might not fully represent everyone's experiences. Engage the students in a conversation about any additions they would make to make the Wheel more inclusive of their contexts. Emphasise that the session won't redesign the Wheel but that you'll note their suggestions for future consideration.

Please note, as part of the assessment *as* learning, students answer reflective questions. Distribute the envelopes and sticky notes with the reflective questions, and give the students time to answer these questions individually. Allow students as much privacy as they need and point out that, throughout the whole activity, what they share is entirely in their hands.

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2. Story Circles

50 mins

Allow students some quiet time to think of a life-story they would like to share in a small group. This story should illustrate their position on the Wheel of Power.

Demonstrate the generative power of vulnerability by sharing aspects of your own identity in relation to the Wheel of Power. Reflect on your own levels of privilege or marginalisation in response to the three reflection questions from Step 1. Then, share a personal story that illustrates your position on the Wheel of Power.

Divide the class into groups of four to form story circles, fostering a safe space for sharing and active listening, enhancing the depth of understanding amongst participants. It's crucial that students listen attentively, without interruptions or direct questions, as the goal is to absorb and learn from each other's experiences, not to offer solutions. In each story cycle, individual students have 3 minutes to speak, followed by 15-second 'flashbacks' from each participant.

Tip: instructions and storytelling guidelines can be found in the Instructions for Story Circles handout.



3. Research Populations

50 mins

Students join their research group and assign a time keeper and a facilitator among them. Ask students to take turns and talk for 3 minutes about how their position on the Wheel of Power affects their confidence or insecurity in carrying out research in the community. For the flashbacks, ask the other students to reflect on insights that are useful for the whole class to bear in mind for inclusive research.

Proceed with a plenary discussion where you explore the characteristics of the specific research community students are working with. What do they know about the community already? Which aspects on the Wheel of Power are the most relevant? Which insights emerged from the flashback session? Introduce the concept of a constructive mindset & values for inclusive social design.

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Finally, students work in their own research groups to study their research population. Instruct students to draw their own version of the Wheel of Power with the most important variables for their specific population. Ask them to plot individuals and/or groups as well as themselves on the wheel.

Invite the students to discuss the following topics and let them take notes:

- How does their relative position of privilege or marginalisation affect them as researchers?
- How can they best gain access to their respondents?
- How will they communicate respectfully throughout the whole research project?



4. Writing Research Manifestos

1 hour

Have the different research groups write a one-page manifesto based on their insights from Steps 1, 2 and 3 about what they have learned from conducting socially inclusive research.

Which shared core values and practices are important to keep in mind? What do they want to stand for? What will inspire them to be inclusive researchers? What do they need to remind each other about during the research project?

They can refer to the reflection questions, the notes they made during flashbacks, the class discussion on the characteristics of their research population and their insights as a project group.

If time allows, each group can present their manifesto to the class and ask for feedback.

Tip: see an example of a collaborative research manifesto by Barker et al. (2023)



5. Writing Communication Plans

30 mins

Each research group writes a practical communication plan based on their core values and the following guiding questions:

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- How will you approach your research population?
- Which channels will you use to communicate?
- How will you build and maintain trust?
- How will you ensure that your respondents consent to your research?
- How will you ensure that you know their needs?
- How will you make their time investment worthwhile for them?
- How will you ensure ownership?
- How will you thank them for their time?

Please note, as part of assessment *as* learning, students answer reflective questions.

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III. Assessment

Students first work collaboratively in project groups on creating a values manifesto and converting it into a practical communication strategy, followed by answering two individual reflective questions.



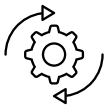
Purpose

Assessment *as* learning aims to strengthen the learning process and the development of metacognitive skills. It empowers students to direct their own learning and to become independent, critical self-assessors.



Roles

Self-assessment



Characteristics

Self-regulated learning



Materials

Reflective questions

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Assessment

Individual reflective questions (Step 1)
Identify and circle your own positions on the Wheel of Power handout per variable.

1. Which aspects of your identity do you think about most often? Which aspects do you think about least often?

2. Which have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself?

3. Which have the greatest effect on how others perceive you?

Write down the aspects of your identity you prefer ***not*** to share on a sticky note, and place these sticky notes inside the envelope. Aspects you are comfortable sharing can be written on the envelope itself or this paper.

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Assessment

Reflective questions

1. What did you learn about your own social identity and power & privilege? How will you use this knowledge as a researcher?

2. What are your own top two values to bear in mind as an inclusive researcher and how will they affect how you act?

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IV. Key Advice

An explanation of **important concepts such as social identity and intersectionality** and **Duckworth's 'Wheel of Power'** (Step 1), **instructions for Story Circles and an optional variation** (Step 2) and an **example Collaborative Research Manifesto** (Step 4) can be downloaded below.

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Key Advice

Important concepts explained

Social identity refers to the way individuals define themselves in relation to the groups they are part of or feel connected to (Tajfel et al., 1979). This can include, but is not limited to, aspects such as ethnicity, nationality, gender, social class, religion and professional or hobbyist groups. It is a critical aspect of self-concept that influences perceptions, behaviors and interactions within societal contexts. Social identities are both self-selected and ascribed by society, shaping one's sense of belonging and influencing interpersonal dynamics and social structures.

Intersectionality is a conceptual framework for understanding how various social and cultural identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class) intersect at the individual level and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It highlights the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term in 1989, used it to critique the single-axis framework that dominated feminism and anti-racism discourses, arguing that it overlooked the unique experiences of those who face simultaneous discrimination on multiple fronts. Intersectionality emphasises that social categories are interconnected and cannot be examined in isolation from one another.

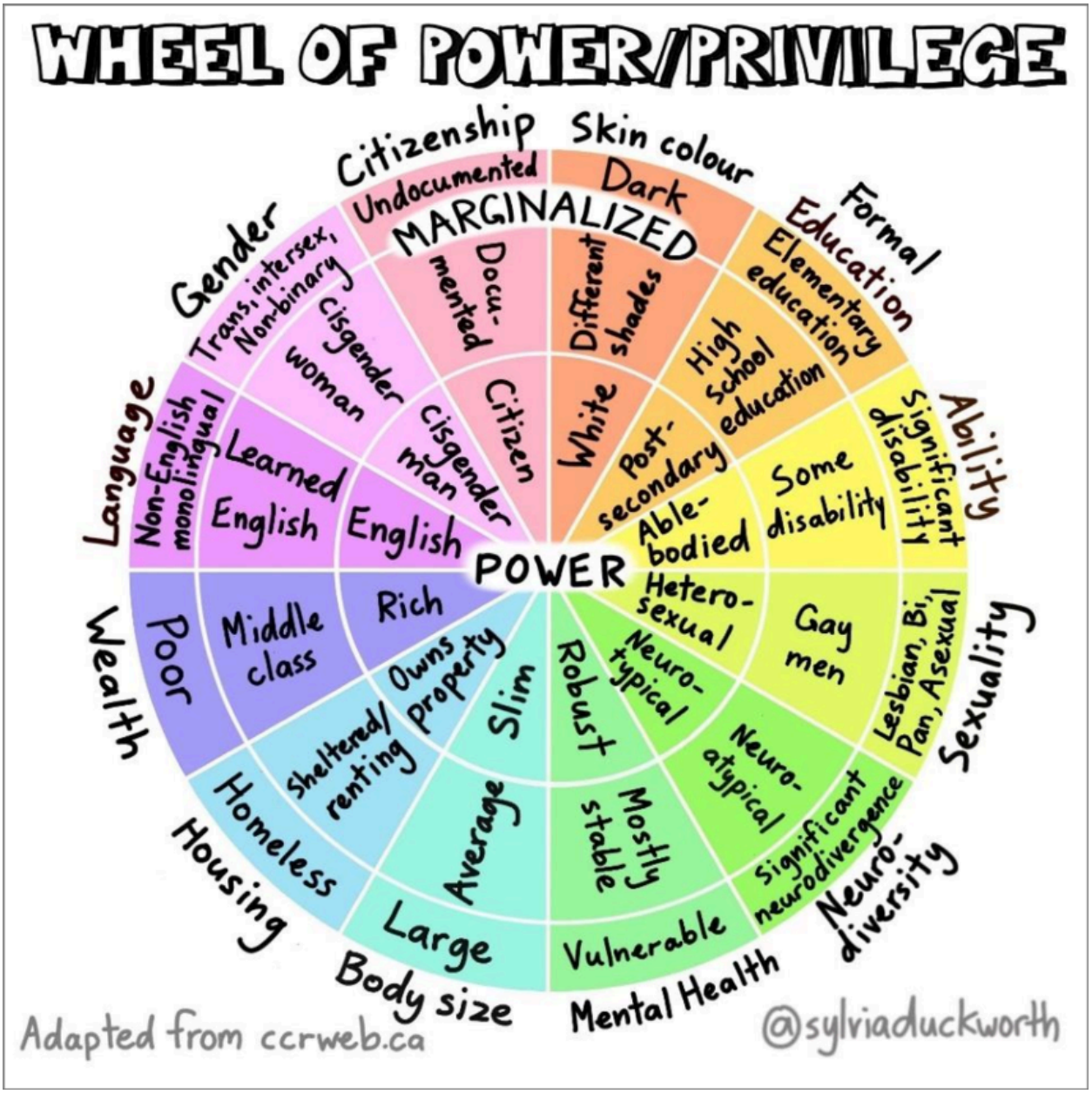
Read more about intersectionality on intersectionaljustice.org/what-is-intersectionality.

The Wheel of Power is an illustrative tool, designed by Sylvia Duckworth, to visualise and discuss the complexities of power, privilege and systemic oppression. It incorporates various dimensions of identity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability and more, mapping them onto a circular diagram to demonstrate how different aspects of a person's identity can intersect to confer or deny power and privilege.

Inclusive social design is a holistic and reflective process aimed at consciously creating spaces, products and systems that are accessible, safe and welcoming for a diverse range of individuals. It emphasises the importance of understanding and addressing the real human needs of a broad group of people, thereby fostering vibrant and attractive environments that cultivate a sense of safety, trust and belonging within communities. This approach is grounded in the principles of human-centered design and engages stakeholders throughout the research and design process to ensure that outcomes are not only innovative and functional, but also genuinely inclusive and reflective of the diverse needs and perspectives of all community members.

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Key Advice



Retreived from Riitoja et al. (2022), “Wheel of Power, Privilege, and Marginalization, by Sylvia Duckworth. Used by permission. To our knowledge, the original version comes from the Canadian Council of Refugees (CCR): https://ccrweb.ca/en/anti-oppression.

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Key Advice

Instructions for Story Circles

Two story circles are conducted, each with strict time management. Assign a timekeeper and a group leader for each circle to oversee the timing and facilitate the process, including managing 'flashbacks'. Encourage students to listen intently, as they will be required to recall and participate. They are permitted to take hand-written notes to aid in this process.

Some guidelines for students to tell their story (Denning, 2005 as cited in Deardorff, 2020) are:

- Be yourself;
- Maintain confidentiality;
- Speak from your own experience only;
- Be genuine and authentic;
- Keep your sharing simple, clear, and focused;
- Uphold positive intent;
- Be comfortable in your own style (i.e., sit, stand, use gestures); and
- Talk with others in your group as a fellow human.

Step 1: individual reflection
Each student reflects for 10 minutes on the questions:

1. Which aspects of your identity do you think about most often? Which aspects do you think about least often?
2. Which have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself?
3. Which have the greatest effect on how others perceive you?
4. Can you think of a life story that illustrates your position on the Wheel of Power?

Step 2: illustrative life stories
Students build on their initial exploration of their position on the Wheel in Step 1 by sharing an illustrative life story. In turn, the students talk for 3 minutes on their life experiences related to their position on the Wheel of Power and the aspects of their identity they are willing to share.

Flashbacks #1: After everyone has presented, the listeners will be asked to briefly recount what they found most memorable from each individual. E.g. Student #1 receives a flashback from all students, then student #2, student #3 and so on. Each listener has a maximum of 15 seconds per flashback per speaker. Participants are encouraged to reflect on the most striking or memorable aspect of each peer's life story.

Optional variation: this exercise encourages students to transition from a cognitive grasp of power dynamics to an experiential and embodied comprehension. If the classroom atmosphere is conducive and all participants feel comfortable, you could reconstruct the Wheel of Power physically to incorporate an embodied element, following these guidelines:

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- Positioning: guide the class to arrange themselves into the formation of the Wheel of Power, standing in positions that reflect their personal discussions of identity and power dynamics. This might necessitate some negotiation, as students determine their relative positions based on the various identity factors they've shared.

- Orientation: have all students face towards the centre of the circle. Then, instruct those in the centre to turn outward, facing their peers in the outer layers of the Wheel. This setup symbolises the differential perspective and experiences within the power spectrum.

- Discussion: facilitate a conversation among students about the relative advantages and disadvantages of their positions in the context of conducting research. Emphasise the value of diverse viewpoints, noting how a marginalised stance can provide unique insights that might be overlooked by those in more privileged positions.

Considerations for Facilitation

- Ensure that the activity is entirely voluntary, with alternative options for those who may feel uncomfortable participating in this manner.

- Prepare to moderate the discussion sensitively, recognising the vulnerability involved in physically embodying power dynamics.

- Use this as an opportunity to foster a deeper dialogue on inclusivity and empathy in research practices, encouraging students to reflect on how their positions might influence their approach to and understanding of their subjects.

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A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

We've lost touch. We are left **unsure** of what really matters and **do not know** where we are heading.
How do we proceed through our precarious times? How can we harness such uncertainty?
Our answer is **TOGETHER**

It's time to unite! Following these 10 statements will help us navigate a way forward together.

MANIFESTO

1 Produce and mobilise valuable knowledge together

Come together with TRUST and respect
for individual and group knowledge.
Jointly engage through critical responsibility.
Find common ground.
Embrace the risk of failing together
and work towards greener pastures

2 Share diverse points of view; hear all voices

Promote the power of argument
and compromise
to work through problems
as they are perceived.

3 Seek Cooperation. Reject Competition

The goal is to form mutual directions.
Equalise risks/rewards-inputs/outputs.
Celebrate and harness diversity.
Do not turn against our goal or each other.
Stay committed

4 Ignore Convention: flatten control

Let go of ego and notions of
'high impact-publication'.
Do good research.
Do MEANINGFUL research.
Flatten __ **FLATTEN** __ dynamics
between us.
Share roles, responsibilities,
writing and doing

5 Entwine ACTION and reflection

Always striving to reach destinations
will **II**stop**II** momentum.
Play with and inject fluctuating
tempos of action and thinking.
en**ACT**, re**ACT**
– step backwards, in circles –
run out of control & sync cadences
- but however we move, let's move together

6 Stimulate joy in the process of meaningful collaboration

Pleasure spurs and binds.
Exhilaration can be found in the pursuit
of partnership.
Leverage community.
Wonderfully generate the conditions for creativity
freedom together.
This will amplify and expand networks

7 Co-innovation for co-liberation

Celebrate creative practices and innovating
cross-fertilisations.
Make room for the unstructured.
Where might this take us?
To be sure, these movements will lead to
our emancipation

8 Learn to communicate through collaboration!

Accept initial frictions in the many
(and different) voices.
Always seek ways to share and understand.
Take time <--> give effort.
Understand each other's language
to find shared meaning

9 No BOUNDARIES. Build BRIDGES

Feel the fear but do it anyway.
Cooperative action is transformative, and hopeful.
Cultivate and spread a collaborative mindset.
Lay down and pass over bridges.
Collectively build our future
– but wherever we go, let's go together!

10 Dramatically change.

Bring about environments,
experiences,
infrastructures,
and events
to
nurture
collaborative skillsets

Ditch the siloed and tired approaches!

Invest now in collaborative research

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With thanks to Guido de Wilde, Lucho Rubio & Fenneke Wekker for inspiration. The tool is based on the tool that is used for the living labs in the Creative Business domain at Inholland, where students work on ‘wicked problems’ following design thinking principles in interdisciplinary groups.
http://www.tourismlab.nl

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