

Invisible Knapsacks	
Overview	<p>This discussion-based activity guides students in understanding privilege as a concept and recognizing the ways their own privileges benefit them and impact daily life. If you as an instructor need a refresher or introduction to privilege before leading this activity, please review “An Instructor’s Guide to Understanding Privilege.” All other necessary materials are linked as PDF’s below.</p>
Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To help students understand various kinds of privilege, specifically manifestations of White Privilege. 2) To prompt students to recognize and reflect on their own privilege and by the end of the activity, be able to identify how privilege influences daily life and offer examples from their own experiences. 3) To begin to illuminate the larger impact of privilege on daily life and how it relates to oppression as well as have a greater understanding of the need for individuals to engage in allyhood behaviors.
Implementation	<p>This activity can be implemented at any point in the semester. It is especially useful as a primer to help students understand privilege before approaching course material that may require students to grapple with aspects of identity.</p> <p>Importantly, the activity allows students to learn about one of their privileged identities in a small group with other students who share that privilege. The rationale is twofold: First, students read lists of privilege examples and therefore avoid relying on members of the oppressed group to educate them in this instance. Second, they have the opportunity to share comments or questions that they may be too afraid or embarrassed to ask in the presence of oppressed group members.</p> <p>The optimal group size for this activity is 20-30 students, but it can be modified for smaller or larger groups.</p>
Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) This activity assumes that all students are able to move easily around the room. If you have a classroom space that limits movement or you have students whose movement is limited, you will need to adapt to accommodate those constraints. 2) The small group discussion portion asks students to pick a privilege that they have. While most students will have one of the 6 privileged identities, it is possible that a student will not experience any of the available forms of privilege.

	<p>3) Another possibility is that a group may only have one person in it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) If this happens, you can meet with any excluded students in a one-on-one discussion of privilege, perhaps finding an area that they do experience privilege. For Example: thin privilege, English language fluency privilege, heterosexual privilege). b) Or you could begin discussing privilege in a more nuanced way with them. For Example: how does context impact their experience of oppression and privilege? <p>4) Discussing privilege often makes students defensive. While this activity is designed to be comfortable (or at least as comfortable as confronting privilege can be), be prepared for some resistance, claims of so-called “reverse” discrimination, and dialogue blockers.</p>
<p>Materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Excerpt of Peggy McIntosh’s, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Enough copies for everyone + facilitator(s) b. Uses pgs. 1-4 for excerpt 2) Lists of privilege examples, 5-7 copies of each <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ability Privilege b. Christian Privilege in the US c. Cisgender Privilege d. (Mostly Cisgender) Man Privilege e. Socioeconomic Status Privilege f. US Citizenship Privilege 3) Small group discussion questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Invisible Knapsacks Small Group Discussion Prompts b. 12 slips, or two per group

Session Sequence

Lesson Structure	Time <i>(Estimated amount of time for each component)</i>	Activity Content and Instructions
Introduction	5 mins	<p>The instructor introduces the assignment with an overview of the lesson, introducing the concept of privilege and stating learning goals for the class period.</p> <p>Privilege: Societally granted, unearned advantages accorded to some people and not others. These systemic or structural advantages impact people based on identity factors such as race, gender, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexuality, class, and body type.</p>
First Reading	10 mins	Ask all students to reach an excerpt from Peggy McIntosh's, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1989)
Large Group Discussion	15-20 mins	<p>Lead a large group discussion to process the excerpt and how it relates to students' own experiences.</p> <p>Questions to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What caught your attention or surprised you in this article? 2) Did anything on the list relate to your personal experiences? 3) Did anything in the excerpt raise questions for you? 4) What does McIntosh say is necessary to redesign social systems? What do you think of this?
Small Group Activity	5-10 mins	<p>Frame the activity and give instructions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) McIntosh's list is helpful for White people to imagine specific examples of oppression they don't experience based on skin color. Inspired by McIntosh, other people have created similar lists of other types of privilege. 2) We have six privilege lists today: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ability b. Christian in the US c. Cisgender <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. If necessary, pause here and ask if someone in the class can provide a definition of cisgender. If term is unfamiliar, provide one for the class. ii. Cisgender: people who were assigned a sex and gender at birth that is in agreement with their self-designated gender. d. (Mostly cisgender) Man e. Socioeconomic Status

	15-20 mins	<p>f. US Citizenship</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Each of you will join a small group that will explore one of these privileges. You must choose a privilege that you hold yourself. 4) In order to get the most out of this activity, you are strongly encouraged to choose the privileged identity that makes you the most uncomfortable and/or that you have had the least opportunity to think about. 5) Listen carefully again to the six privilege lists we have and think about which one you would like to focus on. 6) Assign locations around the room for each small group according to privilege list. 7) Allow students to self-select, but check in with each group – does everyone in the group hold the privilege explored by their list? <p>Small Group Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Distribute small-group questions to each small group and ask students to read the lists before discussing the prompts.
Large Group Debrief	20-30 mins	<p>Lead a large group debrief conversation</p> <p>Questions to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What did it feel like to read the list? 2) What is something you learned about yourself from the small group activity? 3) Did anyone discover areas of implicit bias? Hopefully all of you! <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If necessary, pause here to review implicit bias b. Implicit bias: Describes the way that stereotypes and attitudes we are not aware of shape our behavior; thoughts and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control. 4) Why is it important to be aware of privilege and how can we use our privilege to create positive change?
Closing	5 mins	<p>Possible closing remarks:</p> <p>Thinking about privilege can bring up many unpleasant emotions such as guilt, anger, fear of making mistakes, sadness, and so on. It is important to exercise self-compassion and know that we all have privileges that we did not choose. However, because these privileges influence every aspect of life, we must also remind ourselves that unacknowledged privilege often prevents us from exercising important values such as equality, fairness, justice, and even kindness. I encourage you to continue learning about privilege and how you can harness it to create a more just world.</p>