

## Activity: Power Flower



**TIME ESTIMATE**  
45 minutes



**MATERIALS**  
Large piece of flipchart paper, [paper handouts of the Power Flower Activity](#) for participants, tape, and a variety of coloured markers

### PURPOSE

To become aware that our privilege, position in society, and life experiences deeply impact how we see and experience the world.

### DESCRIPTION

Participants will compare their own position(s), relative to a dominant norm, to explore the ways that privilege and power manifest in familiar social identity groups. Reflection and discussion will bring attention to discrimination and power as a process for maintaining dominant social identities. This activity is similar to "[Social Identity Wheel](#)".

### STEPS

- 1 Hand out the [Power Flower Activity Sheets](#) and markers to participants.
- 2 Introduce the Power Flower image, drawn on the large flipchart paper and placed on the wall. As a group, fill in the dominant social identity of the group on the outside circle (see chart below for examples). ask, 'What is the assumed norm?' in relation to the social identity indicated on each petal. Write the dominant social identity on the section of the petal furthest from the centre.
  - Alternatively, individuals may fill out the power flower prior to all participants working together to establish the dominant social identities of the group.
- 3 Ask participants for examples of 'What is considered to not be the norm?' in relation to the social identity indicated on each petal. Write examples of these marginalized social identities on the section of the petal closer to the centre.
- 4 Ask participants to locate themselves within the power flower by comparing their perceived identity in relation to the established norm/dominant social identity.
- 5 Have participants tape their flowers next to the large power flower and review the collection of power flowers as a group.

#### Facilitator Note

Many of the social identities discussed may be sensitive subjects for participants. If participants do not wish to share, they may opt out of filling certain petals, may choose their own private list of categories, or may choose not to tape their flower to the board. It is important to ensure that those already feeling uncomfortable are not made to feel more so.

**6 Debrief the activity. Choose one or two from the following questions:**

- Personal location within the power flower: How many 'identities' or petals do you have as an individual that differ from the dominant identity? Which identities do you think of most/least frequently in your day-to-day life? What identities can't be shifted or changed?
- Which identities have the most significant impact on your self-perception? Which identities have the greatest impact on how others perceive and treat you?
- Representation within the group: How does the group collectively compare to the established dominant social identities? How might this influence perspectives and discussions within the classroom? Who is not represented in the classroom and why?
- What are the relationships between and among different forms of oppression? What examples of discrimination can be found within these systems of oppression (for example, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism, ageism, etc.).

This activity is adapted from the [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto](#) and Barb Thomas, Doris Marshall Institute and Lee, Letters to Marcia, as cited in Arnold, et.al. (1991).

**Potential Examples in typical British Columbia context:**

Identity	Dominant group	Non-dominant groups
Sex	Male, Female	Intersex
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual, monogamy	2SLGBTQ+ (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning)
Race	White	Black, Indigenous, Person of colour
Ethnic group	European	Non-European
Language	English	English as a second language, languages other than English
Religion	Christianity, Atheism/Secular	Islamic, Indigenous beliefs
Social class/ Socioeconomics	Upper class	Lower class, middle class
Age group	Middle aged	Children, youth, elderly
Education	High school, Post-secondary	No high school education; lived experiences
Ability	Able bodied, neurotypical	Neurodiverse, people living with a disability
Geographic origin	North America/Europe	Africa, South America, South Asia
Geography current	North America/Europe	Africa, South America, South Asia

### Useful definitions for reference:

- **Power:** 1. The ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way. 2. The ability or capacity to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events.<sup>1</sup>
- **Ethnicity:** A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as a shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base. Examples of different ethnic groups are: African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cree, Mohawk (Indigenous); Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish (White).<sup>2</sup>
- **Race:** A political construction created to concentrate power with white people and legitimize dominance over non-white people.<sup>3</sup> Race is a made-up social construct, and not an actual biological fact. Racial categorization schemes were invented by scientists to support worldviews that viewed some groups of people as superior and some as inferior.<sup>4</sup>
- **Class:** Determines how members of society are socially differentiated based on their position relative to the distribution of goods including land, property, money, housing, or where they are located within the division of labour; these differentiations are caused by and a cause of power relations.

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1 ["Power & Privilege: A handbook for political organisers"](#). New Economy Organisers Network. 2015. Retrieved from

2 ["Glossary"](#). Racial Equity Tools.

3 ["Glossary"](#). Racial Equity Tools.

4 ["Race, Ethnicity and Indigeneity"](#). Racial Equity Tools.

## ASSESSMENT

Write a ~3 paragraph reflection on the experience, using the "What? So What? Now What?" Model, reflective model was researched and [developed by Rolfe et al. in 2001](#) and has also been attributed to Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless, the creators of [Liberating Structures](#).

[This post](#) by Gustavo Razzetti, of the Liberationist, provides a good overview of the reflection format:

- What: Understanding the event
- So What: Make sense of the facts and their implications
- Now What: Identify course of action or new solutions based on the reflection

These reflections can be picked up at the end of the class as an 'exit ticket', where learners submit their short reflection before leaving the class or workshop.

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## NOTES: