

# Experiencing Diversity: *Experiential Exercises for use in Multicultural and Diversity Workshops*

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## Circles of Diversity

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**GOAL:** The goal of this exercise is to look at the ways that individuals feel both included and marginalized based on various identities and to simulate the experience of inclusion and exclusion.

**TIME REQUIRED:** At least forty-five minutes.

**MATERIALS:** Paper and pen/pencil for each participant.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** An open space large enough for group participants to be able to move around comfortably as well as sit, write, and share in small groups.

**PROCESS:** This exercise uses a brief, physically involving, group activity called a circle break that simulates and often elicits thoughts and feelings that are associated with discrimination. This physical simulation is then used as a metaphor to exemplify how people sometimes feel like they are inside the circle (majority experience) and how they sometimes feel like they are outside the circle (marginalized experience). Because this exercise involves physical contact, it works best with groups of people who will feel comfortable physically interacting with one another.

Personal identities. Ask participants to list on a sheet of paper all the various "identities" they experience within themselves. These identities may be based on race, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual orientation, religion, profession, geographical origin, political affiliation, world-view, or any other personally-relevant variable.

Circle break. Introduce the circle break activity as a physical activity to stimulate reactions to different group dynamics. It is best not to shape participants reactions too much by revealing a lot of detail about the goal. It may be best to give participants permission not to participate in the circle break if they feel uncomfortable with physical contact.

Ask participants to stand in a circle facing in toward the middle of the circle. Identify one participant to be outside the circle. Ask the participants in the circle to

hold hands and to keep the outsider from gaining entrance to the circle. Encourage the outsider to try to enter the circle. After the outsider gets inside the circle, identify another outsider and repeat the process. You may also want to identify two outsiders to work together to gain entrance into the circle.

Discussion. After a few people have had a chance to try to enter the circle, begin a discussion about the exercise. Start by focusing on participants' thoughts and feelings about this particular activity. Contrast the experience of people inside the circle (insiders) with those outside the circle (outsiders). You may also want to encourage discussion by making process statements. Common processes that occur are that the Insiders learn increasingly effective ways of keeping the outsider out of the circle. Outsiders will typically try a variety of methods of entering.

Generalization. After discussing what happened and how people felt in response to this physical activity, use the exercise as a metaphor and begin discussing how this activity may simulate discrimination and the process of keeping certain groups of people in power and excluding others who do not fit. Ask people how their feelings as outsiders or insiders may parallel the feelings of people who are discriminated against or people who are in power.

Personal application. Ask participants to use another piece of paper to draw a circle and for each of the identities that you wrote down earlier, write the identity in the inside of the circle, the outside of the circle or both, depending if that identity has resulted in feeling like an insider, an outsider, or both in different situations.

Group sharing. Give participants a chance to share which identities make them feel included and which identities make them feel marginalized. This sharing can occur in small groups or in the large group depending on group size and dynamics.

Discussion. This exercise can be used to stimulate a more general discussion on discrimination and prejudice.

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**SOURCE:** This outline was written by Jeff E. Brooks-Harris, Ph.D., Counseling and Student Development Center, University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The circle break exercise is originally from Judith Katz. The writing and sharing exercise was presented by Karen M. Taylor, Ph.D., Counseling and Consultation Center, Ohio State University, at ACPA, Commission VII Meeting, Kansas City, MO, March, 1993.

## Birth Order Exercise

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**GOAL:** To help participants meet each other in an active manner which sets the stage for exploration, self-disclosure and group discussion about stereotypes.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Overhead transparencies of discussion questions to be used in small groups.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** Space enough to break into smaller groups for discussion.

**PROCESS:** Introduce activity as one in which participants will begin to explore beliefs about how people are different.

Instruct participants to break into smaller groups on the basis of their birth order (only child, first born, middle child, last born). If participants identify more with one group although technically they belong in another, ask them to join the group with which they most identify (e.g. last born feels like only child due to large gap after birth of older sibling). Instruct subgroups about where to form.

Once in smaller groups, display these discussion questions on overhead: Talk about what it was like to be a first-born child, etc.; What was positive and negative about being in your birth order?; Have there been any lasting effects with your parents and siblings? Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

After small group discussion, choose one of the groups to remain silent and request that the members of the other birth order groups share with the large group responses to the following questions: What do you think it's like being first-born/middle, etc. (whichever group has been asked to be silent)? What kinds of personality characteristics do you associate with first borns, middle children, etc. (whichever group has been asked to be silent)? Any variations? Do these characteristics hold true across all people? If not, why? Then ask the silent group: What was it like to hear comments about you being made by others? What feelings did you have as you listened? Did you agree or disagree? How would you respond to what has just been said about you? Allow 20 minutes for this process.

Repeat the above exercise with the other birth order groups.

When all groups have been addressed, note the process of stereotyping, how it begins at an early age based on assumptions that are overly general, and how it might, at times, serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Use this activity as a segue into discussions or activities addressing cultural prejudice and stereotyping.

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**SOURCE:** Leader's Manual for Valuing Ethnic Diversity: A Cultural Awareness Workshop. Designed and written by the staff of the Counseling and Mental Health Center, The University of Texas at Austin, 303 West Mall Building, Austin, TX 78731-8119, 512/471-3515.

# Prejudice: An Awareness-Expansion Activity

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**GOAL:** To explore feelings and ideas about prejudice, to explore validity of common prejudices, and to provide the opportunity to experience being the target of prejudice in a non-threatening manner.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 60 minutes.

**MATERIALS:** Sets of cards prepared ahead of time with names of specific groups (e.g. African-American, Jew, Asian-American, Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, American Indian, White person, Arab, Ku Klux Klan member, Muslim, etc.). Prepare enough sets of cards so that there will be one set for each group of four in the workshop (e.g., if 24 are expected to attend, 6 sets of cards will be needed).

Overhead transparency of process questions.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** Space enough to break into smaller groups for discussion.

**PROCESS:** Instruct participants to form smaller groups of four. Provide one person in each group with a set of the prepared cards. Request that the person leave the signs face down. Inform participants that each card identifies a specific racial, cultural, or ethnic group. The person holding the cards can now look at the top card without showing it to other group members. Instruct that person to be sure that it does NOT apply to him/her. If it does apply, instruct the participant to put that card on the bottom of the stack and choose another until a non-applicable card is turned over. After the first person has selected a card that does not apply to him/her, request that he/she pass the stack to the next person. Continue this process until all group members have a card.

The first member of each group should now display the card so that the small group can see the identifying word. During the next three minutes, the remaining group members are to take turns expressing stereotypical remarks about the category of persons named by that sign. The remarks do not necessarily need to be reflective of opinions held by the group members but may reflect things they may have heard or seen growing up in your family, at school, at work, or in the media. The person with the sign is to counter each statement and defend the group the sign represents. Inform the group when three minutes is up and request that they repeat this process with each of the small group members.

**PROCESS QUESTIONS:** Place process questions on overhead and request that the small groups discuss them: How did you feel when you were seated alone defending against others' comments? How did you feel when you were making stereotypical remarks? What did you learn about the effects of expressing prejudicial opinions?

Summarize activity with large group: Stereotypes have consequences - there is no such thing as no harm, no foul in stereotyping; Stereotyping creates separation among and across people; More truth about our attitudes is said in jest than we care to admit and believe; Our feelings about being stereotyped are just below the surface -- it does not take much scratching to touch raw nerves.

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# Stand Up For Diversity

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**GOAL:** To highlight how some people have benefited from and others have been hurt by discrimination in our culture.

**TIME REQUIRED:** At least twenty minutes for this activity. It should be used as a part of a larger workshop on diversity, racism, or multiculturalism.

**MATERIALS:** None.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** A room where people can both sit and stand comfortably.

**PROCESS:** This exercise can be somewhat threatening and is, therefore, best with a group that has had a lot of exposure to the topic of diversity or in which there is a high degree of safety.

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**Instructions.** This exercise will be used to highlight some of the different experiences that each of us have had. It will point out differences in our cultural backgrounds as well as different experiences with discrimination. It will also point out that some of us have benefited from discrimination, whereas others have been hurt by discrimination.

As I read the following statements, I will ask you to stand up if the statement is true for you. If you are physically unable to stand, please identify that this is true for you in some other way. As people stand I would like you to remain silent but to look around and to see how many people in the group are standing and how many are sitting. As you look around silently, I would like you to pay attention to how you are feeling and to make note of your feelings in response to different statements.

## **Please stand up if...**

- You grew up as a member of a minority group in your community.
- You grew up in a neighborhood that was not multiracial.
- Your family employed domestic help of a different race.
- You went to an elementary school that was not multiracial.
- You went to a junior high school that was not multiracial.
- You went to a high school that was not multiracial.

- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your race.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your ethnicity.
- You heard family members use derogatory terms for or made jokes about other racial and ethnic groups.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your religion.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your sexual orientation.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your disability.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your family income.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your gender.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your age.
- People have ever made derogatory comments to you about your physical appearance.
- Your family was eligible for food stamps or public aid.
- As a child your family never had to worry about money.
- You have ever been treated differently than other students by a professor and you believe this treatment was due to your race or ethnicity.
- You have ever been a victim of violence because you were different than others.
- You have ever confronted someone who made a racist comment or joke.
- You have ever confronted someone who made a sexist comment or joke.
- You have ever confronted someone who made a homophobic comment or joke.
- You have ever been questioned or challenged by family or friends about your association or friendships with people of a different background.
- You do not have any close friends of a different race.
- You do not have any close friends of a different sexual orientation.
- You are among the first generation of your family to attend college.

- You did not attend the college that was your first choice due to financial limitations.
- You have not or did not receive financial aid as an undergraduate in college.
- You were told by your family not to trust anyone of a different race.
- You have worked in a job setting that did not include people of different races.
- You have been told that you were hired for a job or admitted to a academic program because of affirmative action guidelines.
- You believe that you were not hired for a job because of your race or ethnicity.
- You have ever experienced fear traveling through a neighborhood which was predominately of a different racial background than your own.
- You have ever experienced anxiety being in a group where you were the only person of your racial group.
- You have experienced any discomfort answering any of the questions during this exercise.

### **Processing Questions**

1. What were your feelings during this exercise?
2. Were there times when you felt good about standing up? Were there times when you felt uncomfortable when you stood up?
3. Were there times when it was difficult to stand up or when you chose not to stand when you could have?
4. Were there particular statements that affected you in a strong, personal way?

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**SOURCE:** This exercise is a modified version of an exercise called Whites Stand Up presented by Paul Kivel and Victor Lewis of the Oakland Men's Project at the 17th National Conference on Men and Masculinity, July 1992, Chicago, IL. This exercise is also described in *Men's Work*, a book written by Paul Kivel (1992) and published by Hazelden Press / Ballentine. This outline was written by Jeff E. Brooks-Harris, Ph.D., Counseling and Student Development Center, University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

# Remembering Prejudice Guided Imagery

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**GOAL:** To help participants get in touch with their own racial attitudes and behaviors; explore reasons why participants choose to guard and/or act on their racial attitudes and behaviors (e.g. through colluding, etc.); to encourage participants to accept personal responsibility for perpetuating their racial attitudes and behavior.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 60 minutes.

**MATERIALS:** Process questions on overhead transparencies.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** Space enough to break into smaller groups for discussion.

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**PROCESS:** Instruct participants to arrange themselves into groups of three. Use the following guided imagery instructions: Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Allow yourself to begin relaxing. Take another deep breath, hold it for about 4 seconds, and let it out slowly. Do this once more. Now, close your eyes and think back to the most memorable time you can remember feeling discriminated against or left out of a group because you were different. For example, if your most memorable time occurred when you were a child, you might have felt like the other kids didn't want to play with you or be your friend because you were different from them. Maybe you were picked last or not chosen at all. Maybe you were different in some physical way - or different because of your age, sex, religion, race or social class. As you think about that time, try to remember how you felt while it was happening, where you were, who was present, how old you were, what time of year it was, and any other important details that help you remember it. As you remember this situation, remember the circumstances surrounding the discrimination. (pause 30 seconds) What were the feelings you experienced as a result of being discriminated against? (pause 30 seconds) What attitudes/beliefs/conclusions did you formulate about the person or people who discriminated against you? (pause 30 seconds) Did you draw some conclusions about yourself based on this experience? (pause 30 seconds)

Give participants 60 seconds or so to come out of the imagery and request that they discuss, in small groups, their thoughts and experiences during the imagery. Place the three process questions (i.e. What were the feelings you experienced. . . , etc.) on an overhead projector and allow small groups 10 minutes to discuss. A few participants may wish to share with the larger group.

Facilitate the second guided imagery with the following instructions: Close your eyes, and think back to the most memorable time you can recall discriminating

against someone else on the basis of their race, social class, gender, religion, and so on. Perhaps you left them out of a group or overlooked them. Or maybe you did not want to associate with them because they were so different from yourself. As you think about it, try to remember how you felt while it was happening, where you were, who was with you, what time of year it was, and any other details that help you remember it. What were the circumstances surrounding the discriminatory event? (pause 30 seconds) Did you feel any type of pressure (e.g. parental, peer, cultural) to continue discriminating against this individual? (pause 30 seconds) Is there anything you could have done differently in that situation? (pause 30 seconds)

Give participants 60 seconds or so to come out of the imagery and request that they discuss, in small groups, their thoughts and experiences during the imagery. Place the two process questions (i.e. Did you feel any type of pressure. . ., etc.) on an overhead projector and allow small groups 10 minutes to discuss. A few participants may wish to share with the larger group.

Summarize purpose of exercise. Some may have felt hurt, guilty, shameful, angry, etc. Acknowledge that awareness of these responses can help to reduce discriminatory behaviors.

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# Homophobia Role Play

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**GOAL:** To provide a stimulus to spur discussion about assumptions we make in interactions with others; to generate potential alternatives to those assumptions.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 20 minutes.

**MATERIALS:** None.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** Enough space to perform role play in front of group.

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**PROCESS:** This role play can either be performed by facilitators or by audience volunteers. The format involves reading the scripted roles below and then asking the audience for feedback about the interaction.

This scene takes place in a work setting. The characters are at work on a Monday lunch break. They are co-workers and are just getting to know one another. Watch this interaction and pay attention to your feelings.

Heterosexual person (H); Gay/Lesbian person (GL) -- do not reveal these roles to the audience.

H: Hey, how's everything going? You adjusting to the work around here?

GL: Yeah, I guess it's ok. I've had worse jobs!

H: So what have you been up to? Did you do anything fun over the weekend?

GL: I went out for a little bit.

H: Yeah? Did you have a date or anything?

GL: One night I did. We went out dancing for a while and partied at a friend's house. Nothing too thrilling.

H: So who are you going out with? Maybe I know him (her if GL is male).

GL: Oh, you probably don't know this person.

H: No, really. I know lots of people around campus. I've been seeing a guy (woman if S is male) on and off since I've been at school here and he's (she's) a blast to be around. We should all go out sometime. There's always something going on.

GL: I'm really a private person so I keep to myself most of the time. Thanks anyway, though.

H: All right, but if you change your mind, be sure to let me know! I could probably even fix you up with one of my guy friends (female friends if GL is male).

First, ask participants in role play how it felt to be in their role. What did you notice about this interaction? What assumptions were being made? Have you ever found yourself in this type of situation? How would it feel to be in either of these people's shoes?

Now re-do the role-play with direction from the audience. How could we construct this scene differently? How might the heterosexual person respond making fewer assumptions? "Freeze frame" the role play at times if the actors get stuck or if assumptions continue to be made. If necessary, make specific suggestions for how to be sensitive to assumptions (e.g. respect privacy; use terms such as partner; avoid use of pronouns unless gender is known). Also note that this scenario does not mean to imply that just because a person is private they are also gay or lesbian or that just because a person is gay or lesbian that he/she will be private about that characteristic.

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**SOURCE:** Developed by Lori Davis and Karen Hampton while they were involved in the Outreach/Paraprofessional Practicum Program, Counseling Center, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

# Being a Minority on a Majority Campus: Checklist of Stressors and Barriers

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**GOAL:** To identify stressors and barriers to success that racial or ethnic minority students face on a majority campus.

**TIME REQUIRED:** At least fifteen minutes. Five minutes to complete and ten minutes to discuss.

**MATERIALS:** Copies of the Checklist and pens/pencils for each participant.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** A room where participants can sit and write comfortably and can speak to one another in a discussion.

**PROCESS:** Distribute the Checklists and have participants complete them. Use the Checklist as a stimulus for a discussion about the challenges of being a minority on a majority campus. This checklist and discussion may also be used with role plays, scenarios, or to present a problem solving model.

**SOURCE:** This exercise and checklist was developed by Judith Holder, Barbara Eldredge, and Jeff Brooks-Harris while they were involved in the Minority Programming Team, Counseling Center, Southern Illinois University.

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## Checklist of Possible Stressors and Barriers

Please place a check on the space next to the item number if you have experienced a situation similar to the one described.

- 1. A professor seems uncomfortable around you when you ask a question after class (because of your race, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation).
- 2. You feel alienated, lonely, or isolated on campus because of being a minority.
- 3. You do not feel connected to the university environment as a whole.
- 4. You speak or look different than most students on campus.
- 5. You think that one or more of your professors think that minorities don't measure up intellectually.

- \_\_\_ 6. Now that you are in college you wonder if you have the study skills to successfully make it in college and graduate.
- \_\_\_ 7. You avoid asking for help from a professor because you think they won't help; meanwhile you feel anxious about getting further behind.
- \_\_\_ 8. You have heard other students make derogatory comments or jokes about your own racial or ethnic group.
- \_\_\_ 9. You are among the first generation of your family to attend college.
- \_\_\_ 10. You feel uncomfortable on campus because most of the faculty and staff members are of a different race.
- \_\_\_ 11. You are afraid that you won't be treated fairly by a university staff member (e.g., resident advisor, financial aid) because of your race.
- \_\_\_ 12. You are told that you were only admitted to an academic program because of affirmative action guidelines.
- \_\_\_ 13. You believe that you were not hired for a job because of your race or ethnicity.

# Being a Minority on a Majority Campus: Scenarios and Problem Solving

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**GOAL:** To experientially explore some of the challenges that minority students face on a majority campus. To introduce and apply a general problem solving model to these challenges.

**TIME REQUIRED:** At least forty minutes.

**MATERIALS:** A chalk board, over-head, or newsprint and markers.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** A room where participants can participate in a discussion. If role plays are to be conducted, more room may be necessary.

**PROCESS:** As a part of a workshop on multiculturalism, diversity or minority struggles on a majority campus: (a) read one of the scenarios, (b) discuss it, and then (c) introduce the problem-solving model and then (d) apply the model to the scenarios in a discussion or (e) role play(s).

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## Problem Solving Model

### 1. Identify the Problem

- What are your perceptions? How can you check this out?
- Ask, Gather information from other sources
- What cultural values are affecting this situation?

### 2. Identify your Feelings

### 3. Identify Possible Solutions - What is under your control?

- Accommodations - adapting self to situation
- Adjustment - altering situation
- Resources - people, place, thing
- Prevention - an ounce of prevention...

### 4. Choose and Implement

## 5. Evaluate and Revise

- Discussion Questions
    - What is the problem?
    - What feelings might the student have?
    - What are some possible solutions?
  - Role Plays
    - Based on scenarios or personal experiences of participants.
    - Utilize problem solving model and feedback from others.
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### **Scenarios**

Tomuda is from a small country in Africa and this is his first semester on campus and in the U.S. There are not any other people from his country on campus and he feels lonely. He feels awkward meeting Americans and does not feel very close to other African students he has met.

Jackson is an African-American student who holds a student work job at an office on campus. When a friend dropped by to say hi, Jackson said, "Yo, what up?". As soon as his friend left, Jackson's boss confronted him about his speech and said that "we don't talk that way in this office."

Daniel sent his resume to several businesses in the area to try and get a summer job. He is granted an interview, but when the company director meets him and realizes that he is Hispanic, he treats him coolly and only interviews him for about twenty minutes even though an hour had been scheduled. Daniel is not offered that job.

Ann is an Asian-American freshman who is moving into the residence hall. When her white roommates' parents meet her for the first time they ask Ann if she is studying math or engineering and suggest that Ann will be able to help their daughter study for her Algebra class. Ann is planning to study anthropology and does not care much for math.

After living in a multi-racial residence hall her freshman year, Denise hears that things are much nicer on the other side of campus. As she moves into her new residence hall at the beginning of her sophomore year, she realizes that she is the only African-American on her floor.

Tom is a white sophomore who lives with an African-American roommate, Andrew. Tom and Andrew are becoming good friends but in the dining hall, Andrew usually sits with other African-Americans and Tom usually sits with other whites. One day, Tom asks Andrew why he never sits with him at dinner and Andrew asks Tom the same question.

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**SOURCE:** This exercise and the scenarios were developed by Judith Holder, Barbara Eldredge, and Jeff Brooks-Harris while they were a part of the Minority Programming Team, Counseling Center, Southern Illinois University.

# Looking at White Privilege

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**GOAL:** To help people become more aware of the privileges that White Euro-Americans receive because of their race.

**TIME REQUIRED:** At least twenty minutes. Discussion may take additional time.

**MATERIALS:** None.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** A room where participants can sit or stand comfortably.

**PROCESS:** Introduce this exercise as a way to become aware of privileges that some people in our society have and others do not. It is a way for participants to become aware of their own privileges in our culture. Start with the following instructions:

Please stand if the item that is read is true for you. As you stand or sit please notice who else in the room is standing or sitting. Also, pay attention to your feelings as you stand or sit.

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## White Privilege Items

1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time on this campus.
2. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in on-campus or off-campus housing will be neutral or pleasant to me.
3. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
4. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
5. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
6. I can be sure that my classes on campus will use curricular materials that testify to the existence of my race.
7. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my

cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.

8. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
9. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
10. I can speak in public to an important campus group without putting my race on trial.
11. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
12. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
13. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
14. If a police officer pulls me over, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
15. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
16. I can go to a variety of group meetings on campus and find people of my race in attendance and in leadership positions.
17. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
18. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
19. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

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### **Discussion Questions**

- How did you feel about this exercise?
- What privileges were you previously unaware of having?
- How do you feel about the privileges that you have and that you do not have?

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**SOURCE:** These items are taken from or modified versions of items from Peggy McIntosh (1989). "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." *Peace and Freedom*, July/Aug., p. 10-12. The outline was written by Jeff E. Brooks-Harris, Ph.D., Counseling and Student Development Center, University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

## Problem-Solving Activity

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**GOAL:** To provide participants with the opportunity to set specific, realistic goals for addressing diversity issues in their environments.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Paper and pen/pencil.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** Space enough to break into smaller groups for discussion.

**PROCESS:** Break participants into smaller groups of 4-6. Brainstorm in the groups all the diversity challenges which they face in their environment. Have them rank order the top three challenges they see and write them down. It is important to focus here on brainstorming, not coming up with solutions. Once challenges are outlined, begin to discuss manageable actions for dealing with those challenges and the resources or support you might need to take those actions. Make a note of these. It is important here to focus on manageable, realistic actions that each individual can take.

Once these actions are outlined, encourage participants to implement them in their own environment.

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## Growing Up Racially

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**GOAL:** Participants are given an opportunity to explore their own racial/ethnic heritage and to discuss what they were taught to believe about individuals who are racially/ethnically different from themselves.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 60 minutes for two racial/ethnic populations. Add 45 minutes for each additional racial/ethnic population.

**MATERIALS:** Handouts of the five questions participants respond to or newsprint with the five questions listed. Blank newsprint and markers.

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** A large enough room for the participants to form two circles. One of the racial/ethnic groups forms an inner circle. All other participants form a large circle around the first, inner circle.

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**PROCESS:** Introduce activity as an opportunity for individuals to learn more about their own and other participants cultural backgrounds and for them to learn what each racial/ethnic group was taught to believe about the other represented racial/ethnic groups.

Have the participants form small groups based on their racial/ethnic heritage. Have a facilitator join each group. It is ideal if the facilitator can be of the same racial/ethnic heritage, but not necessary. The small group facilitator has the group respond to the five questions listed below, "Growing Up Racially". After the five questions are answered the facilitator lets his/her group know that they are going to have to share these responses with all of the other participants. We let them first explore these questions in the safety of their own group. When they share their responses with the larger group they don't have to personalize the responses, they can state "the group said". Take twenty minutes to do this part of the activity.

After the first twenty minute small group activity is complete, form one group again. Have one racial/ethnic group form an inner circle (example, African American). Have all other participants form a larger circle around the inner circle. The African American group will be asked to share their responses to the "Growing Up Racially" questions. All of the participants in the outer circle are asked to remain silent while the inner circle responds to the questions. The outer circle is asked to actively listen and pay attention to their thoughts and feelings.

After the inner circle responds to the five questions, have another racial/ethnic group move to the inner circle (example, Latino). The inner circle responds to all five questions, while the outer circle remains silent and actively listens to the inner

circle. This is repeated until all racial/ethnic groups have been in the inner circle and responded to all five questions.

After each of the racial/ethnic groups have had their turn in the inner circle, the facilitators ask the participants to discuss: (1) What their reactions were when they were in the inner circle responding to the questions. (2) What did the participants learn about how each ethnic/racial group views their own people. (3) Ask the participants what their reactions were to hearing the racial/ethnic groups share what they were taught to believe about the other racial/ethnic groups. (4) Finally, were there common beliefs, stereotypes, or misinformation that more than one group had about the other groups.

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**"Growing Up Racially" questions:**

1) What things were you told and encouraged to believe about people from your own racial/ethnic group?

2) What things were you discouraged from believing about people of your own racial/ethnic group?

3) What things were you told or led to believe about people who are XXXXXXXXXXXX? (include only the racial/ethnic groups representative of the participants). Example: African American, Asian American, Euro-American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American.

4) Were there things you were discouraged from believing about people from any other the other groups?

5) How or in what ways were you taught to interact or not to interact with people from other racial/ethnic groups?

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**SOURCE:** This exercise was written by Rosemary E. Simmons, Ph.D., Counseling Center, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. This activity was created by Dr. Simmons, for use in a racial awareness retreat.

# Being a Minority Guided Imagery

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**GOAL:** Increase participant's empathy about what it is like to be a minority.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 30 to 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** None

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** Preferably in a setting that is quiet and that participants can sit in a relaxed position.

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**PROCESS:** Have participants get in a comfortable position. Begin with deep breathing or muscle relaxation exercise. When participants are relaxed, read the following guided imagery.

I'm going to take you through a typical day. The only change is that now ten percent of the population is heterosexual (non-target) and ninety percent of the population is homosexual (target). You wake up Monday morning and begin getting ready for work. You kiss your opposite sex partner goodbye and head off to work. You listen to the radio in the car. The top 40 station is playing the latest love songs. You hear music by Indigo Girls, Ferron, and Suede. All of the songs are professing love for a same sex partner. You turn the radio to an oldies station. Again all the music is about same sex relationships. You turn the radio off and put in an audiotape that you bought two weeks ago at the only "straight" bookstore in the city. As you drive down the highway you look at all the billboards. Each of them is selling a product with couples holding each other and laughing. All the couples are of the same sex.

You walk into your office and all of your colleagues are standing around the coffee machine. You go to your office, put your briefcase on the floor and walk with your mug in hand to get coffee. They are all talking about their weekends. John and Jim went to the park and had a picnic with their best friends Tim and Mike. Sally and Jennifer took their two children to the zoo and children's museum. They ask you how yours went. You pause as a hundred things run through your mind. "Do you tell them that your lover is of the opposite sex?" "Do you once again use an inaccurate pronoun when talking about your partner?" "How do you explain that you drove four hours away to the only heterosexual bed and breakfast around. You just wanted to enjoy the weekend with your lover without worrying about how the other guests will react when you ask for one room with one bed?" As all of this is racing through your mind you hear yourself say that not much happened. That the weekend was fine. As you walk away you feel left out once again. Later that day you are in the bathroom and you overhear two colleagues talk about you. They are

discussing how you never invite anyone over to your house from the office. They think it is so sad that you are still single at your age. However they've gotten tired of trying to set you up with dates. You always make an excuse not to go. One of them says that they heard you were straight. The other one gasps and says it can't be true. They have known you for three years and you're just too nice of a person to be like that.

The day is over. You head home looking forward to seeing your partner. You go to turn on the radio. The same old gay and lesbian singers. You turn it off and ride home in silence.

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**After the guided imagery is complete ask participants:**

- 1) How they felt throughout the day?
- 2) What were they feeling and thinking as they listened to the radio and saw all the billboards?
- 3) What was their reaction while overhearing their colleagues talk about them?
- 4) What other thoughts or feelings did you have while doing the guided imagery?

Note that this guided imagery can be used for any minority (target) group. Within the guided imagery, change the scenario so that the target group (homosexual, racial/ethnic minority, disabled, etc.) are the ones who have the most power in the society. That means they have the economic, political, and legal ability to shape society in their image and to their advantage. Have the non-target group (heterosexual, Euro-American, physically abled, etc.) be in the minority.

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**SOURCE:** This outline was written by Rosemary E. Simmons, Ph.D., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. The original source is unknown. Dr. Simmons first heard it being used by Dr. Sandy Colbs from Virginia Commonwealth University.

## Decreasing Conflict

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**GOAL:** To give participants a strategy to use in interacting with someone who is angry about a situation. This situation may be a racial issue, but could be used in any conflict resolution situation.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 30 minutes.

**MATERIALS:** None

**PHYSICAL SETTING:** Any

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**PROCESS:** Let the audience know that there is a productive way to interact with someone who is angry at them. Even if the issue is racial or some other emotionally laden topic. There are three responses that the participant can use.

When someone goes off on them, the first thing they need to do is to acknowledge the other persons emotion. "You sound really angry, can you tell me about it?"

After giving them time to vent their feelings, the second question is to ask them "What are you doing about it?" For example, "What are you doing about race conflicts within the residence halls?"

Listen to what they have done.

The final question is to ask them if they want to know what you are going to do. "Would you like to know what I'm going to do?" OR "Would you like to know what I'm doing about it?"

The facilitators need to review the three responses again:

- 1) Can you tell me about it?
- 2) What are you doing about it?
- 3) Do you want to know what I'm doing?

Have the participants get into groups of three to role play a situation they have been in before or one provided by the facilitator. Have two people do the role play and the other one observe and give feedback. Have the participants switch roles until everyone has had a turn at asking the three conflict resolving questions.

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**SOURCE:** Outline was written by Rosemary E. Simmons, Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. The original exercise was created by Dr. Kesho Scott from Grinnel College in Iowa.