

Identity-mapping Using Feminist Theory to Cultivate “Privilege Awareness”**Abstract**

To respond to *JME*'s 2023 call to cultivate “privilege awareness” (Rabelo et al., 2023), this session invites educators to use social identity theory and intersectionality as foundational concepts in their organizational behavior courses. Grounded in the works of black feminist theorists Beverly Tatum (2000) and Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1991), this session guides participants through an identity-mapping exercise and personal reflections on lived and organizational experience. The session will culminate in a brainstorm on how to embed the identity lens into OB curriculum so that critical conversations don't become siloed to tokenized or “on-off” diversity, equity, and inclusion modules.

Keywords: Identity-mapping, privilege, intersectionality

Introduction

The Journal of Management Education's (JME) first issue of 2023 was the special themed issue "Privilege in the Business Schools and the Management Classroom," addressing the need to discuss privilege from multiple perspectives (Leigh and Rivers, 2023). As Dean and Forray (2021) wrote, privilege is "a special advantage or right derived from socially sanctioned (and often disputed) norms such as knowledge, experience, wealth, family, and ethnicity (p. 165).

In the JME special issue, Lo writes that "most inquiries into privilege are not in management or management education" (p. 81). Rabelo and colleagues (2023) concur that few resources related to addressing privilege exist for management educators, noting that they may struggle with the topic (p. 60). To help redress this situation, the special issue published several articles on privilege in business schools. These include two conveying classroom exercises, including a set of four discussions designed by Kevin Lo that bring together experiential and contextual (or historical) understandings of privilege and intersectionality, and an identity-mapping exercise by Rabelo and colleagues focused on helping students to develop social identity group vocabulary and discuss their own privilege and oppression.

We wish to extend this focus and offer another variation. While management education may be relatively new to an exploration of privilege and power, feminist theories have discussed these topics for decades, via theories of intersectionality and dominant/subordinate positioning. This session will share an enhanced version of the standard identity-mapping exercise that draws on feminist theory to facilitate student reflection on privilege and power as it intersects with their own identities. This session relates directly to the Bridges' theme of the conference: our exercise presents a multidisciplinary and critical view of organizational

behavior topics; connects students within a classroom; underscores intersections between positions of dominance and subordination; and links classroom discussion to workplace experience.

Identity mapping - in which students brainstorm the multiple facets of their identity - as a course exercise will not be new to many MOBTS educators, especially those who teach introductory Organizational Behavior courses. However, these exercises, especially early in a course, tend largely to be personal, answering “who am I, how am I unique, how does who I am shape how I behave and lead,” rather than addressing privilege and oppression. Those who do use identity mapping to surface differences across social identity groups (race, gender, etc.) often do so as a component of a DEI class or module, thereby bracketing the conversation into one separate and distinct DEI module.

Drawing from Beverley Tatum’s (2000) theoretical framework of dominant and subordinate groups, this session will lead participants through an identity mapping exercise and group reflection embedded in experiences of power and privilege (or the lack thereof), and intersectionality, that we do with students. The exercise enables students not only to describe themselves and their experience, but offers them vocabulary about power, privilege, and discrimination at the outset of a course, allowing us to shape the entire course from a perspective of power and privilege in organizations, and embedding reflections on identity, power and privilege throughout the course.

This exercise is designed for undergraduate students in an Organizational Behavior course but could be adapted for use in other courses such as HR or DEI, or for graduate students. The exercise can be conducted in face-to-face or online formats.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications

In a post 2020, George Floyd world, management education should include more than token lessons focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Rather, as educators, we must strive to embed issues of power and privilege into our courses in an effort to cultivate strong “privilege awareness”(Rabelo et al., 2023) among our students. This should also include engaging with diverse perspectives and voices and BIPOC scholars and practitioners. Drawing from black feminist theory (Tatum, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), this session provides educators with identity frameworks that ask students to reflect on the salience and impact of their multiple identity dimensions, social positioning, and ultimately how they both benefits from, and/or are disadvantaged by broader organizational and societal processes because of who they are.

Beverly Tatum’s (2000) reading *The Complexity of Identity: Who Am I?* prompts readers to explore their past, present and future from an identity perspective, and specifically their engagement in both dominant and subordinate groups. Tatum explores identity salience, asking readers to reflect on, “I am _____” in 60 seconds. She highlights how those who embody dominant aspects of social identity (such as being white, or male) often forget to list them in this exercise, thereby highlighting the privileged nature of the dominant position. In addition, Tatum asks readers to reflect on the impact of their subordinate experiences. In a reference to Audre Lorde’s work, Tatum also speaks to the realities of simultaneously engaging in both dominant and subordinate groups, and how this informs personal experience.

In the classroom, once participants have reflected on Tatum’s prompts, they are asked to analyze their identities using her dominant/subordinate framework. As a result, students

become equipped with new vocabulary to address their lived experiences and social positioning in relation to others in the room. We then draw upon Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) theory of intersectionality to further address the complexity of identity and systemic oppression in an organizational context. Finally, students reflect on how compounding bias and disadvantage are embodied in the workplace for different identity groups.

Our experience is that students find this experience of listing their multiple identities, assessing the positionality of each identity as dominant or subordinate, learning about intersectionality, and reflecting on how this complex set of facets shapes their organizational experiences, a powerful tool for self-reflection in the moment, as well as when they grapple with the "isms" that emerge throughout the organizational behavior course.

Session Description

This session provides participants with a theoretical and experiential understanding of identity, or an "identity lens," to better analyze the role of power and privilege within organizations. We will run the conference session as we do with students, pausing for opportunities to reflect as educators on the experience. Participants will skim and reflect on Beverly Tatum's *Complexity of Identity: Who Am I?*, discuss Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectional perspective on identity, and finally, create and discuss a personal identity map. The session will culminate in participants sharing their identity maps in small groups and discussing how it shapes their organizational experiences. Finally, we will brainstorm on how to engage the identity lens in classroom discussions of standard OB topics.

Learning Outcomes: Students will...

1. Develop and extend their understanding of their identity through the frameworks of dominant and subordinate groups, and intersectionality
2. Connect their identity dimensions to how they act, react, and are treated at work, i.e., what they embody and how they interact
3. Analyze how privilege and lack of privilege shape individual experiences in organizations

MOBTS Conference Session Timeline

Topic	Time/Total Elapsed Time
Facilitator and participant introductions	5 mins /5 mins
Brief overview of current research on privilege as a lens for discussing identity and DEI in management classroom	5/10
Participants receive and skim Beverly Daniel Tatum’s “The Complexity of Identity.”	10/20
Quick review of Tatum’s key insights	5/25
Individual identity-mapping exercise: A. List 10 of your identities. B. Label each as dominant or subordinate.	10/35

Small group discussion and debrief: What did you notice while doing this exercise? Which of these identities do you highlight in your interactions in academia? Which do you hide/downplay? Why? Impact? [Note: Identity-mapping and group discussion are parallel to what we would do with students in class]	15/50
Presenters share a discussion board and essay assignment assigned to students post-exercise.	5/55
Discussion (small or whole group depending on numbers): How could this mapping exercise be a precursor to or shape OB modules on power & influence? Leadership? DEI?	10/65
Wrap up/questions/insights	10/75

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