

Stef Barozzi

University of Granada (Spain)
stefb@ugr.es; airswimair@gmail.com

Multiple Identities, Power & Privilege - Challenging Stereotypes and Myths about Gender and Sexual Identities

This proposal is about two workshops given in English, which are interconnected with each other, as both deal with prejudice and mainly against lgbtq+¹ people, hence their relevance to the conference. The participants will represent diversity and the language that goes with it. The time needed to carry out both workshops is of about 3 hours and 30 minutes (about 4 discrimination hours with the break), depending on the number of participants, which should be of at least 10, although the number will be flexible.

The participants will be trained on how to deal with power and privilege and how to challenge stereotypes and myths, especially in an educational environment. They can contribute with their own personal and professional experience.

Workshop 1: 'Multiple identities, power & privilege' (adapted from GLEE, 2002, p. 20-23; Bedford, 2009). Its relevance to the conference theme is due to the fact that the participants will have to impersonate different types of people with multiple identities (not only lgbtq+ people), focusing on the power and privilege earned or unearned in our society.

Purpose: To introduce the idea of 'unearned privilege' and explore the ways in which some groups/identities hold power within our societies; to consider the ways in which we can become allies to groups that have been traditionally deprived of privilege and power in our communities.

Time: 90 minutes or more, depending on the final debate and the number of participants

Materials: Power shuffle statements, list of characters (provided by the facilitator)

Space: A (class)room where tables and chairs are removed or left on the sides of the room. The participants need an open space in order to be able to move around.

Activity and its expected results:

To perform this workshop, the participants stand side-by-side in a line holding hands. Each participant is given a different character with multiple identities. The facilitator (myself) reads a number of power shuffle questions aloud one at the time. The participants require to respond by taking a step forwards if the statement read is true for their assigned character, or a step backwards if it is untrue. Each question illustrates an example of unearned privilege or lack of privilege (for most assigned characters). For example, "Can you shop in a department store without fear of being followed or watched?" (This may not be so for youth or non-white people, for example). Or "Can you walk home after dark without fear of intimidation or attack?" (This may not be so for women or trans people, or people with multiple identities, for example).

After asking all the questions, it will be interesting to observe where each participant is standing in the room, and whether or not it was possible for them to keep their hands held in a line (most likely not). A few moments of silence are provided for the participants to observe one another's position and to reflect on the activity. Then the whole group gathers to debrief and the facilitator will ask specific questions related to how they have felt during the activity and what they have learnt from it. The facilitator will point out and highlight some important aspects to be

¹ I prefer to write lgbtq+ in small letters because, although it is an acronym, it stands out in a text and my intention is to use it as any other word. It is often employed as an adjective (lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer or questioning, etc. people).

discussed, concentrating on the doubts and questions raised by the participants (e.g. regarding people with hiv², trans or intersex people).

The participants will learn how power and privilege is earned or unearned and why. They will also contribute with real examples of situations that they have experienced and might learn new aspects about people with multiple identities who are usually discriminated against.

Workshop 2: 'Challenging stereotypes and myths' (adapted from GLEE, 2002, p. 46-48; Bedford, 2009). It is related to the previous workshop as diversity and discrimination will be analysed through direct confrontation. In this case language will be more important and the participants will do most of the talking. It is therefore a continuation of the first workshop, where the participants' language related to diversity will be central for discussions, hence its relevance to the conference.

Purpose: To give the participants a practical experience on how to challenge lgbtiq+phobia and identify successful techniques to counteract it.

Time: 90 minutes or more, depending on the number of participants and their capacity to sustain confrontation

Materials: a chair for each participant

Space: a (class)room with chairs (tables are not needed)

Activity and its expected results:

The group brainstorms lgbtiq+phobic statements or views they have heard, expressed by students, colleagues, anybody, even themselves. These are recorded on the board and simultaneously on slips of paper. Half of the participants are invited to take their chairs and make a circle facing outwards in the middle of the room. The remaining people then each take their chairs and sit opposite from one of the people in the middle so that each person has a partner (facing each other).

The people on the outside are each given a slip of paper which contains one of the lgbtiq+phobic statements, such as 'Why are all gay men so promiscuous?' 'Trans people should be fully operated on to become a man or a woman', etc. The people on the outside are then given a minute or so to think about their statement and arguments to back it up. The people on the inside are going to have the opportunity to deal with 3 lgbtiq+phobic statements, challenging a fellow participant. The people on the outside will make the statement and they will have about 10 minutes to deal with the issue. These people's role is to act like someone who believes their statement to be true and to be prepared to defend that point of view.

After the first round, people on the outside will stand up and move one place to the right and then repeat the exercise. This procedure is then repeated once more after the second round. By then the people on the inside will have had the opportunity to deal with 3 different statements and the people on the outside will have heard 3 different responses to their statement. A debriefing will take place after this first round. The exercise is then repeated with the roles being reversed.

Finally, the facilitator will ask precise questions related to how the participants have felt with the different statements and the different roles (defending and attacking) and the whole group will discuss how challenging stereotypes and myths regarding lgbtiq+phobia can be useful in this direct way, especially in educational/academic settings.

References

- Bedford, T. 2009. *Promoting Educational Equity through Teacher Empowerment. Web-assisted Transformative Action Research as a Counter-heteronormativity Praxis*. Oulu: Oulu University Press.
- GLEE. 2002. *GLBTQ Educational Equity Project. Leadership Training Course Manual*. Unpublished. Oulu University, Finland.

² I also prefer to write hiv (and aids) in small letters as it stands out in a text. My intention is to reduce its social stigma.