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EDUCATORS' GUIDE

Design Social Change

Creating Social Change

Designing social change means making the kind of change that will have a lasting impact on social practices. It's about the type of change that moves people beyond surviving to thriving. To achieve this, you need to know who you are and what motivates you as a changemaker, you need an awareness of the forces preventing you (and others) from thriving, and you need to make a conscious effort to “design out” these forces on individual and collective levels.

Declaring your positionality is a good way to get started. It's a reflective practice of thinking about who you are: your identities, your social position, and how these affect your work. Writing a positionality statement can help you see who you are as you embark on your journey to stir up change. Once you know who you are, you can then look around and ask: Where is change needed? What are the issues? Who's impacted? What's the environment? In short, you must build a critical awareness so you can see the issues in the world around you and more clearly understand where change is needed. Your critical questions may annoy some, but they will help everyone move toward a better world.

This activity from *Design Social Change* by Lesley-Ann Noel challenges you to develop a positionality statement and fine tune your critical awareness. It has been adapted for use in both K12 and higher education classrooms.

Activity: Know Your Positionality and Develop Critical Awareness

LEARNING GOAL

To help learners know who they are as changemakers and how to understand where change is needed. To help them develop self-awareness, agency, and empathy.

WHERE TO USE THIS ACTIVITY

Classrooms | Virtual learning sessions (Zoom, etc.) | Workshops

MATERIALS

Paper | Writing instrument

FORMAT

Individual work, with opportunity for individual or paired reflection

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Write Your Positionality Statement

Who are you? Think about the diversity that is represented within you. Push back against the world that asks you to fit in, and reflect on all the complexity that has made you. Here are some questions to consider in this reflection:

Who had a big impact on you?

What are some of the social changes that the people who are significant to you have experienced in their lives?

What significant social changes have you experienced in your life?

What are some of your many identities? Do any identities give you greater access to anything?

Do any of these identities deny you access to anything?

When has the world encouraged you to obscure or celebrate your identities?

What is the one change that people with one of your oppressed identities need in order to thrive?

What is one change you want to see in fifty years? Or before you die?

What are some of the positive experiences that have made you?

How do your identities affect how you think about the world?

Reflect on your responses and write a description of who you are, what has made you who you are, and your vision for the future. Consider the complex combination of your identities with the identities of people who have had a significant impact on you.

This reflection on positionality can help you see your own agendas and possible biases. It can help you reflect on elements of your identity that you don't always see. This statement can help guide the work that you do. Come back to your positionality statement and reflect on it from time to time. Your positionality is also not fixed. It will change over time, as you age, as your abilities change, as your status changes. These changes will also impact the way you understand the world.

2. Go Deeper with the Positionality Wheel

The Positionality Wheel is another tool to prompt reflection about the way your worldview affects the work you do. Though I first made this activity for individual reflection on identity, it also works well with groups and helps teams to identify their own biases and gaps and how to balance their composition and ideas. This activity encourages all participants to reflect on facets of their identity ranging from more visible factors, like race, gender, and age, to less visible elements, such as ability, class, education, and even their languages. Ask everyone in the group to reflect on the twelve elements of their identities in the Positionality Wheel, then reflect individually and discuss as a group.

3. Raise Your Critical Awareness

Understand where change is needed in the world by building your critical awareness. Start to develop and fine tune your critical awareness by answering the following questions.

What are some examples of inequity in the work you do or the world in which you live? What causes this inequity? What is the individual's role? What is society's role?

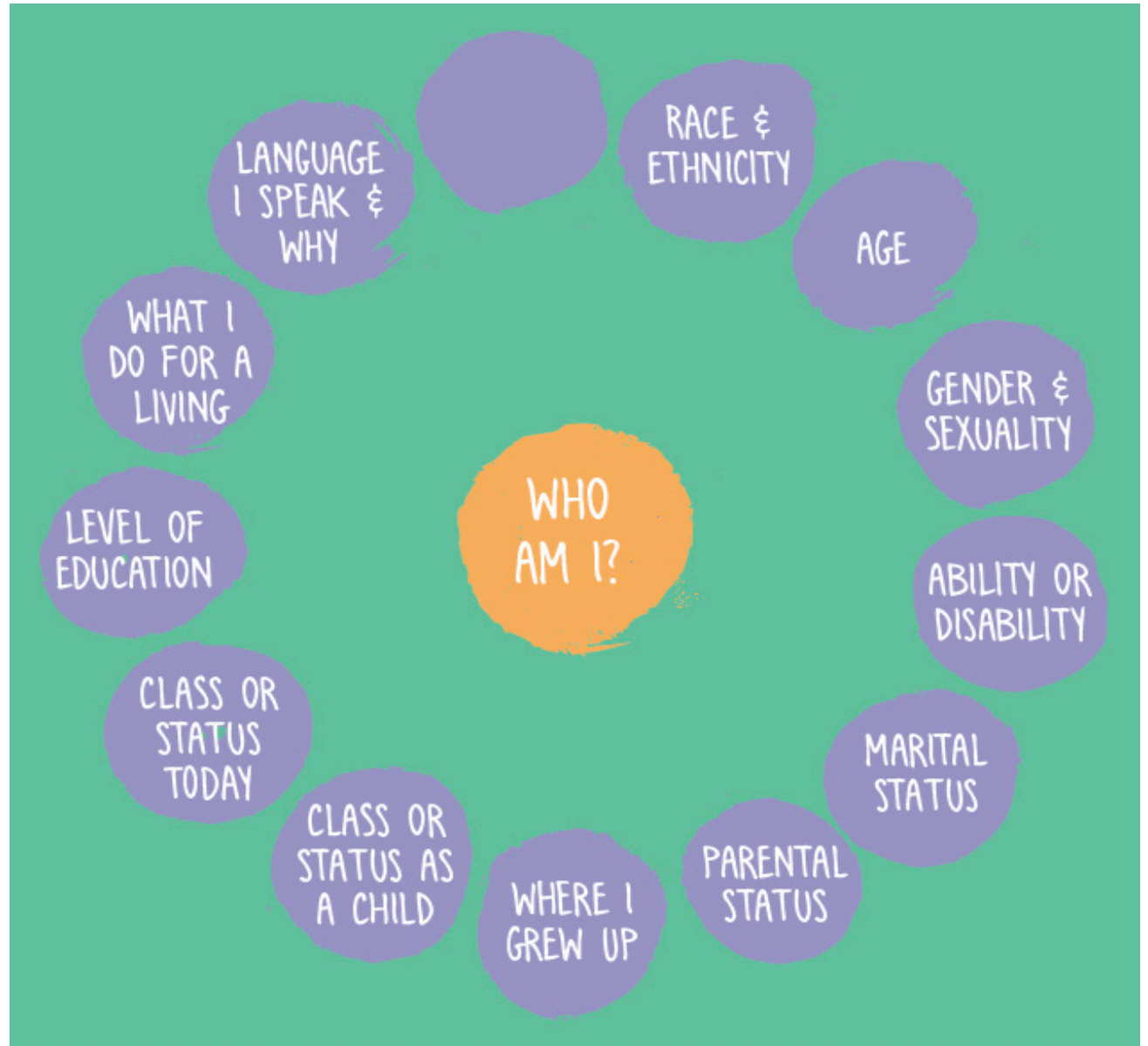
How do you think your positionality might affect your critical awareness? Where might there be blind spots? Where might you be overstimulated?

Think about your day-to-day experiences. Where do you see examples of inequity? How does this inequity impact you?

Reflect on your own power and privilege. How do you benefit from inequalities? How are you disadvantaged because of them?

What are people doing to make change? Who is hacking inefficient systems around them to make things work? How can you work with them?

Building critical awareness helps you recognize your own agency and see how you can change the world. It also enables you to see the power and agency of others.



WE'D LOVE YOUR FEEDBACK!



This educators' guide is a prototype (hooray!). We're hoping to understand what types of materials are useful to educators and learners in K12 and higher education classrooms. If you used this, please share your feedback with us in this four-question survey.

WANT TO READ MORE?

Check out *Design Social Change!* The book offers even more ways to know yourself, connect to others, and create change in the world.

Learn about all of our d.school books at dschool.stanford.edu/books.

To request a complimentary examination copy to review for use in your classroom, contact Penguin Random House Education at k12education@penguinrandomhouse.com for PreK–12 Education or highereducation@penguinrandomhouse.com for Higher Education.