



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Building empathy and community in classrooms

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Outline

- Introduction
- Background for how to build empathy and community
 - Power/dynamics
 - Decision making
 - Empathy
 - Teams
- Q&A



Intro



Who I am

(beyond academic standards)





Who I am

(in academic standards)



“It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism”
— Dr. Angela Y. Davis





Es fácil gritar "quédate en casa" cuando lo tenes todo.



“It’s easy to say ‘stay at home’ when you have everything you need”



In new/intimidating spaces, what are actions that make you feel included, valued, and part of a community?



Background



Power dynamics

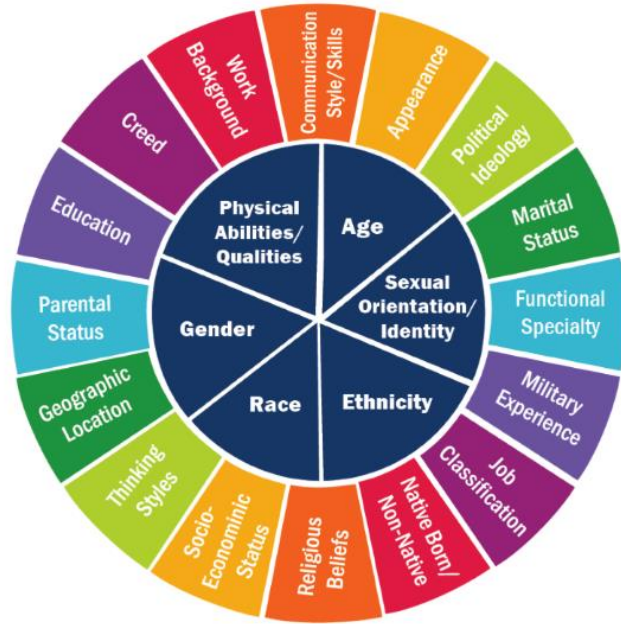


Figure 5.1. Group Identities Across Relations of Power

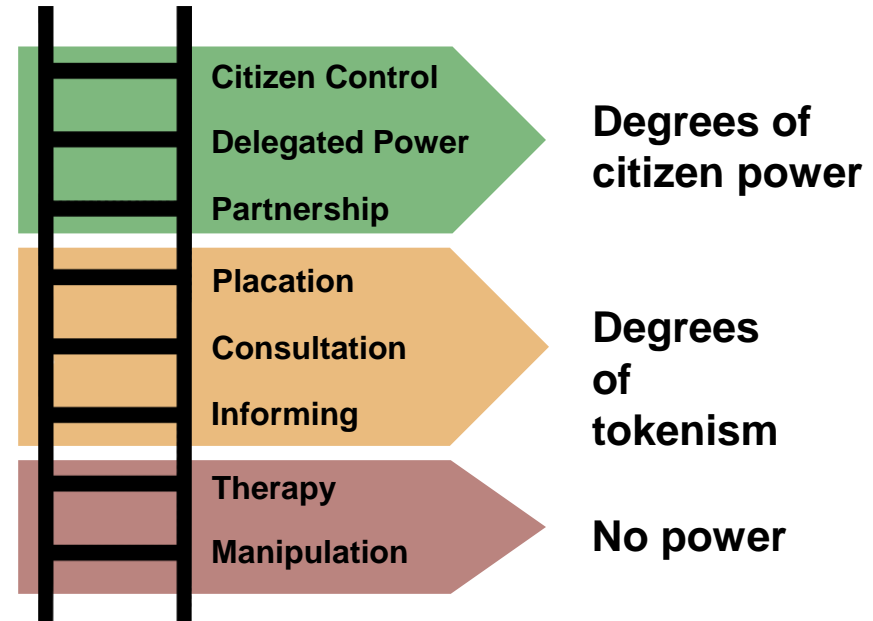
Minoritized/Target Group	Oppression	Dominant/Agent Group
Peoples of Color	Racism	White
Poor		
Working Class	Classism	Owning Class
Middle Class		
Women; Transgender; Genderqueer	Sexism	(cis)Men
Gays; Lesbians; Bisexuals; Two Spirit	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals
Muslims; Buddhists; Jews; Hindus; and other non-Christ- ian groups	Religious Oppression Anti-Semitism	Christians
People with Disabilities	Ableism	Able-bodied
Immigrants (perceived)	Nationalism	Citizens (perceived)
Indigenous Peoples	Colonialism	White Settlers

Sensy and DiAngelo, 2017



Decision Making

- As instructors, we all hold power over our students
 - Assignments
 - Grades
 - Their own perception of their ability
- Participation is one way in which we can disrupt holding all the power and ensuring that diverse voices and experiences are heard (Arnstein, 1969)





What are the barriers that exist within the classroom that can prevent anyone (e.g., instructors, students) from being more empathetic and understanding?



Empathy

- Empathy is a multi-dimensional concept



Empathy

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- Empathy is an **emotion** (Davis, 1983)
 - People feel unsettled or awkward when interacting with a person who needs them emotionally



Empathy

- Empathy is a multi-dimensional concept
- Empathy is an **emotion** (Davis, 1983)
- Empathy is a **cognitive behavior** (Davis, 1983)
 - People put themselves in other people's shoes to understand their experiences



Empathy

- Empathy is a multi-dimensional concept
- Empathy is an **emotion** (Davis, 1983)
- Empathy is a **cognitive behavior** (Davis, 1983)
- Empathy **leads to action** (Gerdes and Segal, 2009)
 - People make decisions to address the other person's needs



Empathy in engineering (Walther et al., 2017)

- Empathy is a teachable and learnable **skill**
 - E.g., developing strategies for understanding others



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- Empathy is a **practice orientation**
 - E.g., when working with the users, listening to their perspectives is important
- Empathy is a **professional way of being**
 - E.g., Engineers can work on technical projects and still care for society as a whole



On building teams (and perhaps community)

- Psychological safety (Edmondson, 2014)
 - Frame the work as a learning problem, not an execution problem
 - Acknowledge your own fallibility
 - Model curiosity
 - TEDx Talk! [\(send link in the chat\)](#)





On building teams (and perhaps community)

To measure a team's level of psychological safety, Edmondson asked team members:

- If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
- Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
- People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
- It is safe to take a risk on this team.
- It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
- No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
- Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.



What strategies can you leverage in your classroom to build empathy and community?



Thank you!

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