

Theories of Conflict

Characteristics of Group Identity

List ten (10) group characteristics about yourself that help define who you are:

I am:

_____ ()_	_____ ()_
_____ ()_	_____ ()_
_____ ()_	_____ ()_
_____ ()_	_____ ()_
_____ ()_	_____ ()_

Now, place a check mark (✓) next each characteristic that confers to you relative social privilege (“agent” status). Leave blank those characteristics that either do not confer social privilege to you or may be seen as a characteristic of a marginalized or non-dominant group.



Group Identity Characteristics Activity

Instructor's Notes

Time Required: 20-30 minutes

After discussing social identity theory, circulate the handout on the page above. Ask each participant to quickly list up to ten characteristics they see in themselves that they perceive as markers of their own group identities. Then ask them to put a check mark next to any of the listed characteristics they believe confer to them some degree of social privilege. For example, in dominant U.S. culture, someone who identifies as a cisgender, straight, white male would list four identity characteristics and likely check all four as conferring some degree of social privilege. Someone who identifies as transgender white upper-middle class would list three identity characteristics and likely check white and upper-middle class as conferring some degree of privilege.

Three-step debrief:

1. After the group completes the worksheet, invite them to work either in pairs or in small groups (3 or 4 people) to discuss what they have listed, why, and what, if any, significance the characteristics have in social interactions and in conflict situations (the “so what” question).
2. Bring the whole group together for full debrief. Invite a discussion of similarities and differences among the characteristics people listed and whether there is consensus about which, if any, characteristics confer relative social privilege. Again, follow up with the “so what” question.
3. Finally, bring the discussion directly back to conflict work. For example, in what ways do social identity differences influence parties’ attitudes toward others in their own group, toward others who they perceive to be “out-group” members, and so on.

Note: Ask participants to keep their worksheets for later review. This exercise is re-visited and extended when the class covers Module 7: Systems, structures and the conflict ecosystem. In that later module, the question of social location and relative social power is addressed directly.