

Intro to Privilege and Oppression

Justice and JOFEE

90 minutes

Age range for activities: 18+

Ideal attendees: 6-20

Program Overview

This class is intended to serve as an introductory course about privilege and oppression. This class can serve as a framework for any justice curriculum, especially in a JOFEE context. This course is taught to every Adamah cohort, and was specifically designed for the JOFEE Network Gathering 2019. I felt that this content should be taught in all JOFEE programs. While the connection to the outdoors and/or Judaism isn't obvious, it is important to remember that we run JOFEE programs for *humans*...and anytime you have humans together, systems of power are at play!

Introduction:

This program will provide a basic understanding of concepts such as privilege, oppression, power, socialization and identities. This program will provide definitions and explanations of concepts so that participants will be able to have a shared language. They will also get to explore the ways that they have all been socialized into our identities and the way that the socialization has happened over time. They will leave the class having a better understanding of the privileges they have as well as the oppressions they experience and how those all connect to one another. They will also have an opportunity to brainstorm how they can each use their privileges (either individually and/or organizationally) to disrupt systems of oppression.

Behavior Change:

Participants will have a shared understanding and basic working definitions for the ways that privilege and oppression affect all of us, every day. This will also serve as a stepping stone for more nuanced conversations about justice as it relates to our JOFEE work.

JOFEE Ethics & Connection to Jewish Tradition:

Connections to Jewish tradition: Having a better understanding about the ways that we as Jews are a part of systems of power (experiencing antisemitism and internalized anti-semitism) as well as ways we might hold other privileges/ identities (race, class, gender, ability, etc) will help us be in more genuine relationship with our constituents, ourselves, our co-workers, and our neighbors.

JOFEE Ethics:

People Care

- Helping us all to think about how we are in relationship with one another, and our co-workers, constituents, neighbors etc allows us to start to disrupt systems of power which will help to allow people to have a more equitable access to resources.

Guiding Questions / Enduring Understanding(s)

Enduring Understanding:

Systems of power are at play in all of our work, whether we study it or not. It is incredibly important as a JOFEE movement to be acknowledging the ways that power/privilege and oppression impact our work, and then changing our programming accordingly.

Materials needed:

- Source sheet
 - Cycle of socialization
 - White board or flip chart
 - Marker
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Goals:

- Have a shared set of definitions and basic understanding of privilege & oppression
 - Explore how our identities within systems of oppression/privilege have directly impacted us.
 - Better understand the process by which we learned to play out societal roles
 - Connect more deeply with our personal and collective stories, and our personal and collective power.
 - Do the internal work that makes it possible to turn to justice work authentically and fully.
 - Better understand the systemic nature of oppression, and the many levels on which it operates
 - Better understand the ways privilege operates in the world on a macro level, and in concrete ways in our own lives every day.
 - Make visible the ways we benefit from oppression, even as we recognize the ways everybody gets hurt by oppression.
 - Have a greater understanding of the importance of these topics in the JOFEE field
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Session Plan:

INTRO & FRAMING (5 min) end 11:40

- 90 min not a lot of time- goals & agenda are on your handout
- Intention: not about blaming, shaming, sharp analysis, or being smartypantses
- Powerful tool: Raise your right hand and repeat after me: “I do not know what that means” “Can you tell me more about that?” When someone says these things, it’s a cute to think “Whoa, that person is eager and ready to learn. Amazing.” Brave to say those things!

- Let whatever feelings come up come up in this class, and try to stay open to learning, especially if a lot of this is review for you! How can you find newness? When you're feeling challenged, try to lean into it
- Credit UA, Jo Kent Katz
- Why are we talking about this at JOFEE: whether or not we're talking about this, all of this is at play in our work-- interpersonally with our coworkers, the land we're working on, folks who are impacted by our programs. There isn't a space that isn't impacted by it. By talking about it we interrupt the system of oppression that would by default be perpetuated if we didn't talk and learn about it.
 - Adamah example: we're farming on land that was stolen from indigenous folks... gender dynamics- who's socialized to think they can use power tools etc... to live communally-- dishes, cooking, etc- we donate food to lower income folks of color because the way the systems are upheld, there's no fresh food within miles because of redlining and food deserts & access to resources and health care etc. who's in our program who can afford to take 3 months off unpaid, and who can pay to do physical labor.

INTRO TO SOCIAL IDENTITIES (10 min) end 11:50

- In this society, we are born into or placed into categories that we call social identities.
 - These are the identities that we carry, that are prescribed and defined by society. Identities on which society places value and worth. These identities aren't ALL that we are-- we have other identities that make us interesting and who we are
 - What do these identities impact?
 - The power we have in society, which affects our ability to access resources we need.
 - The power that affects the voice we have in decisions that affect our lives.
 - Agency to change our circumstances
 - Access we have to people who make decisions that affect our communities.
 - Identities that affect the kind of health care, food, education, neighborhoods, experiences we have access to growing up, what we can imagine is possible for us, what we are taught we are worth of.
 - **We are not to blame AND we are responsible** (write on flip chart)
 - Someone reads quote? *"Our socialization begins before we are born, with no choice on our part. No one brings us a survey, in the womb, inquiring into which gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, cultural group, ability status, or age we might want to be born. These identities are ascribed to us at birth through no effort or decision or choice of our own; there is, therefore, no reason to blame each other or hold each other responsible for the identities we have. In addition to having no choice, we also have no initial consciousness about who we are. We don't*

question our identities at this point. We just are who we are.” (cycle of socialization)

SOCIAL IDENTITIES WE’LL EXPLORE TODAY CS

- Ask: What are some social identities? Fill in whatever they miss
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Class
 - Religion
 - Ability
 - Sexual orientation
 - Nationality
 - ethnicity/culture
 - Language
 - Age
- **a note on INTERSECTIONALITY:** These identities don’t stand alone. We are full humans, we carry all of these identities at once. At all times we have all of these identities.

THE CYCLE OF SOCIALIZATION (10 min) RB end 12:00

- How did we learn to participate in the roles that these identities prescribe?
- Why does this matter? A big part of interrupting oppression and working towards liberation is understanding how we learn to play these roles and come to perpetuate them (often without realizing it). By being born into these identities, we are placed by society into roles where oppression acts upon us, and where we end up acting out oppression upon others. It’s not our fault, but we are still accountable/responsible.
- share handout, use gender as an example
- The Cycle of Socialization is a tool that helps us think through how we learned what these identities mean and learned to act out roles

FILLING OUT OUR OWN CYCLES (15 min) end 12:15

- Choose one social identity, pair off, share how it connects to the Cycle of Socialization (5 min)
- Bring them back together- take 3 insights /questions - not walking us through the whole thing, just something you noticed

TRANSITION:

all of these identities don’t operate in a vacuum, they operate in systems of power where some social identities have greater privileges, including access to resources etc... some identities are

given more power, which means that the flip side and direct result is that other identities are oppressed.

DEFINITION OF OPPRESSION and THE 4 I's (20 min) end 12:35

- Share definition of Oppression
- Define and give examples of the 4 I's- the 4 levels of oppression - with each one we'll provide JOFEE and non-JOFEE examples
 - **Interpersonal:**
 - JOFEE: in the field, adamahnik comes up and asks why you use they pronouns, why not just pick one
 - racial slurs, violence towards trans folks, cat calling, white trash
 - **Institutional:**
 - JOFEE: most of these programs you have to pay to do- have to pay to experience earth-based judiasm- only accessible to upper/middle class folks.... Freedman- difference between program & hospitality staff
 - disparity in sentencing between crack & cocaine, stop & frisk- black and brown people stopped more often than white, Christmas celebration in schools, state adopts a law prohibiting the legal recognition of queer relationships, city employment agency requires that individuals have a permanent address and phone before accepting their case, since public schools are funded by property taxes, students in lower-income neighborhoods attend schools with fewer resources
 - **Ideological:**
 - JOFEE: lawnmower- manpower- "can i get two guys to....".... Jewish world- hair straightening products & nose jobs... what people picture when they picture jewish leaders... economic success based on hard work rather than other privileges... assumption that people are self-made and pull themselves up by their bootstraps, when actually it's often privileges that others don't have--- white skin, male, etc
 - unrealistic beauty standards in magazines, a belief that individual merit and hard work is rewarded by economic success leads to an assumption that poor people are lazy and undeserving,
 - **Internalized:**
 - Explain how we could talk forever about internalized anti-semitism, why we're not now
 - JOFEE: non-cis-male person doesn't raise their hand when leader asks for a strong person to help, flame of shame seeing people being visibly jewish- wearing a kippah etc.
 - women speaking critically about another woman's body; a student of color prefers to take classes from white prof rather than a person of color since they do not think that POC profs are as qualified; agreeing that jews

control the media; someone queer being embarrassed by gay people who are too open about their sexuality, or showing anger towards other queer folks for not coming out; a person 'catcalled' on the street blames herself, assuming she was wearing too provocative clothing.

PRIVILEGE (15 min) end 12:50

- talking about privilege can bring up lots of feelings. Guilt isn't productive. As we get into this class you might feel these things. Sometimes it's useful to externalize them like this before we go into it, because as they come up you can notice them and laugh at them a little, not take them so seriously. And- we can't talk about privilege without talking about oppression— reminder about intersectionality and how people can hold both privileged and oppressed identities in their full selves.
- Go over definition.
- Privilege is about how society systematically accommodates certain groups of people based on their identities. It's about unearned advantages certain groups have that *they see as normal or do not notice at all.*

LOOK AT CHECKLISTS

- Read through and journal
- Popcorn share back
- Elephant & mice example. Part of the privilege is that you don't have to look down or look where you're stepping, whereas mice spend an incredible amount of energy and awareness trying to avoid being stepped on

LUNCH TOPIC & WORK TO DO GOING FORWARD

WHAT DO WE DO WITH OUR PRIVILEGE? How can I use my unearned power to distribute power more fairly and to weaken systems of oppression? How can you use your privilege in your org to weaken systems of oppression?

CLOSING (10 min) end 1:00

- a question, a learning, a goal (share one or all)
- Pair or popcorn or whole circle depending on size...?

Prepared by: Cole Siegel, Adamah Apprentice, Falls Village, CT (*Rebecca Bloomfield was a collaborator of this curriculum and was scheduled to teach it alongside me at JNG... however, she had a family emergency and it was co-taught with Liana Rothman*)

2019, Fall