



Power

Suggested exercise:

Create placards that establish demographic profiles of five “characters,” such as the examples below. (Tip: create the placards ahead of time.) Divide all participants into five small groups, encouraging participants to join people they don’t already know. Establish an area where the placards will be placed to visually demonstrate the hierarchy of social power. (Tip: a staircase works very well for this.) Ask each small group to come up with a social scenario—any time-and-place in current society where multiple people might gather.

Choose a small group to go first and explain their social scenario. Then, invite discussion among the full group regarding which “characters” have more power than others in that scenario. Arrange the placards accordingly. See if the full group can reach consensus. After a few minutes, move on to the next group and repeat the process.

Example “character” profiles: Cristina / Latina / age 64 / U.S. citizen ● Anthony / Black / age 28 / U.S. citizen ● Chong-Min / Asian / age 32 / U.S. citizen ● Raúl / Latino / age 55 / Mexican citizen ● Emily / White / age 40 / U.S. citizen

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Thought themes to inspire conversation:

How does one get power? Can power be given? Asserted? Denied?

Is power a social compact—*i.e.*, something that multiple parties must *agree* to?

Is power the same thing as privilege?

Is power a vacuum?

How successfully do we place limits on power?

“Freedom for the wolves has often meant death to the sheep.” - British philosopher, Isaiah Berlin