

Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

This is a great activity to stimulate self-reflection by teachers related to multicultural education and relationship-building. The activity helps teachers see various aspects of life through different cultural lenses, including their own, and improves cultural awareness and community building by checking assumptions we may have. Teachers can use learnings from this activity to inform decisions related to how and what they teach.

This activity was developed by Nancy Gallavan (2005), based upon the works of Peggy McIntosh (1989), and was designed for use in an teacher pre-service multicultural education course. Our recommendation is to use this as a self-assessment and reflection piece to broaden your own cultural awareness, and we have modified the activity to reflect this use. We do not recommend using this activity within your classroom due to the potentially sensitive or painful nature that self-disclosure may cause. Facilitation of this activity within a classroom would require a lot of trust-building activities and the establishment of a very safe environment prior to implementation.

Steps for use as an *individual self-reflection activity*:

1. Print out Part I & Part II of the “McIntosh’s Privileges-Gallavan Activity” found on pages 3 & 4 of this document.
2. Think about the community in which you live and/or teach. On a piece of paper, write down the dominant cultural group(s) for this community. Next, list the non-dominant cultural groups for this community. Consider cultural groups based upon: race or ethnicity, ability/disability, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, age, sex, language usage, etc.
3. Complete Part I (per the directions on the handout) from the perspective of your own cultural identity.
4. Write down any interesting thoughts that came to mind as you completed the chart.
5. For Part II, fill out the chart a second time, only this time from the lens or perspective of a cultural group different than your own. If you identify with the dominant cultural group, choose a non-dominant cultural group from your list above. If you identify with a non-dominant cultural group, choose another cultural group from your list (dominant or non-dominant). Try to fully immerse yourself into this characteristic to view the world through this new lens.
6. It may be helpful to complete the chart from the perspective of several of the non-dominant groups represented within your school.

7. Reflect upon your answers considering questions such as the following:
- What differences did you notice between the way you completed the chart for Part I and Part II?
 - What differences did you notice between completing the chart from the perspective of the dominant cultural group (if you did) versus the perspective of the non-dominant cultural group(s)?
 - Did this activity uncover any assumptions you may have had about any of the cultural groups?
 - What interesting thoughts or insights did you have as a result of this activity?
 - Are there any changes you might make in the way you teach based upon your learnings from this activity?

Continued ↘

McIntosh's Privileges (Revised by Gallavan)

Part I: Based upon your own personal cultural identity: _____

1. **Rate** each item as: **Y** for "Yes I can do this (almost) whenever I want and wherever I am, **N** for "No I cannot (or can rarely) do this whenever I want and wherever I am, or **NA** if you feel this does not apply to you.
2. **Rank** each item from 1 (most convenient) to 5 (least convenient). You may use the same ranking for many items.
3. **Write** any additional comments or thoughts you may have related to this statement.

McIntosh's Privileges (revised)		
Cultural Characteristics:	Yes/No/NA	Rank: 1-5
1. I can live where I want to live. Comments:		
2. I can worship where I want to worship & near where I live. Comments:		
3. I can shop where I will not be followed or harassed & my form of payment is accepted. Comments:		
4. I can find my preferred kinds of food, clothing, hair solons, hair products, music, etc. Comments:		
5. I can find people like me portrayed positively on television, in the movies, in songs, etc. Comments:		
6. I can find posters, toys, dolls, greeting cards, etc., that show people like me. Comments:		
7. I can find people like me portrayed positively in books, etc., about our nation & history. Comments:		
8. I can find people like me in most textbooks & teaching materials. Comments:		
9. I can say what I want about people & be accepted by the people around me. Comments:		
10. I can be with people like me. Comments:		

McIntosh's Privileges (Revised by Gallavan)

Part II: Based upon a cultural identity other than your own: _____

4. **Rate** each item as: **Y** for "Yes I can do this (almost) whenever I want and wherever I am, **N** for "No I cannot (or can rarely) do this whenever I want and wherever I am, or **NA** if you feel this does not apply to you.
5. **Rank** each item from 1 (most convenient) to 5 (least convenient). You may use the same ranking for many items.
6. **Write** any additional comments or thoughts you may have related to this statement.

McIntosh's Privileges (revised)		
Cultural Characteristics:	Yes/No/NA	Rank: 1-5
1. I can live where I want to live. Comments:		
2. I can worship where I want to worship & near where I live. Comments:		
3. I can shop where I will not be followed or harassed & my form of payment is accepted. Comments:		
4. I can find my preferred kinds of food, clothing, hair solons, hair products, music, etc. Comments:		
5. I can find people like me portrayed positively on television, in the movies, in songs, etc. Comments:		
6. I can find posters, toys, dolls, greeting cards, etc., that show people like me. Comments:		
7. I can find people like me portrayed positively in books, etc., about our nation & history. Comments:		
8. I can find people like me in most textbooks & teaching materials. Comments:		
9. I can say what I want about people & be accepted by the people around me. Comments:		
10. I can be with people like me. Comments:		