

Privilege for Sale

Small Group – 101 – Medium Trust – 20 mins – szp.guide/privilegeforsale

Materials

- Privileges for Sale Participant Handout
- Scrap paper

Setup

- Write different dollar amounts of money on the scrap paper — one piece per group

Facilitator Framing

- Giving directions for this activity in steps will help ensure that participants don't miss any part of the instructions.
- Privilege for sale is an activity that can have a lot of different outcomes and goals, many of which can be focused on in the debrief. If you want to use the activity to achieve certain goals/learning outcomes be sure to steer the debrief towards that end.
- The coming out handout flows nicely from privilege for sale but can be used/referenced anywhere in the curriculum.

Goals & Learning Outcomes

- To acknowledge and investigate privilege.
- To provide an opportunity for participants to empathetically connect and reflect on the experience of having (or not having) privilege.
- To discuss the variety of privileges that the queer community (and other communities) have limited access to. Not just legal privileges but social, financial, etc.
- To discuss how no one privilege is more important than another, that for someone any privilege may feel essential.
- Participants will be able to identify privileges that they take for granted in their everyday life.
- Participants will discuss what types of privileges (social, financial, legal, etc.) are important to them and why that may differ from others in their group.
- Participants will be able to investigate and discuss what groups may have limited access to what privileges and effect that lack of access may have on an individual.

Process Steps

1. Break participants into small groups, ideally no more than 4 people. Have folks create little discussion pods around tables or with chairs in a circle, groups should be far away from each other so they can have a discussion without being distracted by the other groups.

2. Explain the directions:

“On your sheet there is a list of privileges, for the purposes of this activity, you do not have any of these privileges. We have removed of these privileges and you, as a group, need to buy them back from us. Each privilege costs \$100. One of us is going to come around in a moment and give an amount of money to each group. That is the amount of money that you *as a group* have to spend. We will give you a few minutes to talk together and decide what privileges you’d like to buy. After we’re going to come back to the big group and debrief.”

3. Check to see if the group has any questions on the directions.

4. Pass out dollar amounts for the different groups on scrap paper. (*Typically we vary the amounts from \$300-\$1400*)

5. Give the groups approximately 5 minutes (giving them a “half-way” / 2 minute warning) to discuss and decide which privileges they would like to buy.

6. Debrief the activity as a whole with the group.

7. (*If desired*) Transition into the Coming Out Handout.

Debrief questions

What was this activity like?

How did this activity make you feel?

- For some people this is a new experience because they’ve never thought of privilege in this way, or in a list form like this.
- It can sometimes be a deeply triggering or frustrating activity because perhaps you don’t have access to a lot of these privileges and seeing all of the privileges in a list can be challenging.
- For others it can be deeply moving/emotional because they’ve never thought of all the privilege that they do have before. This can bring up feelings of guilt or even feelings of shame for taking things for granted.

How did you go about picking privileges?

- Some groups go democratic of everyone gets to pick one privilege. Groups with less money often don’t have the opportunity to go that route.
- Sometimes different amounts of money change our priorities. Often times groups with less money will make different decisions than if that same group had had more money.
- Often times conversations about values and about life goals come up when folks begin picking privileges.

What on this list surprised you?

- A lot of times people don’t realize all of the privileges that they take for granted. And that’s often because privilege is invisible to those of us who have privilege it.

- Sometimes people mention that they'd never thought of what it would actually be like not to be able to use a public bathroom without threat or punishment. It is interesting to think about that conversation from a personal perspective rather than as a political issue.

Why do you think this activity is called “Privilege for Sale” instead of “Heterosexual Privilege for Sale” or “Cisgender Privilege for Sale?”

- While some of these privileges may apply to sexuality or gender they may also relate to race, class, ability, or even religion. We are all likely approaching it from a lens of gender and sexuality because that's what we've been focused on today but a lot of different marginalized experiences/identities apply to this list.

Why do you think we choose money? We could have easily said that each privilege was worth a token and you have 5 tokens, what does money represent?

- When you have more money you can actually buy privileges, you can move to new locations where some of the social privileges may be more easily accessed or you can hire a lawyer to manage adoption paperwork for instance.
- Money is a form of privilege. When you have money you may not be as concerned that you could lose your job or may be rejected from housing.
- We take money very seriously and we understand how it can affect our decision making processes.

Why do you think we gave groups different amounts of money?

- Sometimes you can think that you that you only have \$500 until you realize that someone was less privileged than you and then all of a sudden the \$500 feels differently.
- It can create animosity between groups even though the groups were simply assigned the money and it was really the facilitators who should be receiving the animosity.

What have you learned from this activity?

How does this activity and what you're learning from this activity translate into your job or work?

Wrap-up

Clarify any points above that you didn't land with your participants that you feel are particularly relevant and important for the group. Summarize the main learning points that they shared.

Make it your own

You can modify this list to talk about whatever types of privileges you'd like to highlight, like [cisgender privilege](#), [male privilege](#), [christian privilege](#), or [White privilege](#).

You can experiment with pace (e.g., more decision-making time, or less), group size, rules (e.g., introduce a "fire sale" in the last minute of decision-making where certain privileges cost \$50), and the allocations of money (e.g., a huge economic disparity, or everyone getting the same amounts).

Unlock the Magic

No two facilitations of this activity will be the same, even if — *especially if* — you try to make that happen. Sometimes you'll have a group be righteously mad. Other times the primary emotion surfaced might be sadness or dejection. Sometimes groups are just confused or baffled by these examples "How did I not see this before?!"

The trick to this activity is *not* trying to elicit a *particular* emotional/cognitive response, but being present to *whatever your group surfaces*, and honing in on that: what're they feeling, where's it coming from, what meaning might you make from it?

This activity is a ton of fun if you let your group take the lead, and follow them where they take you. Enjoy the ride.

Notes

The word "privilege" has become really loaded, and a borderline trigger for a lot of people. Further, other activities or interventions meant to help folks "check their privilege" often backfire, or fall short. Keeping this all in mind, Privilege for Sale is (or at least *can be*) different. Just be prepared for pushback, and do your best to validate or understand where it is coming from. We've had tons of participants, after the training or on a break after this activity, tell us something along the lines of "That was so different from how I've always seen 'privilege' done."

This activity will really hit home for some people. Give people time to debrief and be ready to validate any emotions that come up for the group. It is also a really great activity to refer back to later in the training because a lot of people really connect with this activity and can use it to understand other impacts of bias or prejudice or how additional levels and layers of privilege would interact.

A neat way to wrap up this activity is to segue into the **Coming Out Handout** szp.guide/comingouthandout. You can use this to talk about how not thinking about coming out is a privilege that not all of us have and address the issues related to coming out.

Privileges for Sale

Please look at the following list of privileges. Each privilege costs \$100 to purchase. As a group, please purchase as many privileges as your money allows.

1. Celebrating your marriage(s) with your family, friends, and coworkers.
2. Paid leave from your job when grieving the death of your partner(s).
3. Inheriting from your partner(s)/lover(s)/companion(s) automatically after their death.
4. Having multiple positive TV role models.
5. Sharing health insurance with your partner(s).
6. Being able to find role models of the same sexual orientation.
7. Being able to see your partner(s) immediately if in an accident or emergency.
8. Being able to be promoted in your job without your sexuality playing a factor.
9. Adopting your children.
10. Filing joint tax returns.
11. Able to obtain child custody.
12. Being able to complete forms and paperwork with the information you feel most accurately communicates who you are.
13. Being able to feel safe in your interactions with police officers.
14. Being able to travel, or show ID in restaurants or bars, without fear you'll be rejected.
15. Kissing/hugging/being affectionate in public without threat or punishment.
16. Being able to discuss and have access to multiple family planning options.
17. Not questioning normalcy both sexually and culturally.
18. Reading books or seeing movies about a relationship you wish you could have.
19. Receiving discounted homeowner insurance rates with your recognized partner(s).
20. Raising children without worrying about state intervention.
21. Having others comfort and support you when a relationship ends.
22. Being a foster parent.
23. Using public restrooms without fear of threat or punishment.
24. Being employed as a preschool or elementary school teacher without people assuming you will "corrupt" the children.
25. Dating the person you desired in your teens.
26. Raising children without worrying about people rejecting your children because of your sexuality.
27. Living openly with your partner(s).
28. Receiving validation from your religious community.
29. Being accepted by your neighbors, colleagues, and new friends.
30. Being able to go to a doctor and getting treatment that doesn't conflict with your identity.
31. Being able to access social services without fear of discrimination, or being turned away.
32. Sponsoring your partner(s) for citizenship.
33. Being open and having your partner(s) accepted by your family.