

Introduction:

In this activity, you will read a case study about a diverse group of students attending an environmental justice event. The students in the case study have conflicting viewpoints about environmental justice based on their own cultural frameworks. In small groups, you will discuss how you respond to statements you disagree with, your experience of shifting perspectives, your own positionality in terms of relationships of power, and your responses to the dialogue presented in the case study. In a large group debriefing session, you will reflect on your thoughts and feelings, and how you could use your power, positionality, and privilege to create a more just and equitable world.

Activity Instructions:

1. Read the Case Study provided by your instructor and refer to the Intercultural Praxis Model on p. 2.
2. Small group discussion. Answer the following questions (from the case study handout):

Inquiry

- In this case study, what or who are you curious about?
- If you were part of this discussion group, how would you go about finding out what you want to know or acting on your curiosity?
- What are some of the different methods of inquiry? (For example, some cultures, like the dominant European American or white culture in the U.S., tend to ask direct questions as the central form of inquiry. Some other cultures depend more on observation as a way to inquire and find direct questions to be disrespectful.)
- When someone makes a statement you disagree with, is your tendency to argue against it, dismiss the person in some way, or ignore the comment?
- What if you were able to suspend judgment – in other words, hold back on your criticism and ask questions about the other point of view? Would you respond in the same way?
- What if you were to try to understand why the other person thinks the way they do about this issue? How would you respond?
- Could you say: It seems like you feel very strongly about this, can you help me understand why?
- In this case study, which participants in the conversation do you think exhibit the most curiosity about other perspectives?
- What would YOU like to know more about or better understand?

Framing

- Clearly, the students have differing perspectives on climate change and environmental justice. In what ways might their cultural backgrounds frame or shape their perspectives on this issue?
- How might micro, meso, and macro cultural frames limit perspectives in the case study? How would you recommend broadening frames or gaining the ability to shift among perspectives?

Positioning:

- While the students in the case study are all in the same classroom at the same university, are they positioned identically in terms of hierarchy or status?
- How are students of color positioned in terms of power at a predominantly white university?
- In addition to being in a clear numeric minority, what other factors impact how students of color are positioned at the university? How does this positioning feel?
- What about international students? What factors contribute to their positioning, and how does that positioning feel?
- Upon arriving in the U.S., what is the experience of international students as their positionalities shift, for example from majority to minority group members?
- How are white students positioned at the university? How about white students who are the first in their family to go to college?
- How does socio-economic class, rural/urban background, and/or religion impact positionality?
- Once you are aware of your positionality, how can you leverage it or use it to shift perspectives, challenge stereotypes or discrimination, and create inclusion and access? Are there students in the case study who illustrate this?

Dialogue:

- What are your observations and reflections about the dialogue described in the case study?
 - How would you re-write the case study to illustrate the process of dialogue as described here?
 - Think about a situation you have been in recently where differences of opinion or perspective were voices leading to tension or conflict.
 - What strategies, knowledge, or behaviors have you gained from the intercultural praxis process that would support a more productive, inclusive, and transformative outcome?
3. Debrief with the whole class. Discuss the following questions (from the case study handout):

Reflection:

- How reflective are you, usually?
- Do you think about your habitual behaviors? Your assumptions about other people, or their assumptions about you?
- How could reflection help you be more successful in your interactions and satisfied with your relationships?
- How were you feeling when you read the case study?
- Which perspectives resonated most with your experiences and values?
- So far, which aspects of the Intercultural Praxis model have been most useful in understanding the complexity of the situation?
- What has made you uncomfortable?

Action:

- What actions did individuals in the case study take to challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and systemic inequities? What behaviors seemed to escalate the conflict?
- What suggestions or advice do you have for the students to engage more productively in their discussion?
- How could the students, individually or collectively, use their positionality to generate alternative solutions? Is there an alternative, where environmentally just practices and products generate profit?
- Imagine yourself inside this case study. What would it mean to you to think of yourself as an agent of change?
- How can you leverage your positionality to enable greater access, inclusion and belonging in your classroom, on campus and beyond?
- How could you use your power, positionality, and privilege individually and collectively to create a more just and equitable world?