Understanding Realities That Are Not Our Own

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Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define</th>
<th>Define social constructionism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Understand how race, class, and gender affect our experiences and shape our perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Identify personal practices that pause bias and open us to other realities</td>
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Social Constructionism

We develop stories (narratives) to make sense of experiences.

- Inherited
- Develop in Social Circles
- Family
- Communities
- Cultural Context
- Social Norms
Assumptions

Constantly making sense

Experiences are put into stories

Socially influenced

Meanings are fluid

Power-dynamics affect meaning making
Major Concepts

- Reality
- Language
- Identity
- Positioning
Intersectionality

Describes multiple threats of discrimination/stigma when a person’s identities overlap with other identities that are placed in the margins of society:

- Race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic- standing, health, etc.
Identity

- Created within social and relational contexts
- Defined as:
  - Relational
  - Distributed
  - Performed
  - Fluid
What Does This Mean?

- Historically and culturally
- Multiple realities exist
- One event/experience can have more than one meaning
Pausing Bias

What can we do?  How do we move forward?  Can we expand our reality?
Pausing Bias:
Identify Dominant Narrative

- Individually:
  - What identities do you hold?
  - What have you internalized?
- Social Lens:
  - Whose voice is at the table
  - Who represents us
  - How are non-dominant experiences considered?
- Fill in the gaps
Pausing Bias: Externalization

Through social construction, we learn to create “others”

- Ask:
  - “How have my experiences taught me to see people like me/not like me?”
  - “How is the racism/sexism/transphobia I’ve been taught showing up in the things I do?”
Pausing Bias: “Not-knowing”

- Only 1 assumption: You don’t know the meaning the other person gives to their words and experiences

- Focus on:
  - Learning
  - Understanding

- Ignore desire to:
  - Confirm
  - Seek validation
  - Promote
What can we do?

- Identify dominant narratives
- Externalize
- Practice not-knowing
Questions?

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