

Title of the submission: “Invisible People”: Explorations in Diversity, Privilege, and Oppression -Educating Counselors and Teachers in Training

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Example Scenario on Privilege

A few years ago an African American friend told me about an experience at a fast food restaurant. My friend was in the front of the line ready to order when instead of being addressed, the cashier looked right past her and asked the next person in line what she would like. I had a hard time believing my friend's story, but I listened as though I did. In my mind I thought, “I’m sure she’s mistaken. People aren’t that rude. I’ll bet she thought you were still deciding on your order.”

A similar situation occurred two years after the first, and between my co-editor, an African American female, and I, a Swedish American female. Upon ending a business lunch at a nearby hotel, we decided to check into the possibility of using that restaurant as a meeting place for future business activities. My colleague approached the receptionist to inquire about the cost and availability of the facility. The receptionist looked around her to ask me, “How can I help you?” Upon seeing this scene play out before me, the aforementioned scenario also flashed through my mind and at that moment I became a believer.

This scenario highlights the “phenomenon of invisibility” experienced by individuals of minority cultures or other non-dominant statuses. The most frequently cited dominant culture statuses or states of being in the United States include white, male, heterosexual,

able-bodied, upper/middle class, and Christian while the list goes on to include additional categories of difference such as height, weight, age, language, etc. The scenario above briefly demonstrates the presenter's struggle and journey in recognizing privilege and in accepting the lived experiences of others as different from hers.

One **goal of this session** is to explore the range of subtle and overt patterns of individual thought and behavior that perpetuates the inequality and power differential of the status quo by sharing personal experiences of understanding and teaching about privilege. The recognition that most of us, at one time or another, belong to one of the privileged groups will serve to provide each participant with the opportunity to learn about the many faces of diversity, prejudice, oppression, and privilege through the stories of contributing authors as well as session participants. By delving into professionally connected personal struggles and triumphs as well as counselor and teacher education implications we expect participants to leave this session with both personal and practical knowledge for addressing these issues.