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Academic Wheel of Privilege:
Self-Positionality and Self-Reflection

Overview

The ***Academic Wheel of Privilege*** is a reflective tool that visually maps various axes of social privilege and marginalization as they manifest within academic settings. By situating identity markers such as race, gender, language, ability, citizenship, educational background, and institutional affiliation, the wheel helps educators, researchers, and students to critically examine how structural advantages and disadvantages operate in higher education.
In educational contexts, this tool is particularly valuable for fostering **critical self-reflection** and **self-positionality on the topic of intersectionalty**. It encourages individuals to consider how their identities shape their experiences, opportunities, and assumptions within academic spaces. This process is essential for educators who aim to teach inclusively and equitably, as it cultivates awareness of both visible and invisible forms of privilege that influence classroom dynamics, curriculum design, and student engagement.
Moreover, the Academic Wheel of Privilege supports institutional conversations around **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** by providing a shared language to address power relations in academia. It promotes a shift from abstract commitments to inclusion toward a more embodied and accountable practice, where individuals reflect on their own roles in reproducing or disrupting systemic inequities.

Objectives

1. **Raises Self-Awareness**
   Helps educators reflect on their own privilege and position within academic structures.
2. **Informs Inclusive Teaching**
   Encourages thoughtful, equitable choices in course design and classroom practice.
3. **Supports DEI Dialogue**
   Serves as a clear, accessible tool to discuss power and equity in education.

Implementation Guidelines for Teachers

There are three steps to using the following tool:

Step 1: Individual Reflection (10–15 min)

Fill in your identity wheel by linking the numbered statements in the center to the identity categories around the wheel. Place the numbers that apply in the corresponding boxes (e.g., if you rarely think about your age, place “2” in the “age” box). You can include multiple numbers per box and leave some boxes empty. Feel free to add a category if one is missing.
Tip: This can also be done before the seminar as preparation.

Step 2: Small Group Discussion (15–30 min)

In pairs or trios, share your wheels and reflect together. Discuss both the content and the experience of completing the wheel.

Suggested questions:

- *Which questions were easy or difficult? Why?*
- *What stood out when comparing your wheels?*
- *What did you learn about others’ identities?*
- *Did you add an identity? Why?*
- *What feelings did this exercise bring up?*
- *How might your identities influence your views on course themes or literature?*

Step 3: : Small Group Discussion (15–30 min)

Privilege is always context-dependent. What counts as privilege in one setting (e.g., the Dutch university classroom) may differ in another (e.g., during international fieldwork, or in a student's home country).

Now, use the AWoP presented below as a visual aid to deepen your reflection. This wheel highlights how different social identities can be closer to positions of power or marginalization.

Consider how your own identity positions you in relation to power within Dutch higher education. You may choose to reflect individually, or facilitate discussion in pairs, small groups, or plenary.

Discuss (at least) **three** of the following discussion prompts

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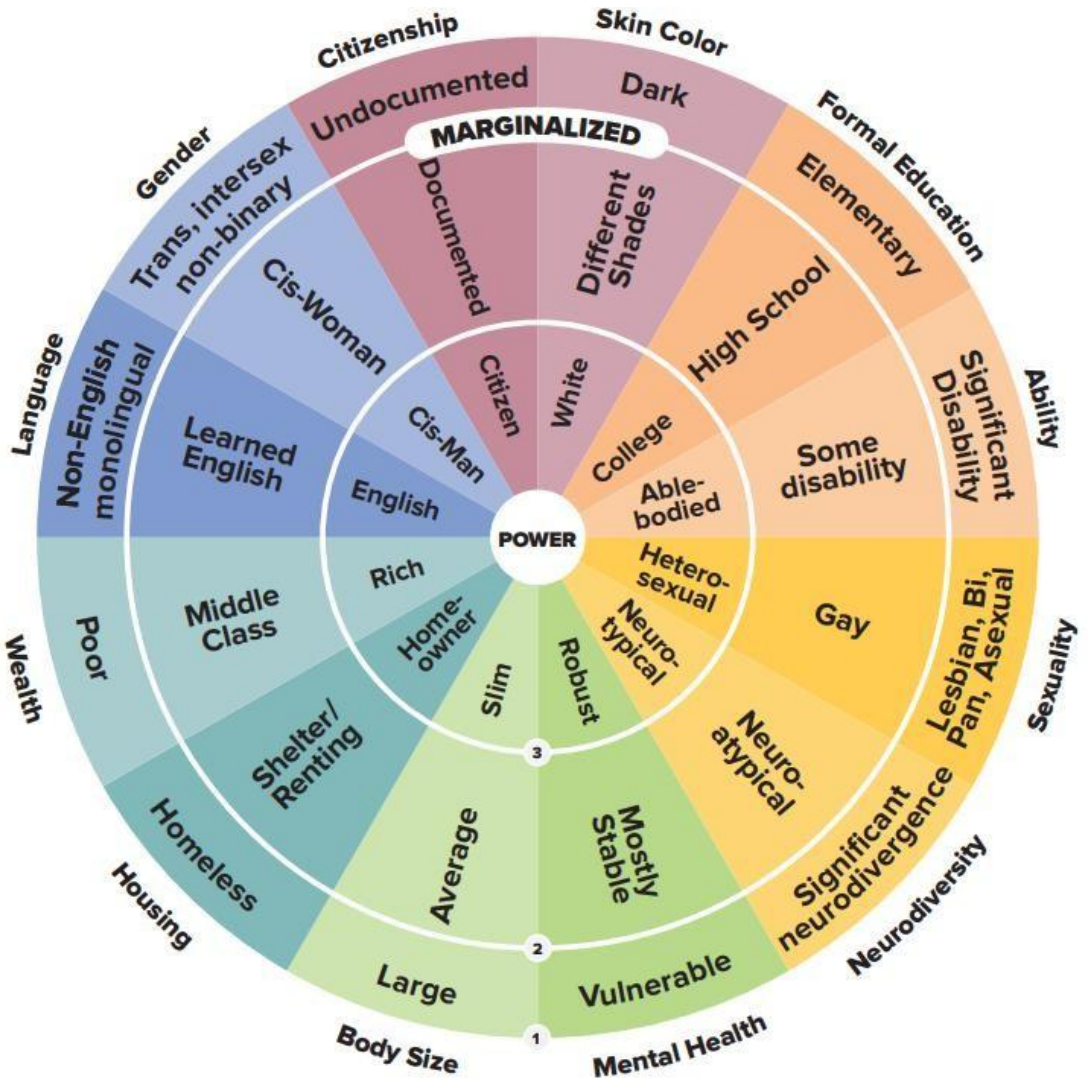

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Discussion prompts:

- Which of your social identities are closer to the “center” of the wheel in the context of Dutch academia?
- Have you ever experienced a shift in privilege when moving between academic spaces (e.g., between classroom and fieldwork, or between countries)?
- How do language, nationality, or educational background influence your authority or participation in academic settings?
- Are there aspects of your identity that you rarely think about because they align with the norm? What might this suggest?
- In what ways might your positionality shape how students perceive you—or how you perceive your students?
- Which identities are most relevant when you teach, supervise, or grade? Do these shift depending on the student or setting?
- What does the wheel help you realize about the institutional norms embedded in your department or university?
- How might this reflection inform the way you design learning environments, assessments, or support structures?

CELT supports faculty and staff in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments. For guidance on teaching practices, curriculum, or classroom dynamics from a DEI perspective, contact the CELT team.