



Defense Definitions

Recognizing Privileged Identity

- **Denial** is a defensive reaction that denies the existence of the dissonance provoking stimulus (DPS).
- **Deflection** is a defensive reaction that shifts the focus of the dissonance provoking stimulus (DPS) toward another source.

Contemplating Privileged Identity

- **Minimization** is a defensive reaction that lessens the issues surrounding the dissonance-provoking stimulus (DPS).
- **Rationalization** is a defensive reaction that generates alternative explanations for the dissonance-provoking stimulus (DPS).
- **Intellectualization** is a defensive reaction that attempts to explain the dissonance-provoking stimulus (DPS) as a data point or with academic theories.

Addressing Privileged Identity

- **False Envy** is a defensive reaction that compliments or expresses affection toward a person or a feature of a person that represents the dissonance-provoking stimulus (DPS).
- **Principium** is a defensive reaction that reports a principle to defend against the dissonance-provoking stimulus (DPS).
- **Benevolence** is a defensive reaction that uses an act of charity to situate the self in relation to the dissonance-provoking stimulus (DPS).

Being in Dialogue with Difference and Resistance Workshop

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Addressing PIE Defenses

Denial: *“That privilege does not exist.” or “That privilege doesn’t relate to me.”*

- “I heard you say....did I understand that correctly?”
- “What might it look like if this [dissonance] was real?”

Deflection: *“It’s not about that privilege, it’s about this...” or “It’s not my fault.”*

- “In what ways could this be related to [dissonance]?” (e.g., race be related to class)
- “What feelings are coming up for you about [dissonance]?”

Minimization: *“It’s not that big a deal.” or “It might be a problem for some people, but it’s not that important to me.”*

- “How do you think [dissonance] influences people with different identities than you?”
- “What other aspects of [dissonance] might be part of this situation?”

Rationalization: *“Here’s the logical reason why this privilege exists.” or “Here’s the logical reason I operated from that position.”*

- “How might someone else examine [dissonance] from another perspective?”
- “What are other possible rationales?”

Intellectualization: *“Here are outside sources that explain that privilege.”*

- “What might it look like to consider alternative perspectives on [dissonance]?”
- “What are other possible explanations?”

False Envy: *“I have this privilege, but look at all you have/get in spite of not having this privilege.”*

- “What might it feel like to be the recipient of this attention on a regular basis?”
- “It sounds like you wanted to share a compliment. How might it be interpreted if we looked at it from another point of view?”

Principium: *“Even though there’s privilege, everyone has the right to their own values.” or “I may have this privilege, but these are my values.”*

- “What could it look like for multiple values to exist at the same time?”
- “Where do you believe this value stems from in your background?”

Benevolence: *“I have this privilege, but look at all I’ve done.” or “This privilege exists, but there are so many people doing good.”*

- “How might privilege influence power relations in the work that you’ve done?”
- “What assumptions do you hold about the people you are serving?”

Selected References:

Watt, S. K. (2015). Designing transformative multicultural initiatives: Theoretical foundations, practical applications and facilitator considerations. Stylus Publishing: Sterling, VA.

Watt, S. K. (2007). Developing cultural competence: Facilitating privileged identity exploration in student affairs practice. College Student Affairs Journal, 26(2), 114-126.