Class Activities

# Chapter 10: Listening to Out-Group Members

## Guide to the Class Activities

Each activity is designed based on Fink’s Learning Taxonomy and is tagged with the following tags under the taxonomy’s learning and assessment structure:

1. Foundational Knowledge (F)
2. Application (A)
3. Integration (I)
4. Human Dimension (H)
5. Caring (C)
6. Learning How to Learn (L)

These activities may be used in either small-group or large-group settings, depending on class size and time available. Some may also be suitable as homework.

## Activities

### The Class Climate (A, H, C)

These activities can be used to foster an inclusive class climate.

1. Change the seating in the room occasionally to encourage quieter students to participate more, or to be heard more often. Try seating the class (a) in one large circle; (b) in groups at small tables; (c) next to people they don’t know; (d) in a fishbowl arrangement (with a small group in the center discussing an assigned topic and the rest of the class around them, listening in, and responding afterwards to what they observed and heard), or (e) in an interactive fishbowl (where students sitting outside the center can enter the discussion in the middle by tapping on the shoulder of a participant and taking their place).
2. Throughout the semester create a “hot seat” in the center of the room, with each student taking a turn being asked questions from classmates that are relevant to the day’s topic. The instructor should model this exercise the first time around. For chapter 10, questions could include:

Where did you grow up?

How big was your high school?

What did you like best about high school?

What kinds of kids were in the out-groups at your high school?

Did you share any common interests or experiences with them?

Who is one of the best listeners you know?

What’s one group, at college or work, that you’ve felt especially close to or cohesive with?

How did group members make you feel included?

This should take no more than 10 minutes. Each question could have a follow up. Students should be free not to answer a question. The activity will give every student equal opportunity to be known by others in the class, and will model for the class how to listen to and speak with people they don’t know – an important skill in “bringing people in” to the group.

### Seeing and Walking Fresh (A, H)

One way to learn to see beneath the stereotypes we create about individuals, groups, or communities, is to expose ourselves to new experiences and perspectives. Ask students – before the next class period – to walk through a different part of campus or town, shop in a different grocery store than usual, eat at an ethnic restaurant they haven’t tried before, drive to campus via a different route, watch a film they might not ordinarily seek out, attend a campus lecture on a topic that is new to them, and so on. You can debrief this in class, or ask students to write a one page reflection paper on the experience. What new things did they see? Enjoy? Feel uncomfortable with? How might this fresh perspective help them in a leadership role?

### Take 5 (A, L)

This can be done as an individual or group assignment, as homework, or at the beginning or end of class. Ask students to come up with a “burning question” about the chapter, for class discussion. Questions should be written anonymously, on slips of paper and turned in to the instructor. The instructor should anticipate some questions in advance, such as:

* What if the out-group person is more than just opinionated, but really odd or troubled? In what way should they be included?
* When is it justified to NOT include someone in a group?
* How can in-group members prevent becoming cliquish and closed-minded?

### Sketch-noting (A, I)

Sketch-noting is explained in the Class Activities for chapter 1. Making sketch notes is not about drawing, or artistry, but about making marks on paper (or a white board) to help oneself think. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Everyone will do it differently.

Have students think about a group they are involved with, whose members vary in commitment to the group. Commitment could be measured by attendance, input, reliability, quality of work, enthusiasm, and so on. Have them write down the names of the group members, including themselves, (or create symbols for them). Then ask them to reflect on what motivates each group member (or could motivate them) to be in that group and to sketch that on the paper. Once the sketch is complete, what are the commonalities in motivation? What are the differences? Are there possible synergies among the different motivations? How can the group address the motivations of less-committed members? A sample sketch:

### In-Group Privilege (A, H, C)

The concept of white privilege was first proposed in 1935 and has since become a central concept of critical race theory. It relates to our consideration of out-groups because it conceptualizes racial inequality not just as disadvantages experienced by people of color, but also as advantages that white people gain from North American society simply by being in the dominant group. Many websites offer exercises on identifying white privilege, e.g. [www.culturesconnecting.com/docs/WhitePrivilegeExercise.doc](http://www.culturesconnecting.com/docs/WhitePrivilegeExercise.doc). This can be done as a written exercise, but is even more effective as a physical exercise identifying with privilege or exclusion. Instructors can use existing lists of privilege or exclusion or create their own (see sample items below). Students are asked to stand and remain standing until an item is read from the list that applies to them; then they sit down. At the end, few students remain standing. An alternative is to have students form a line across the middle of the classroom. They should take a step forward if they identify with a statement of privilege that is read, or a step backward if they identify with a statement of disadvantage or exclusion that is read. At the end of the list, the class may be quite dispersed.

Out-group questions can be formulated along different demographic lines (gender, ethnicity, age, physical ability, etc.). Some examples:

Gender: Ask students to stand up (sit down, or take a step backward) if…

You have ever been told to “act like a man”

You have ever felt forced to fight in order to prove your manliness

You have dieted or exercised to change your body weight or shape

You have ever pretended not to be as smart as a man

Ethnicity

You attended elementary or high school comprised of students with the same

ethnic background as yourself

You work in an office where most people share your ethnic background

Your supermarket stocks the foods from your culture

You can find make-up in shades suitable for your skin tone

The exercise is best done without talking, so students can feel the accumulation of exclusionary experiences. After each statement is read, allow a few seconds for the class to look around and notice who has moved and how the composition of the class has changed. Students should be allowed to not participate or to pass on a given statement. After the exercise is complete, debrief in small groups: How did you feel participating in this exercise? What feelings arose for you? If you self-identified as an out-group member, how did you feel about the dominant group? If you self-identified with the privileged group, how did you feel about the out-group? How do messages like these become entrenched in a culture? As a leader, what steps can you take to become aware of your own privilege?

### Film Analysis and Class Debate (A, H, C)

There are many good social documentaries available depicting in-groups and out-groups. Three are suggested here.

1. *The Garden*. This film depicts the struggles of the South Central Farmers in Los Angeles, to preserve their 13 acre urban garden. Students can analyze and compare the leadership of six different persons or groups: Doris Bloch, the visionary; Mr. Horowitz, the property owner; Tezo and Rufina, representing the Hispanic farmers; City council politicians, including Jan Perry and Mayor Villaraigosa; legal counsel Dan Stormer and Pat Dunlevy; and celebrity advocates like Darryl Hannah and Willie Nelson. In a written assignment or class discussion, have students deconstruct the process of marginalizing groups in society. What does it mean to act “in good faith”? Who “lost” in the final decision? Discussion can also be structured as a debate or role play, with groups of students assigned to represent each of the different perspectives.
2. *Waiting for Superman*. This film follows a group of promising kids through an educational system that inhibits their academic growth rather than encouraging it, and exposes “drop out factories” and “academic sinkholes” in public education. By putting names and faces to those underserved by failing schools, we see the process and ultimate cost of underpreparing our future leaders. Discussion can be framed in terms of systemic forces (not just interpersonal ones) that create out-groups. Analysis can be done through a written paper or class discussion.
3. *Heart Broken in Half*. This ethnographic film by Dwight Conquergood profiles male gang members in the Albany Park area of Chicago. Though dated, the concepts of social identity and need for inclusion are vividly depicted. Ask students to evaluate how the criteria in chapter 10 for why out-groups form, and what impact they have, apply to the reality of gangs. How should community leaders respond to gangs?

### Role Play for Skill Development (F, A, H)

In class have students brainstorm the many different ways employees can become marginalized in an organization, giving specific examples of being in opposition to the larger group, not identifying with the larger group, being excluded by the larger group, or lacking necessary social skills. Write the examples on the board. Ask two volunteers to role play a scenario using one of the examples, with one student enacting the role of supervisor, the other student enacting the role of out-group member. The out-group member should first make the case why he or she feels excluded, disagrees with the organization in some way, doesn’t identify with others in the office, or feels inadequate or ill-prepared. The supervisor should attempt to listen with an open-mind, and then practice showing empathy through restatement, paraphrasing, reflection and support. The rest of the class can “coach” the supervisor in how to respond to the different statements made by the employees. Ask the actors how they felt about playing their roles. What was difficult? Did the out-group member feel listened to? Which empathic behavior was most effective? Try to enact a scenario involving each of the different main reasons out-groups form.

### Jenga Visualization (F, A)

This exercise is adapted from an article on how to use Jenga blocks to teach systems theory in a family communication class (the article can be downloaded from the web). Instructors should set up the tower of wooden blocks on a table or desk in the center of the room. Each student is asked to come forward, state one way a person can become a member of an out-group in an organization, then remove a block from below the top level (without toppling the stack) and place their block on top. When the block is placed on top the student should suggest a possible effect this excluding behavior (self-imposed or group-imposed) might have on the organization. Students are allowed to use only one hand to remove and replace blocks. One by one, as more reasons for out-groups are identified, the stack becomes less solid, less stable, and less interconnected. Once the stack topples, discuss the effect of out-groups on organizational functioning.

\* Docan, T. (2006) Using Jenga to teach systems theory. *Communication Teacher, 20,* 11-13.

### Rebels with a Cause (A, C, L)

This activity the effects of leaders who are actually out-group members. Put sheets of newsprint up around the room. Then ask students to write on these sheets the names of leaders who were “mavericks,” opposed the majority, or led without a formal organizational position. Then ask students to write adjectives underneath each name which describes her or him. Finally, invite students to select one or more individuals that they would emulate as a leader. In discussion, consider the following questions:

* What did this leader accomplish?
* How did others react to this leader?
* What do they admire about this leader?
* What might we learn about out-groups from these individuals?

## Writing Assignments

### Why Out-Groups are Necessary (F, A)

Have students write a 1-2 page argument for why out-groups are necessary for an organization or community.

### Out-Group Profile (A, H)

Have students select a well-known out-group they are interested in and report on the group’s formation and beliefs (e.g. a protest group). How does the out-group interact with the dominant culture? Does the dominant culture benefit in any way from the presence of this out-group?

### One Minute Paper Topics (F, A, I)

Choose an out-group you think no organization should ever be without and justify why.

If we eliminated all out-groups…