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## Positionality and Identity in the World

When considering one's outlook on the world, one must acknowledge the many positionalities that will undoubtedly cloud their ability to see things the way they are. One's lenses will always affect how one perceives the world, not only in a conscious way but in subconscious ways as well. I know from personal experience that there are aspects of one's life that will change their outlook on life. Several major features in one's life affect how they interact with the world around them, including race, sex, gender, religion, geographical identities, and many more.

Growing up in southern Maine, one of the whitest states in the country, I know that my thoughts on race are clouded by my lived experiences. I have never known any kind of discrimination based on the color of my skin, and I really did not experience any of my classmates growing up experiencing this either, due to the fact that 99% of my school population was also white. This identity of mine shaped the way I viewed the world in more ways than I was aware. I grew up having dinners with the cops in town, and having all of my teachers look like me. I had never considered that this may not be the reality for everyone until I was well into high school. I had a privileged position that allowed me to "ignore" race as a factor of who I was, I did not have to be aware of how others were perceiving me based on my race because I looked like everyone else. It wasn't until my first semester here at Clark that my perception of race changed drastically. I was aware of the racial injustice that was occurring all over the country, which had been emphasized after the murder of George Floyd, but I did not realize how deeply embedded it was in our society. My positionality as a white person from a majority-white state allowed me to stay blind to the injustice that was happening all around me.

Another piece of my identity that shapes how I view the world is the fact that I identify as a cis-woman. Growing up as a cis-woman, the world has always perceived me exactly how I identify, I have never had the experience of someone misgendering me or saying hateful things due to my gender identity in the same way that someone who does not identify as a cis-woman has. With that being said, I have experienced certain bigoted behavior from cis-men due to my identity. Growing up a woman, I was told by several male figures in my life that I was overly emotional and needed to toughen up. I was often passed over when an adult needed help with something that required physical labor, and I have been told on several occasions that I am destined for a life in the kitchen. I have experienced men seeing me only as an object and not a person, I have been passed over on experiences due to my size, or lack thereof. My being a woman has shown me that I need to work three times as hard to earn the respect a man is given in the workplace and that I will never truly be respected on a societal level. I have seen my basic rights be argued over by people who don't even own the parts they are so desperately trying to control.

The way I view the world is affected by my identities, and because of this, how I am in the world is also affected. Not only does my positionality affect how I interact with the people and things in my everyday life, but it also affects how I am in a classroom setting. Being a teacher has always been my dream, as we know a teacher's style is often based on what they knew growing up. I am actively trying to break that cycle each time I step into a classroom. I want all of my students, regardless of their identities, to feel included, safe, and challenged in the learning. As an educator, it is my job to hold myself accountable and not let my positionality-based biases affect the lives of my students.

One's positionality is also dependent on where they are. My positionality changes from insider to outsider when I go from a classroom at Clark to a classroom in a Worcester public school. This aspect of positionality is something that is often forgotten about, but is arguably the most important. Being aware of all aspects of your positionality is important at all times; if you ignore pieces of your positionality, then your risk of doing harm is amplified greatly.