

The Drawbridge Exercise

Judith H. Katz. (1978). *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training* (pp. 70 – 72)

Objective

To explore how the realities of power, authority, and societal values influence our perceptions about how we see the world.

Instructions

1. Divide participants into groups (6 or more).
2. Provide the story as a handout to each participant.
3. Read the drawbridge story aloud or instruct each participant to read it themselves .
4. Direct each participant to rank the characters from most responsible to least responsible for the baroness's death.
5. Instruct each group to rank collectively the order of responsibility for the baroness' death.
6. Ask each group to select a spokesperson.
7. Have each group spokesperson explain the group's rationale for the rankings and to record their rankings on a chalk/white board to compare.
8. Facilitate a class discussion.

Facilitation Questions

- What factors influenced your ranking decision?
- What feelings were provoked during this activity and your decision making process? Why?
- In attempting to reach a group consensus, were you convinced of a different ranking order? Why or why not?
- How does this exercise relate to societal values and norms?

Character Representations (Katz, 1978)

- **Baron**—white male, sets values
- **Baroness**—oppressed has little say in values, but expected to follow
- **Gateman**—authority, police, military, etc. - no say in rules, but must enforce
- **Boatman**—institutions (education, church, etc.) - service for a cost - if you have money, you have opportunity
- **Friend**—White liberal, good intentions - “my framework” mentality: “I’ll accept you, based on my value system” - diversity celebrated my way: “I’ll accept you as long as you act white/male”
- **Lover**—enticements, things we fall in love with but in reality or practice they don’t always help – ideological examples: U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights

The Drawbridge

As he left for a visit to his outlying districts, the jealous baron warned his pretty vile: *“Do not leave the castle while I am gone, or I will punish you severely when I return!”*

But as the hours passed, the young baroness grew lonely, and despite her husband's warning, she decided to visit her lover, who lived in the countryside nearby. The castle was situated on an island in a wide, fast-flowing river. A drawbridge linked the island to the mainland at the narrowest point in the river. *“Surely my husband will not return before me,”* she thought, and ordered the servant to lower the drawbridge and leave it down until she returned. After spending several pleasant hours with her lover the baroness returned to the drawbridge. Only to find it blocked by a gatemen wildly waving a long, cruel knife.

“Do not attempt to cross this bridge, Baroness, or I will have to kill you” he cried. *“The baron ordered me to do so.”*

Fearing for her life, the bareness returned to her lover and asked him for help. *“Our relationship is only a romantic one,”* he said. – *“I will not help.”* The bareness then sought out a boatman on the river, explained her plight to him and asked him to take her across the river in his boat.

“I will do it but only if you can pay the fee of five marks.”

“But I have no money with me!” the baroness protested.

“That is too bad. No money, no, ride,” the boatmen said flatly.

Her fear growing, the baroness ran crying to the home of a friend and, after explaining her desperate situation begged for enough money to pay the boatman his fee.

“If you had not disobeyed your husband this would not have happened,” the friend said. *“I will give you no money.”*

With dawn approaching and her last resource exhausted, the baroness returned to the bridge in desperation, and waited to cross to the castle, and was slain by the gateman.

After reading the scenario, rank the characters from 1-6.

1 = most responsible for the death of the Baroness | 6 = least responsible

	Individual Ranking	Group Ranking
<i>Baron</i>		
<i>Baroness</i>		
<i>Gateman</i>		
<i>Boatman</i>		
<i>Friend</i>		
<i>Lover</i>		

Be prepared to explain and discuss your rankings.