

C'est La Vie: The Game of Social Life (Kosha Bramesfeld)

Abstract: This resource is an empathy-based privilege and oppression awareness intervention that can be used to help students engage in difficult dialogues surrounding the issues of privilege, oppression, and intersectionality. The materials include (a) 64 character profiles and game sheets that describe the demographic characteristics and resources assigned to each player's character, (b) a strategy game that presents students with a variety of different decision scenarios that interact with their character's resources (described in a 33-slide presentation), and (c) an instructor's guide that covers the development of the game, its recommended uses, and a debriefing and discussion points that help students reflect on the outcomes of the game, its connections with real life inequality, and the role that privilege and oppression might play in the students' own lives.

RECOMMENDED USES

C'est La Vie: The Game of Social Life is intended for use in small or large enrollment courses (20 to 200 students). I have used the game with a group of 62 students (as part of a Community Psychology course) and with a group of 115 students (as part of a Social Psychology course). The activity can be used in any course that contains a unit or emphasis on multicultural psychology or diversity. The activity can also be used in a wide range of courses to generate discussion about structural factors that influence psychological adjustment and mental health outcomes. For example, the activity could be introduced as part of a community, health, or clinical psychology course in order to highlight a social justice and multicultural framework for understanding psychological practice. Or, the activity could be used at the end of a social psychology course in order to summarize how issues of social perception, attitudes, conformity, and mixed motive dilemmas interact with stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination in order to influence individual achievement and mental and physical health.

The activity includes (a) character profiles, (b) a strategy game, and (c) a directed discussion. Setup for the activity takes approximately 15 to 30 min to distribute character profiles and to explain the rules and structure of the game. The strategy game takes approximately 60 to 90 min to complete. Instructors with classes that meet for less than 60 min can divide the strategy game over two class periods, or they can shorten the strategy game by removing some of the decision scenarios. I recommend devoting at least 45 min to the discussion of the activity to ensure that students understand how the activity relates to real life inequality and to relevant course concepts.

The full exercise with instructor's guide and materials is available online at the OTRP website.

Resources:

- Bramesfeld, K.D., & Good, A. (2016). *C'est la vie! The game of social life: Using an intersectionality approach to teach about privilege and structural inequality. Teaching of Psychology, 43*(4), 294-304.
- Bramesfeld, K.D. (2015). "C'est la vie: The game of social life: A role-playing game for teaching about privilege, oppression, and intersectionality." Office of Teaching Resources in Psychology. Retrieved from <https://teachpsych.org/page-1603066>.