

## **Fish Bowl**

[http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection\\_manual/activities.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/activities.html)

### Fish Bowls (from STACS)

Fish Bowls provide an opportunity for a select group of participants to openly discuss an issue, video, problem, or strategy in an open manner. Simply select volunteers to sit in a tight circle in the middle of the room. The facilitator may choose to have only men, only people of color, etc. in the Fish Bowl. Provide two or three questions for Fish Bowl participants to discuss. The goal is for those observing to keep quiet and notice, comment, or observe different perspectives. The value of a Fish Bowl is that certain groups relate in different ways when uninterrupted. Men sometimes approach conversations in a different manner than women. Much awareness can be raised by simply hearing what other groups have to say on particular topics. As a general rule, the facilitator should allow equal time for each Fish Bowl group. For example, if African-Americans are given ten minutes in the Fish Bowl, then Asian-Americans should also be given ten minutes. If the facilitator allows one group more time than others, conflict may arise. In order to process the Fish Bowls, simply allow for all to discuss openly, at the end of all Fish Bowls, any group's observation (also see Frierian Fish Bowl).

### Frierian Fish Bowl (from STACS)

Often, for many reasons, certain individuals will feel uncomfortable voicing their opinion in a group environment. One mechanism for gaining full-group participation is to have all participants write their respective responses to issues on a piece of paper (do not include names). The issues, or pieces of paper, are then placed in a hat in the middle of a circle. For example, the facilitator asks that everyone explain (on paper) "why are there so many homeless people in this city?" Answers may range from, "people do not want work because they are lazy" to "there exists a government conspiracy and homeless funding is often misused." These are typical statements that are controversial but tend to not be voiced openly. Thus, the Frierian method gets all opinions down on paper.

Once opinions have been recorded on paper and placed in a hat, pass the hat among the group. Everyone must respond with their interpretation of the written response and then voice their personal reaction to the paper.