

UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE, SOCIAL POWER, & OPPRESSION

Privilege:

- Unearned access to resources (social power) only readily available to some people as a result of their advantaged social group membership.

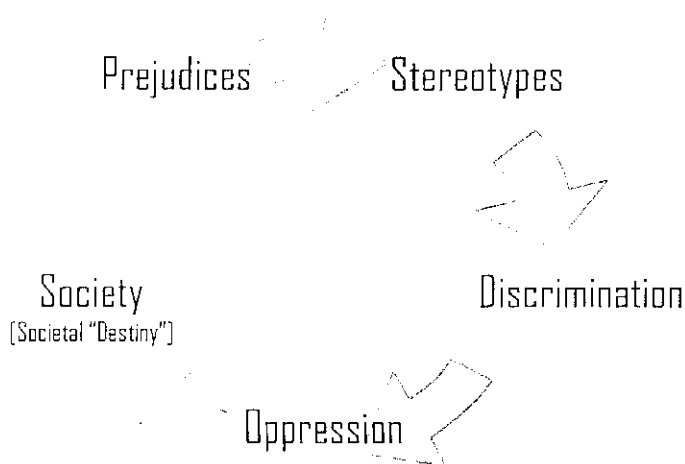
Social Power:

- Access to resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs or influencing others in order to lead a safe, productive, and fulfilling life.

Oppression:

- A system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on social group memberships and operates, intentionally and unintentionally, on three levels:
 - **Individual:** attitudes and actions that reflect prejudice against a social group (intentional and unintentional).
 - **Institutional:** policies, laws, rules, norms, and customs enacted by organizations and social institutions that disadvantage some social groups and advantage other social groups. These institutions include religion, government, education, law, the media, and the health care system (intentional and unintentional).
 - **Cultural:** social norms, roles, rituals, language, music, and art that reflect and reinforce the belief that one social group is superior to another (intentional and unintentional).

Adams, Bell & Griffin. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Routledge: New York, 2007, p. 58 – 59.



*Watch your thoughts; they become your words.
Watch your words; they become your actions.
Watch your actions; they become your habits.
Watch your habits; they become your character.
Watch your character; it becomes your...Destiny.*

– Frank Outlaw

Understanding Oppression

Social Identity	Form / Type of Oppression	Dominant / Privileged Group(s) (Traditionally or Historically)	Marginalized / Underrepresented Groups (Traditionally or Historically)
Race	Racism	Whites	Arab/Middle Eastern, Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, Black/African/African American/Caribbean, Latino/Hispanic, Native American/First Nations/Indigenous Peoples, Biracial/Multiracial
Gender	Sexism	Men	Women, people who identify as transgender
Class	Classism	Owning class, upper middle class	Lower middle class, working class, poor
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals	People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc.
Religion	Religious Oppression	Christians	People who practice a religion or have faith or spiritual beliefs that are not Christian
A Physical, Psychological, Developmental [Dis]Ability	Ableism	People without disabilities	People with disabilities
Age	Ageism	Middle-aged adults	Youth, Seniors

Each form of oppression is (1) perpetuated by a socialization process, (2) has privileged and oppressed social groups and (3) operates on multiple levels (i.e., individual, institutional, cultural/societal; conscious and unconscious).

One-Up Group Perspective

Unaware to “groupness”

Individual acts

Unaware of privilege

Internalize Dominance

Focus on victim

Create systems out of
their own beliefs

“Stay-in-line” / Collusion

Intent

Progress

VS.

One-Down Group Perspective

Aware of “groupness”

Patterns

Aware of privilege

Internalize Oppression

Focus on system

Use of standard One-Up group
to evaluate their own group

Collusion / “Stay-in-line”

Effect

Long way to go