

Forms of Oppression

Institutional Oppression - The network of structures, policies, and practices that create advantages and benefits for some, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantages for others. Examples: Harsher sentencing for white drug users than Black drug users; health insurance often covering Viagra but not birth control; criminalization of poverty through quality of life policing (e.g., loitering). (Perpetuated in institutional contexts, such as education, policing, healthcare)

Interpersonal Oppression – Interactions between people where individuals use oppressive behavior, insults or violence. Example: Using racial slurs in conversation; perpetrating or minimizing sexual assault; writing degrading and homophobic statements on someone's whiteboard.

Internalized Oppression – The results of a process by which members of an oppressed group come to believe and act as if the oppressors' belief system, values, and way of life were correct. External oppression becomes internalized, resulting in shame, the disowning of our previous understandings of reality, and previously unseen levels of violence within communities. Internalized oppression means the oppressor doesn't have to exert as much pressure, because we now do it to ourselves and each other – aka, Divide & Conquer.

Cultural Oppression – Norms and patterns that perpetuate implicit and explicit values that guide or bind individuals and institutions; the cultural perspectives of dominant groups are imposed on individuals by institutions, and on institutions by individuals. This includes philosophies of life, definitions of good and evil, beauty, health, deviance, sickness, and perspectives on time.