“Psychology” of Oppression & Freedom: Working with Your Internalized Self

21 May 2016
10:30a – 12:30p
Samish Lodge

Hui-Ling Chan, MEd, Joanne DeMark, PhD, & Bryce Fields, BA & BS very soon
Agenda

Pre-assignment review
✓ Definitions - “isms” (pre-assign Camara Jones, CDC) – flip chart
✓ The Birdcage (to review pre-assignment or catch everyone up)

AGENDA
• Welcome/Who We Are/Agreements
• Why “Psychology” of Oppression & Freedom
• Pairs or triads – Your Identities
• Exercise 1 - The Colonizer in
  Your Mind
• Exercise 2 – Owning Your Privilege
• Debrief & Closing
Pre-assignment Learning Outcome

Upon conclusion of this pre-assignment video & review, you will be able to

- Define
  1. systemic or institutionalized oppression,
  2. personally mediated oppression, and
  3. internalized oppression.

Marilyn Frye - Birdcage

If you look closely at the cage you can not see the other bars. It is only when you step back and take a look at the whole do you see how multiple bars work together to form a cage.

Those on the outside are also restricted – they are locked out of that location.
Session Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the pre-assignment and this session, you will be able to

• Name several of their own social identities, both identities where privileged or identities where traditionally targeted.

• Identify the voice of an oppressor in their heads and be able to use statements to contradict their internalized oppression.

• Identify uncomfortable thoughts that occur when facing one’s own privilege, and practice non-defensiveness while contradicting those thoughts, to enable being a more productive ally.
Our Agreements

• Respect (Speak for self, don’t interrupt)
• Lean into discomfort
• Confidentiality (what’s personal stays in here)
• Step Up/Step Back
• Expect & be willing to explore differences of experience and opinion
• Make a commitment to one another’s development and learning
Camara Jones, PhD, TEDxEmory, Allegories on Race & Racism
https://youtu.be/GNhcY6fTyBM

PRE-ASSIGNMENT/REVIEW & CATCH UP
On the three flip chart sheets…

- Institutionalized oppression
- Personally-mediated oppression
- Internalized oppression

- Discussion of birdcage to summarize flip charts
Jona Olsson, Cultural Bridges
Based on work by Bailey Jackson & Rita Hardiman
Connection to Marilyn Frye
Some Definitions

• **Institutionalized Oppression** - the system that results in differential access to the goods, services and opportunities of society, by a particular identity (e.g., race, class, gender, etc.)

• **Personally-mediated Oppression** - differential assumptions about the abilities, motives and intents of others, by “identity”, and then differential actions based on those assumptions

• **Internalized Oppression (IO)** acceptance by members of the stigmatized identities of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth.

Adapted from the work of Dr. Camara Jones, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
Exercise 1 and Exercise 2

WORKING WITH YOUR INTERNALIZED SELF
Our target & dominant identities

The Diversity Wheel

(Loden, M. 2006 Implementing Diversity, Irwin Professional Publishing)
...the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations that we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor that is planted deep within each of us...

(Lorde, 1984, p. 123)

Exercise 1: Colonizer in Your Mind

1. Mindfully notice a self-defeating message/ voice in your head
2. Identify the “colonizer” (it’s a person who said this to you in childhood, but it’s a system of oppression for which that person stands in)
3. Formulate the contradictory statement to this self-defeating message and say to self/have allies say to you (listen to instructions)
4. Discharge/notice your feelings/irrational thoughts about it
5. Continue to claim the positive, contradictory statement as the liberator in your head, until the colonizer’s voice significantly diminishes or disappears
Some Common Uncomfortable Thoughts When Facing Your Privilege

1. I think that I’m being made out to be a villain.
2. I feel like my family is under attack.
3. I don’t feel privileged.
4. You are asking me to change.

Dr. Robin Landwehr,
http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/uncomfortable-thoughts-privilege/
Exercise 2: Owning Your Privilege (because you do have it)

Find a different person with whom to partner
Thinking to yourself first:
1. Identify the group to which you would like to more strongly be an ally (you are not in this target group).
2. Name the general privilege associated with this system of oppression,
   a. e.g. male privilege, white privilege, ability privilege, cisgender privilege, etc.
3. Name this out loud to the other person and hear the target group and privilege that they thought of for them
Common Thoughts when Facing Privilege

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Again, inside with yourself first:

4. Looking at the four common uncomfortable thoughts that people feel when facing their privilege,
   a. Which one of these shows up in you as it relates to this system of oppression
   b. Notice how your defensiveness shows up in you (body, cognitive, etc.)

5. With your partner, practice being the opposite of what showed up in you, by listening, being quiet, relaxing your body and mind, etc.
   a. practice non-defensiveness, e.g. no counter arguments, no rationality, no anger over shame etc.
Thoughts from the privilege work
Thoughts overall
Commitment you will make to continue this work
We thank you for completing for the evaluation
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O, let my land be a land where
Liberty is crowned with no
false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real,
and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

- Langston Hughes
Without concerned citizen action to uphold universal rights close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.

Eleanor Roosevelt
Comparison of 2 Different World Views

Mercator Projection
World Map (1569)

Peters Projection
World Map (1967)

• The Peters Project map is now used by the United Nations Development Program, UNICEF, the World Council of Churches, and as backdrop to the newscasts in Europe.
• The maps in the United States, however, have not changed.
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Your Identities (non-exhaustive)

- Race/Ethnicity
- Class/Class Background
- Sexual Identity
- Religious Heritage
- U.S. Region/Country of Origin
- Military/Veteran Status
- Occupational status
- Geographic Region
- Urban/Suburban/Rural
- Marital Status
- Parent/Caregiver
- Gender
- Age
- Disabilities
- Educational Level