

SYSTEMS & POWER

Professor Richard C. Clark

Community Psychology

3/2/2023

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Assignment 2 questions?
- Assignment 3: Questions on what a community issue is?
- After Systems & Power...
- COMMUNICATION

FREE WRITE/DRAW/IMAGINE

What does an ideal/perfect world look like? Think about this on every one of the 6 levels. **Personally** how do you feel? How do you see & understand yourself? **Micro**: What kinds of relationships and everyday interactions do you have with your family, friends, and those people/places around you? **Meso**: What is the relationship between those people/places around you and how do they interact with one another? **Exo**: What policies are in place? What do institutions look like? How do they interact with people? **Macro**: What are the larger forces, ideologies at play moving and shaping society? **Chrono**: when is this, what is the context? (don't feel limited to the future)

FRAMING

- The next two classes we're mainly thinking about influences of the macro system. (Dominant ideologies, attitudes, norms)
- The macro system can and does influence all other levels significantly and can often be confused with them (Exo Especially)
- Human tendency to narrow, specify, and individualize.
- Macro system influences/manifestations can bring up personal feelings that often lead us to search for more tangible lower system explanations.
- Also, the tendency to believe there is only one macro level force operating in each instances but there are often multiple

DEFINITIONS

- **Power**: The force that moves as well as maintains societal structure. Power determines what is considered “normal”, “standard”, and “acceptable”. Power can be used in a multitude of ways including but not limited to: Advocacy, Violence, Resource Distribution, Surveillance, Resistance, Law & Policy implementation or repeal, and Representation/Media. Power is influenced by wealth, capital, voice, labor, and control. Power fuels oppression and privilege.
- **Intersectionality**: A concept coined by Dr. Kimberly Crenshaw intended to grasp when multiple systems of oppression or disadvantage compound to create a particular experience or form of oppression. Originally created in a legal context to understand the particular experience of Black women, but has since expanded into all realms dealing with social categorization. NOT IDENTITY BASED.

DEFINITIONS

- **Oppression**: Oppression is the systemic and institutional abuse of power by one group at the expense of others and the use of force to maintain this dynamic. An oppressive system is built around the ideology of superiority of some groups and inferiority of others. This ideology makes those designated as inferior feel confined, 'less than', and hinders the realization of their full spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological well-being and potential. They are portrayed as "others" and are marginalized via social, mental, emotional, and physical violence which prevents their full inclusion into the society and/or community.

DEFINITIONS

- **Privilege**: The unearned physical, psychological, spiritual, social, economic, and institutional benefits, immunities, or advantages associated with being widely perceived to be a member of a particular group and/or holding a particular identity. By design most forms of privilege shield themselves in normalcy. Privilege is very difficult to recognize because when one holds privilege mainstream society rarely asks them to confront it. This confrontation of privilege can lead to defensive tactics and the activation of defense mechanisms in order to avoid acknowledging privilege.

DEFINITIONS

Positionality: Understanding ones one social position in relation to power, social systems, and access. Researchers naming their positionality involves first understanding complex social locations, intersectionality, and interlocking systems of power. Researchers must be able to name, understand, and speak to their own experiences with privilege, oppression as they relate to factors such as: Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality, Citizenship, Body, Ability, Language, & Religion.

ACTIVITY: KEEPIN' IT MACRO

Amaya (15) and her mother Dora (43) are visiting a department store to buy some summer clothes. Dora who is a darker skinned Afro-Latina woman immigrated to NYC from Brazil before she had Amaya with the love of her life A White American man named Xavier. As such Amaya has lighter skin and less afro-centric features. Dora and Amaya are both US citizens. While in the store Dora and Amaya are looking at clothes speaking to one another Amaya mainly using English and Dora slipping back and forth from Portuguese to English with a slight accent. As they are chatting a woman mutters under her breath to Dora "Go back to Mexico..." Amaya overhears and gets ready to defend her mother "What the f*** did you just say?!" A store clerk intervenes and immediately asks Amaya and Dora to leave. Stating on their way out "I don't think we carry your size anyway sweetie." and "Maybe you should have your parents pay for your nanny to take English classes."

Staying on that macro level what dominant ideologies, discourses, attitudes, norms are at play here?

FIVE FACES OF OPPRESSION

- **Exploitation** is the systematic transfer of resources (such as land, wealth, or labor value) from one group to another.
- **Marginalization** is the prevention or limitation of full participation in society through exclusion from, for example, the job market, health care system, public benefits programs, or community activities.
- **Powerlessness** is a deprivation of the ability to make decisions about one's living, emotional, or working conditions.
- **Cultural imperialism** is when one's culture is deemed to be less than and/or inferior to the dominant culture.
- **Violence** includes physical, sexual, and emotional violence, and the threat of violence, as well as policies and structures that condone violence.

FIVE FACES OF PRIVILEGE

- **Profiting:** Gaining fiscal, cultural, social resources off of the exploited labor/identity of "others".
- **Centering/Centered:** Defining difference and "other". Creating social hierarchies and defining values. Deciding who should be included and who shouldn't be.
- **Enactment/Power:** Having the ability to enact or make decisions about ones own and others living, emotional, and working conditions
- **Cultural Standardization:** Cultural standards & practices of the dominant culture become what is seen as beautiful, standard, aspirational (even if stolen from another culture.)
- **Safety/Protection:** Protected by legal and social systems as well as dominant societal ideologies. Violence enacted receives punishment.

ACTIVITY: DEFINING THE FACES

Each group will be assigned an Oppression/Privilege duo and will work together to think of and flesh out examples.

- Get specific. Speak to an example(s) of how these dynamics play out. Use the ecological systems to help.
- Who/what has the privilege who/what deals with the oppression. What is the relationship between the two?
- Use “yes and” thinking what other forms of oppression/privilege could be present in your examples.
- Groups will present their examples to the class and discuss their implications.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Privilege and oppression are both systemic and unearned.

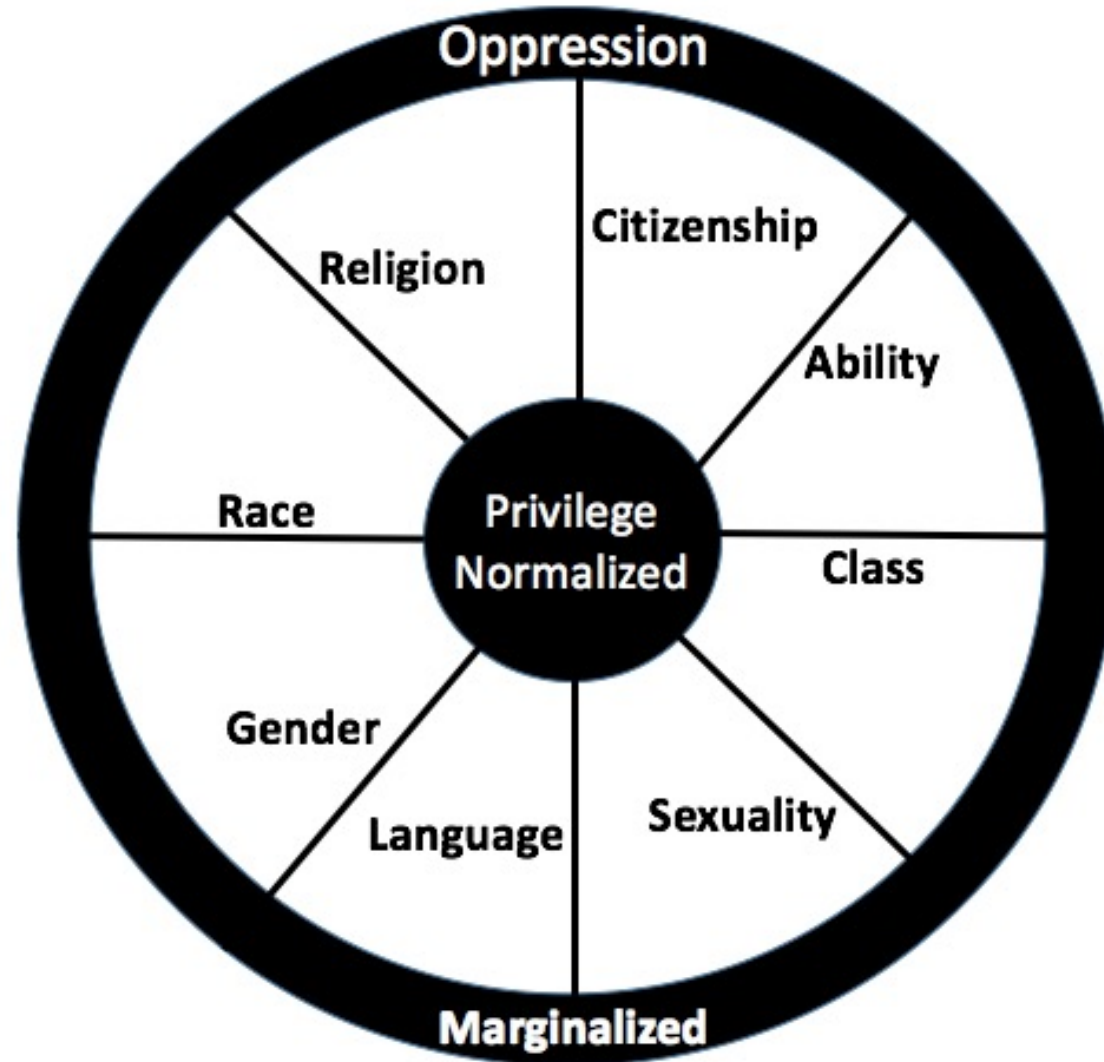
Privilege and oppression exist on the macro level, but influence each level significantly.

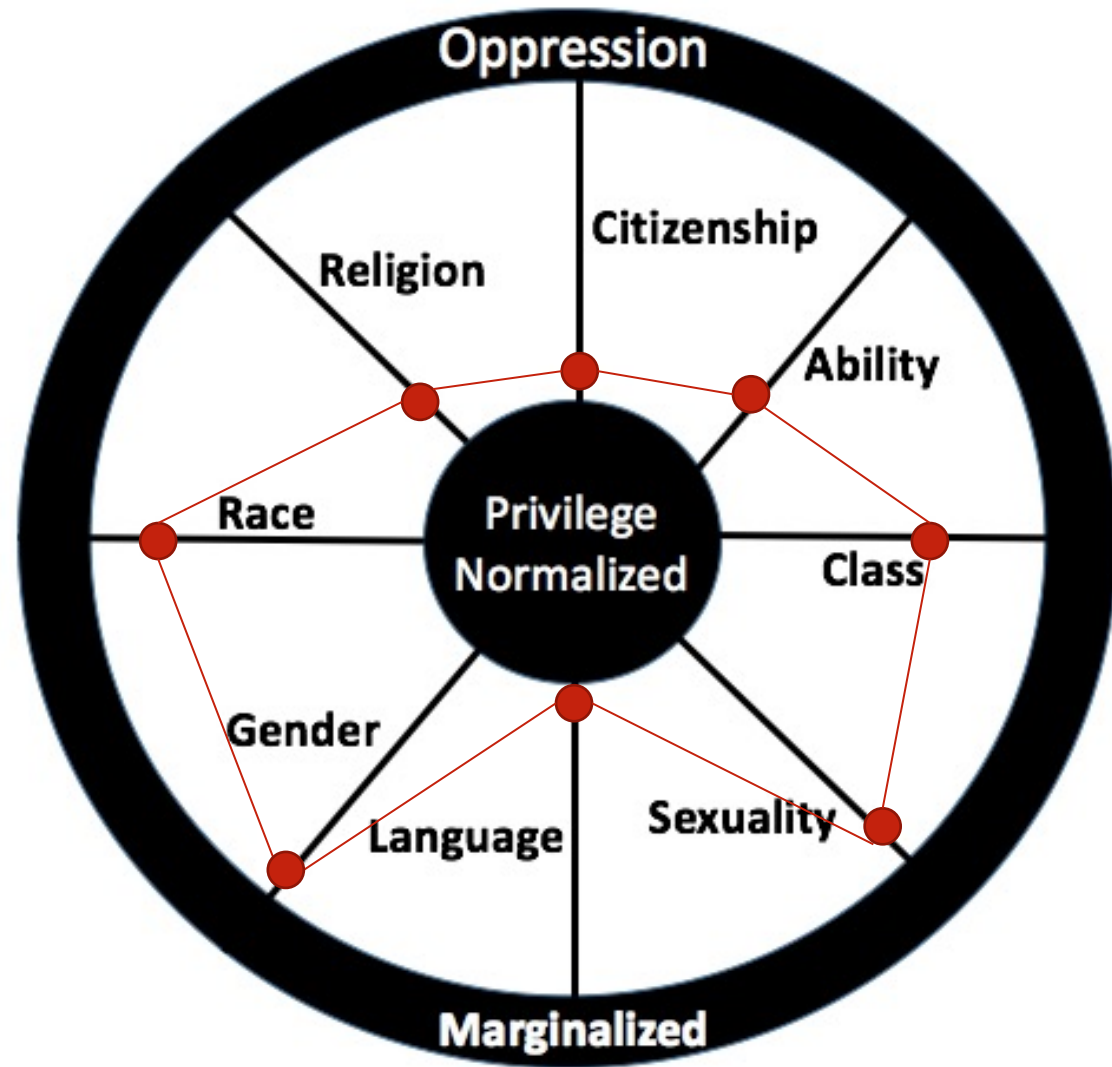
Oppression is often minimized because privilege is normalized

Oppression can create an awareness of privilege.

Privilege can often act as a buffer or shield against oppression.

OPPRESSION & PRIVILEGE MATRIX





SHARE & DISCUSS

- Using your matrix, life experiences, and 5 faces discuss what forms of oppression and privilege affect you personally.
- See if you can find commonalities. What are some forms of privilege or oppression you share? Do they manifest in the same way?
- Without comparing which is worse, discuss How about differences/tensions between your groups various forms of oppression/privilege
- How does your privilege/oppression interact within you individually and in relation to your group?
- Discuss whether you maintain or resist these forces of privilege and oppression on the day to day.

COMMUNITY PSYCH AND POWER

- Being a researcher comes with an immense amount of power.
- A researcher must place themselves within multiple contexts of privilege and oppression.
- Researchers should be able to name their biases, core beliefs, relationship to research, and goals.
- Researchers should always be open to critique especially from the community they are working with.
- It is important that the community is centered in community psych research.
- Understand that research is only 1 method of knowledge production and not the only valid form.

RESEARCH SCENARIO

You are a research assistant on a community psychology research project aimed at better understanding and reducing violence/discrimination faced by women of color in healthcare. The research team consists of: the PI (principal investigator) who is your mentor and a white woman, and 2 co-researchers. One co-researcher is a Black American woman who is Community activist and full spectrum doula the other is White 2nd gen Mexican woman who is an OBGYN. You are hoping to use focus groups with women of color in order to better understand the intricacies of the issue and collaboratively develop solutions.

What does power look like in this research project? What forms of privilege & oppression are present in the project, research topic/issue, and research team? How might you name and navigate them?

REFLEXIVITY & POSITIONALITY

- As long as we exist in this present system our experiences will be flavored/touched by privilege and oppression.
- These experiences influence the dynamics that move and shape our lives as well as how we make sense of them. This can be seen in how we speak to one another, how we discuss ourselves/others, how we seek answers, where we seek them from, and so much more
- It is vital that in writing reflexivity or positionality statements that you don't just name these connections BUT ALSO how they influence you.
- Ex: You are a child of immigrant parents working with immigrants on the topic of immigration/deportation here in the united states
- **Reflexivity is not:** I am a child of immigrants so this issue is important to me.
- **Reflexivity is:** I am a child of immigrants so this issue influences how I see and engage in this this work by _____ because _____
- **Positionality is not:** I experience oppression as a child of immigrants
- **Positionality is:** Immigrant communities in this country deal with _____ form(s) of oppression and this shapes _____ experiences because _____

IMPORTANT POINTS

- Systems of oppression are interlocking
- Power and domination exist in a way that folks want them or want to participate in them
- The systems of domination work so that in order to move through them compliance, civility, and passivity are required
- People are the center of knowledge/change/growth
 - “the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us.”

IMPORTANT POINTS CONTINUED

- Research and community work must be done centering the most vulnerable
- Desire for power or proximity to power leads folks away from equity and social justice
- Necessity of multiple vantage points and perspectives in any project
- Because we are all influenced by power privilege as well as our identities and experience true objectivity is impossible



“NONE OF US ARE FREE
TILL WE’RE ALL FREE.”

-FANNIE LOU HAMMER