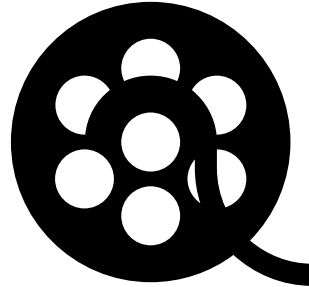


Pre-Reading for Developing an Anti-Opressive Practice

Begin today's pre-reading by watching [this video](#):

THE LEGACIES – KIKE OJO-THOMPSON

(Time: from 1:00-6:00)



POWER, PRIVILEGE, OPPRESSION:

It's at the System Level

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

The intentional disadvantaging of groups of people based on one's identity while advantaging members of the dominant group (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, language, etc.).

A "lens" is a metaphor to communicate the idea of looking at an event, experience, and/or a set of data through a particular perspective. The extension of this metaphor being that one can look at what is occurring and construct an interpretation and a subsequent action based on the "lens" being employed at any given time. Each of us views the world through a set of lenses everyday – it is how we read and make meaning of the world.

The lens of systemic oppression is a lens we intentionally employ to sharpen our focus on the ways in which any given form of oppression (race, gender, class, language, sexual orientation, etc) may be negatively impacting people's ability to make progress on the things they care about and/or preventing individual or collective action toward the achievement of a particular goal.

Source: <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/lens-of-systemic-oppression>

THE LENS OF SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION ASSUMES:

- All negative forms of prejudice and/or bias are **learned and therefore can be unlearned**.
- Systemic oppression exists at the level of institutions (harmful policies and practices) and across structures (education, health, transportation, economy, etc) that are interconnected and reinforcing over time.
- Oppression and systematic mistreatment (such as racism, classism, sexism, or homophobia) is **more than just the sum of individual prejudices**.
- Systemic oppression is systematic and has **historical antecedents**;
- Systemic oppression **manifests in economic, social, political and cultural systems**.

DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES OF SYSTEMIC MISTREATMENT

- **ageism:** A system of oppression that produces economic, political, social and cultural advantages barriers based on one's age, particularly those deemed especially young or especially old.
- **dis/ableism:** A system that produces economic, political, social and cultural advantages barriers based on one's abilities (mental, neurological, intellectual, emotional, and/or physical) and one's contributions to "productivity" within a capitalist and colonial framework. Dis/ableism depends on a binary, misuse of power over disabled individuals for the benefit of abled individuals.
- **racism:** Race is a social construct, not racism. Race is a concept created as a tool to justify the domination, enslavement, and exploitation of racialized groups by Europeans. Racial categories have been created, shaped, re-imagined and destroyed throughout history depending on social and historical contexts. While race is not biologically or genetically real, as a social construction, it has very real repercussions. Racism then is the belief that groups are superior to others on the sole basis of their racial or ethnic characteristics. This is expressed through prejudicial and discriminatory actions; and it has social, political, economic etc. consequences.
- **sexism:** A system of oppression that produces economic, political, social and cultural advantages and/or barriers based on one's gender identity, specifically individuals who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth and/or within the gender binary of (cis) man and (cis) woman.
- **classism:** A system of oppression that produces political and economic barriers based on one's real or perceived economic status or background. It is associated with but not mutually exclusive to capitalism.

PRIVILEGE

Access to power enjoyed by a dominant group, giving them economic, political, social and cultural advantages at the expense of members of a marginalized group.

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION IN STUDENT SERVICES

Research shows:

- While there have been efforts to increase student enrolment in higher ed, policies and necessary resources to address EDI have not followed suit. As a result, students from equity-deserving communities remain under-represented in higher education¹.

¹ *Black students still face major hurdles getting into university* (2018) *Brighter World*. McMaster University. Available at: <https://brighterworld.mcmaster.ca/articles/black-students-still-face-major-hurdles-getting-into-university/> (Accessed: March 23, 2023).

- One study revealed that EDI is failing international students as part of the group that EDI should address at postsecondary institutions. One international student, who arrived in Canada five years ago, could not relate to the western definition of work-life balance. “In my culture [...] the concept of my ‘family’ is not just me and my partner – it’s my parents and my grandparents. I must take into consideration intergenerational family members.”²
- There are a number of barriers that traditionally have prevented individuals from BIPOC communities from accessing mental health resources. There still remains a stigma attached to seeking counseling in many cultures and communities, as students report worrying that others will view them as “weak” or “crazy”. Even more so, often it is not culturally appropriate to “air the family business”, especially with a professional.

**see additional readings at the end which supports these claims*

How are we addressing these unique needs within the services we offer to students, knowing that they are not a monolithic group?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AND REFLECT ON WITH RESPECT TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL SPACES

- Whose voices are being heard? Whose are silent?
- Who is represented? Who is missing?
- Who has power here? What is power based on here?
- How safe is it here for different people to share their truth?
- How is leadership constructed here? What forms does it take? Who is missing? What can we do to make room for different cultural constructions of leadership?
- How can I build my practice as a leader for equity starting with who I am?

Robson, K. *et al.* (2018) *Underrepresented students and the transition to postsecondary education: Comparing Two Toronto cohorts – Canadian Journal of Higher Education / Revue canadienne d'enseignement supérieur, Érudit*. Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education. Available at: <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/cjhe/2018-v48-n1-cjhe03924/1050841ar/> (Accessed: March 23, 2023).

² COEN-SANCHEZ, K. (2023) *How edi policies are failing international students, How EDI policies are failing international students*. University Affairs. Available at: <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/global-campus/how-edi-policies-are-failing-international-students/> (Accessed: March 23, 2023).