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Teaching Intersectionality to Improve MSW Students' Understanding of Oppression and Privilege.

James D. Simon

California State University - San Bernardino, james.simon@csusb.edu

Rigaud Joseph

California State University - San Bernardino, rigaud.joseph@csusb.edu

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Grant Abstract

Teaching Intersectionality to Improve MSW Students' Understanding of Oppression and Privilege.

Background and Purpose:

There are growing calls to understand how clients' multiple intersecting identities result in compounded disadvantage, which leads to disparate and disproportionate outcomes (CSWE, 2008; Ortega & Faller, 2011; Nadan, Spilsbury, & Korbin, 2015; NASW, 2015). Although social work students are required to learn about intersectionality (NASW, 2015), there is some evidence that blind spots remain with respect to the relationship between intersectionality, oppression, and privilege (Bronstein, Berman-Rossi, & Winfield, 2002; Bubar, Cespedes, & Bundy-Fazioli, 2016). In response, this project attempted to address this teaching and research gap by examining whether MSW students' knowledge of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and privilege can improve after an enhanced lecture and modified assignments.

Methods

The sample consisted of 56 students enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at CSUSB in a micro social work practice course during the fall quarter 2019. The project utilized a pre-experimental research methodology consisting of a one-group pretest/posttest research design measuring participants' responses using the Diversity and Oppression Scale (DOS) before and after the implementation of an enhanced teaching intervention. The DOS has 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree) measuring cultural diversity self-confidence, diversity and oppression, social worker/client congruence, and social worker responsibilities. The enhanced teaching intervention consisted of a lecture with up-to-date material connecting intersectionality, oppression, and privilege (See attached lecture slides), and an assignment assessing the main character of *Good Will Hunting*, which was modified by adding the following prompt: *If Will would have been part of any other non-dominant group (e.g., person of color, LGBTQ, disabled, etc.), give an example of how his life might have been different.*

Due to the small sample size 30 students with completed pretests and posttests, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was utilized comparing the pre and post-test sum scores on DOS Factor 2 (Diversity and Oppression), which were cut into tertiles measuring low knowledge about oppression (1-4), moderate knowledge (4-6), and high knowledge (7-8).

Findings

There was support that the teaching intervention was associated with increased knowledge on DOS Factor 2 among students in the intervention class ($Z = 3.30$, $p < .001$), and it had a moderate to strong effect size ($r = .43$). Qualitative results also indicated that some students felt that the TED talks and interactive exercises were also helpful in learning about intersectionality.

Limitations

The findings are limited by the small sample size and lack of comparison group because not enough students completed the survey in other classes to make comparisons between classes feasible. Furthermore, although the DOS captured some knowledge of diversity and oppression, we did not measure how much knowledge related to intersectionality the students had prior to the intervention.

Conclusions and Implications

Findings suggest that enhanced teaching including pre-lecture activities, interactive lectures, and modified assignments may improve knowledge of diversity and oppression among MSW students. In addition, several participants commented on the usefulness of media such as TED talks and Youtube videos as well as interactive exercises to facilitate discussions of intersectionality. Futures studies need larger samples & comparison groups and should test different types of delivery of lecture content.

Notes

The attached poster and lecture slides were completed as part of the 2019-20 Summer Institute and Faculty Learning Community Grant focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom in collaboration with Dr. Rigaud Joseph.

References

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- Windsor, L. C., Shorkey, C., & Battle, D. (2015). Measuring student learning in social justice courses: The diversity and oppression scale. *Journal of Social Work Education, 51*(1), 58-71.

SUMMARY

Background and Purpose

- There are growing calls to understand how clients' multiple intersecting identities result in compounded disadvantage, which leads to disparate and disproportionate outcomes (CSWE, 2008; Ortega & Faller, 2011; Nadan, Spilsbury, & Korbin, 2015; NASW, 2015).
- Although social work students are required to learn about intersectionality (NASW, 2015), there is some evidence that blind spots remain with respect to the relationship between intersectionality, oppression, and privilege (Bronstein, Berman-Rossi, & Winfield, 2002; Bubar, Cespedes, & Bundy-Fazioli, 2016).
- In response, this study attempted to address this teaching and research gap by examining whether MSW students' knowledge of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and privilege can improve after an enhanced lecture and modified assignments.

Research Question

Can participation in an enhanced lecture improve students' knowledge of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and privilege?

Sample

56 students enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at CSUSB in in a micro social work practice course during the fall quarter 2019. Only 30 had completed pretests and posttests.

Methods

The project utilized a pre-experimental research design using a pretest/posttest (O1 X O2) to measure participants' responses before and after the teaching intervention using the Diversity and Oppression Scale.

MSW Students	n=56	%
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	48	87.3
Male	7	12.7
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
African-American	5	8.9
Caucasian	11	19.6
Hispanic/Latino	31	55.4
Native American	1	1.8
Other	8	14.3
<u>Age</u>		
22–30	37	69.8
31–40	12	22.6
41 and older	4	7.8
<u>MSW Year</u>		
1 st Year (F/T)	26	47.3
2 nd Year (F/T)	5	9.1
2 nd Year (P/T)	24	43.6
<u>Program Type</u>		
Traditional	35	63.6
Online	20	36.4
<u>Instruction Type</u>		
Enhanced	38	67.8
Traditional	18	32.2

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Data Analysis: Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Dependent variable: Knowledge about Oppression (Factor 2) [Ordinal coding: 1-4 (low), 4-6 (moderate) and 7-8 (high)].

Intervention: enhanced lecture

Control variables: age, ethnicity, race, gender

Result: Intervention was effective ($Z = 3.30$, $p < .001$)

Effect Size: Moderate to Strong ($r = .43$).

Conclusion and Implications

Findings suggest that enhanced teaching including pre-lecture activities, interactive lectures, and modified assignments may improve knowledge of intersectionality & privilege among MSW students. Futures studies need larger samples & comparison group.

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- Bronstein, L. R., Berman-Rossi, T., & Winfield, B. (2002). Beyond cultural specificity: Teaching the impact of oppression on all clients' lives. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 13*(2), 43-59.
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Diversity and Oppression Scale

5-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)
Factor sums were cut into tertiles (Low/Moderate/High)

Factor 2: Diversity and Oppression-In the U.S.

- Q1: Everyone should at least try to learn English*
- Q2: Minorities are often verbally attacked
- Q3: Illegal immigrants should be deported*
- Q4: All people have equal opportunities*
- Q5: Minorities are at risk for discrimination and oppression
- Q6: Minorities are often physically attacked
- Q7: Being lesbian, bisexual, or gay is a choice*
- Q8: The American dream is real for anyone*
- *Reverse coded questions.



Student Quotes

What was the most helpful activity to learn about intersectionality and why?

- "The activity where we all were in a circle and we stood forward or stayed in our spot with the question asked. I found the discussion after the activity very meaningful."
- "The Danger of One Story TED Talk & The Pedagogy of Privilege TED Talk. Both of these resources presented an inviting way of thinking about the charged topics of privilege and oppression. Both TED talks presented these topics in a way that invited thinking about where one's own privilege exists."

Intersectionality

Understanding Diversity, Privilege, and Intersectionality



Ground Rules

- Maintain a safe space
- Respect one another
- Confidentiality is key
- Remember your active listening skills
- Listen without judgment
- Be open to a little discomfort



Diversity and Culture Terminology¹

Diversity

- includes the sociocultural experiences of people such as national origin, color, social class, religious and spiritual beliefs, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, & physical or mental disabilities.

Culture

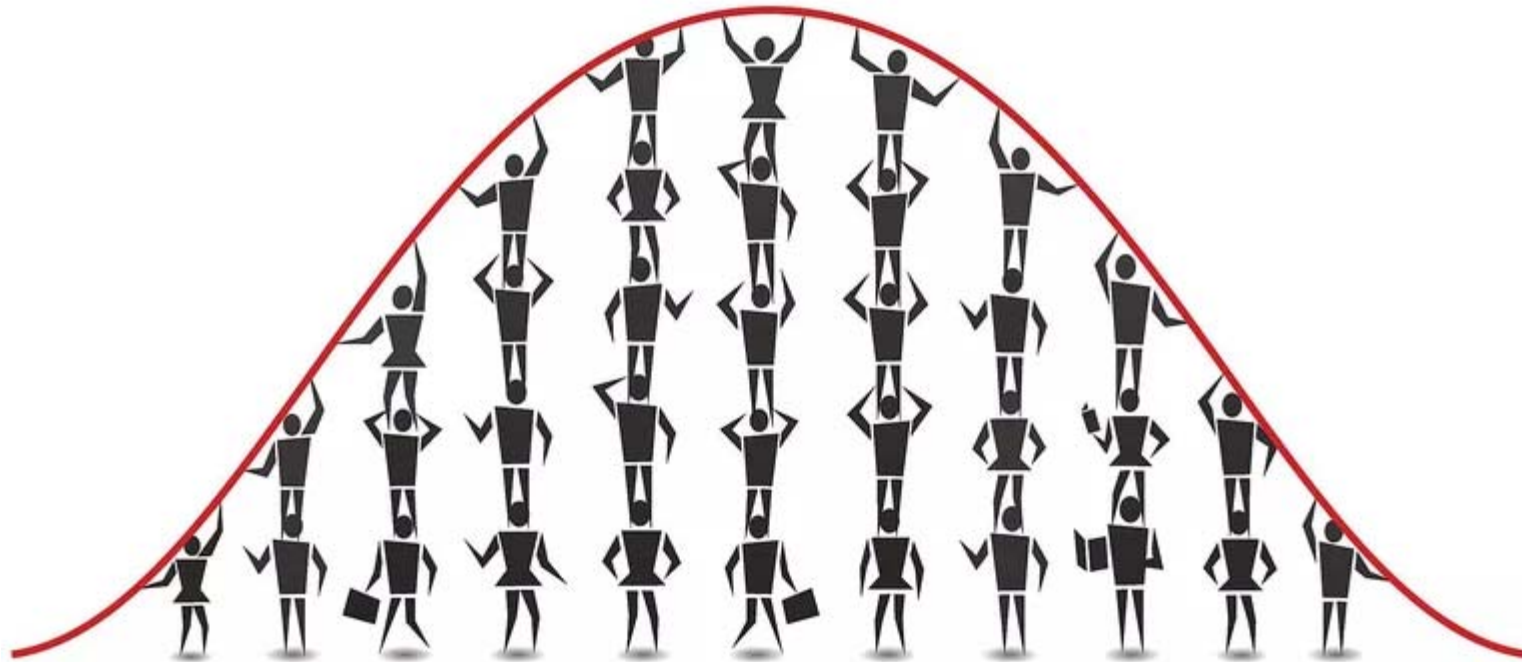
- Integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group.

Cultural Competence

- seeking out *knowledge, skills, and values to enhance the delivery of services* to people with varying cultural experiences associated with their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability [or other cultural factors].



Cultural Differences



- Before you can understand the diversity of any client, you have to understand their cultural group.
- A range of differences exist within cultural groups and your client is part of that range.



Limitations of Cultural Competence

The great majority of clients are members of populations whose diverse identities places them at risk of experiencing prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. **Does cultural competence help these clients?**

Cultural competence requires social workers to use an intersectionality approach to practice, examining forms of oppression, discrimination, and domination through diversity components of race and ethnicity, immigration and refugee status, religion and spirituality, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, social class, and abilities¹.



How to Develop Cultural Competence

Understand Self

- Values, biases, beliefs, and your own culture.

Understand diverse group experiences

- Cultures, customs, strengths, burdens.

Understand Societal Influences

- History, policies, stereotypes, prejudice, privilege.

Recognize how privilege can give groups advantages

- Can lead to the oppression of other groups.



What is Privilege?

Privilege-special right, benefit, or advantage given to a person, not from work or merit, but by reason of race, social position, religion, gender, or other social category^{2,3}.

- Usually unconscious and arises in an environment where one's social identity is normal and universal².
- This can lead to seeing similarities as good & difference seen as deviant³.
- Usually invisible to those who have it⁴.
- Maintains advantages of dominant groups and disadvantages for non-dominant groups⁴.



Dominant group privilege⁴

- Wealthy over the poor
- Males over Females
- Heterosexuals over LGBTQ
- Caucasians over people of color
- Youth over age
- Christianity over other religions

A key to understanding your privileges is to pay attention to your language. Do you identify difference?

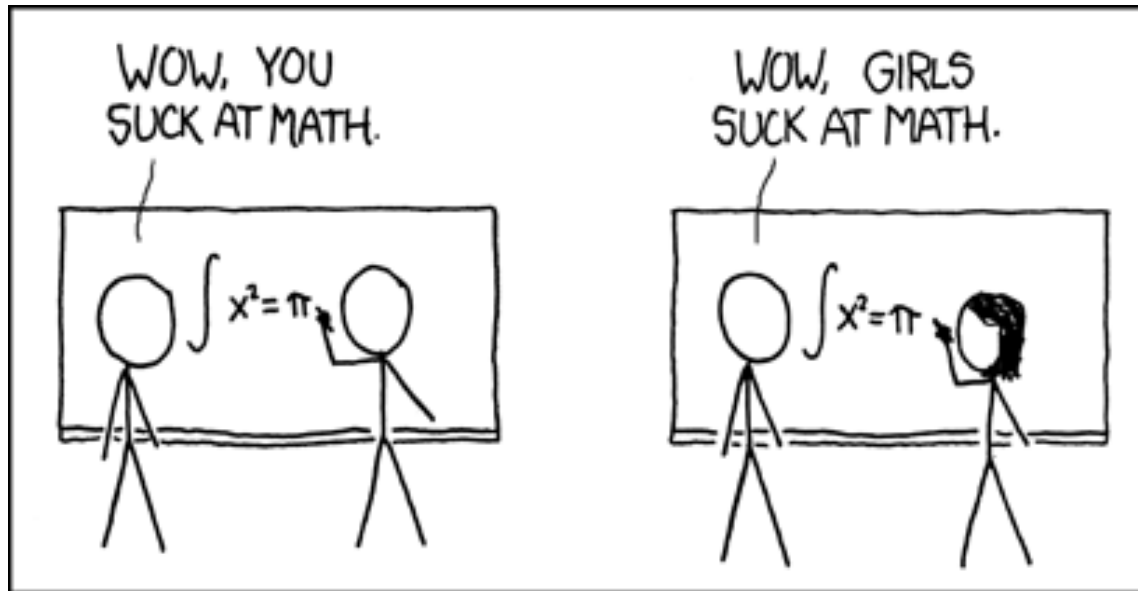
Example: I am going to meet my *older, black, gay* friend Berry.



Male privilege



CartoonStock.com



Heterosexual privilege



Have you ever been asked:
“What do you think caused your heterosexuality?”

Why? <https://projecthumanities.asu.edu/content/heterosexual-privilege-checklist>

Ableism privilege

Ableism Is...

(a form of)
Discrimination.



The false idea
that disabled people
are by default, inferior.

When in truth
disability



is just another way
for a mind and/or body
to be.

whatisableism.tumblr.com



White privilege

(Th)ink

BY
KATH
KNIGHT



THE POWER OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

PRIVILEGE

a user's guide

WHITE

can see their race represented in media; their race is assumed to be default

MALE

can be in public space at night without fear of sexual harassment or violence

HETEROSEXUAL

can openly be in romantic relationships without fear of harassment or violence

CISGENDER

can use public restrooms without confusion or fear of harassment or violence

ABLE BODIED

can perform everyday activities without worrying about special accommodations

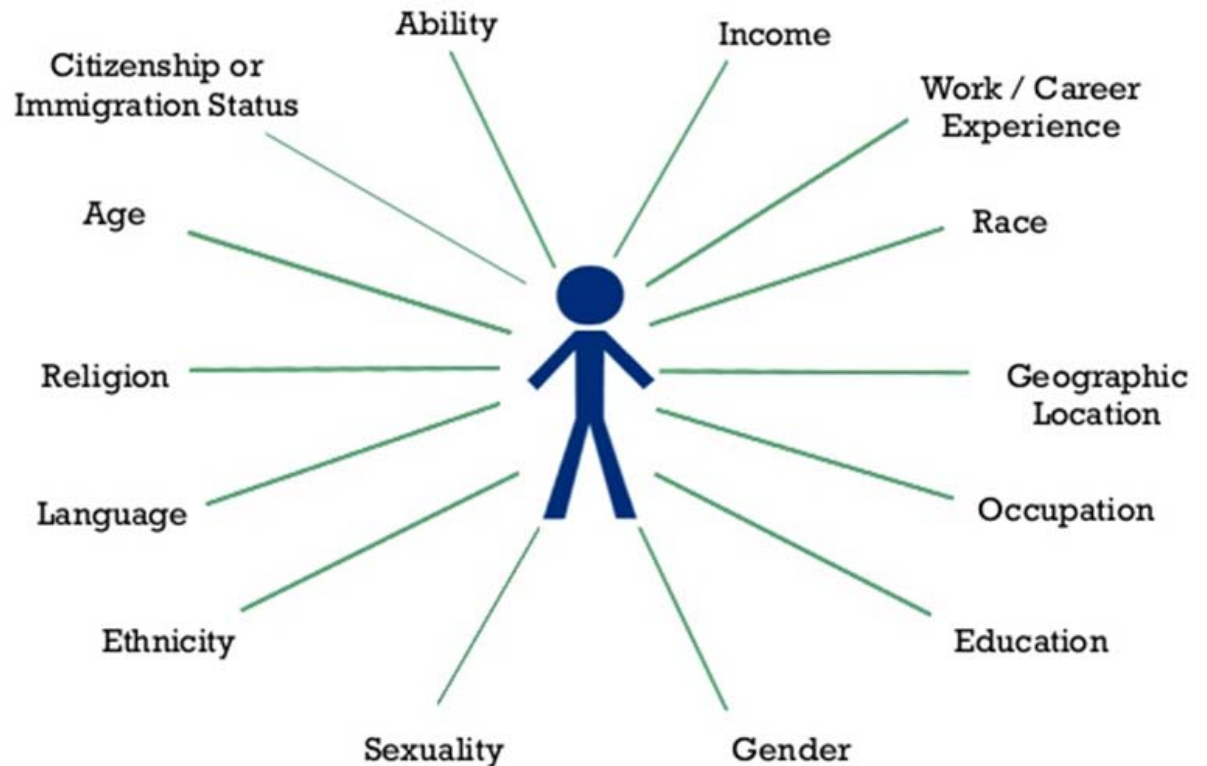
MIDDLE-UPPER CLASS

can easily purchase necessities such as food, shelter, and medications



Intersectionality

race
gender
cis (gender identity)
weight
able (non-handicapped)
mundane
age (young adults)
education
income
religion
first world
neurotypical
height



Multiple identities intersect resulting in both unearned advantages and disadvantage.



Intersectionality Terminology

Intersectionality

A theoretical framework for understanding how multiple identities such as gender, race and socioeconomic status simultaneously shape human experience at the individual level through interlocking systems of bias and inequality that exist at the macro social-structural level (e.g., sexism, racism, and classism)^{5,6}.



Intersectionality Key Points

- Nobody chooses their privilege.
- People may be privileged in some ways but not in others, i.e., Caucasian, gay male. This is intersectionality.
- *Some people have to work harder* to experience things others take for granted⁶.



What is wrong with these statements?

“If you just work hard enough, you can get ahead?”

“I don’t see color. I treat everybody the same regardless of their skin color?”

“I’m not racist. I have plenty of friends who are...”



What to do? Start with yourself.^{7,8}

I cannot be blind to
the invisible system of
privilege I am a part of.



Do not shame!



Make a privilege pledge⁸



Targets and Agents of Oppression

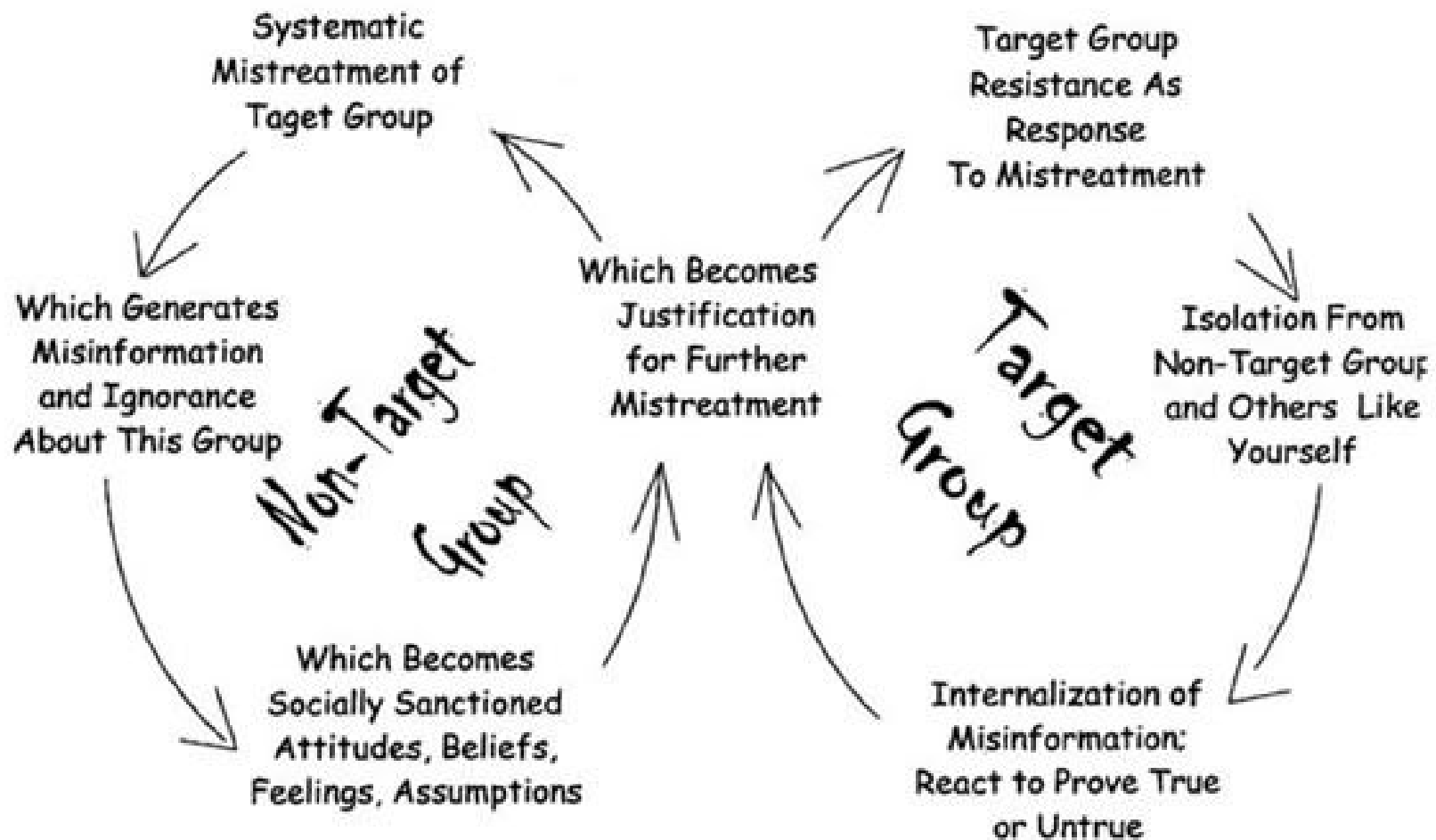


Agent: Members of dominant social groups privileged by birth or acquisition who knowingly or unknowingly exploit and reap unfair advantage over members of the target groups.

Target: Members of social identity groups who are discriminated against, marginalized, disenfranchised, oppressed, exploited by an oppressor and oppressor's system of institutions without identity apart from the target group, and compartmentalized in defined roles.

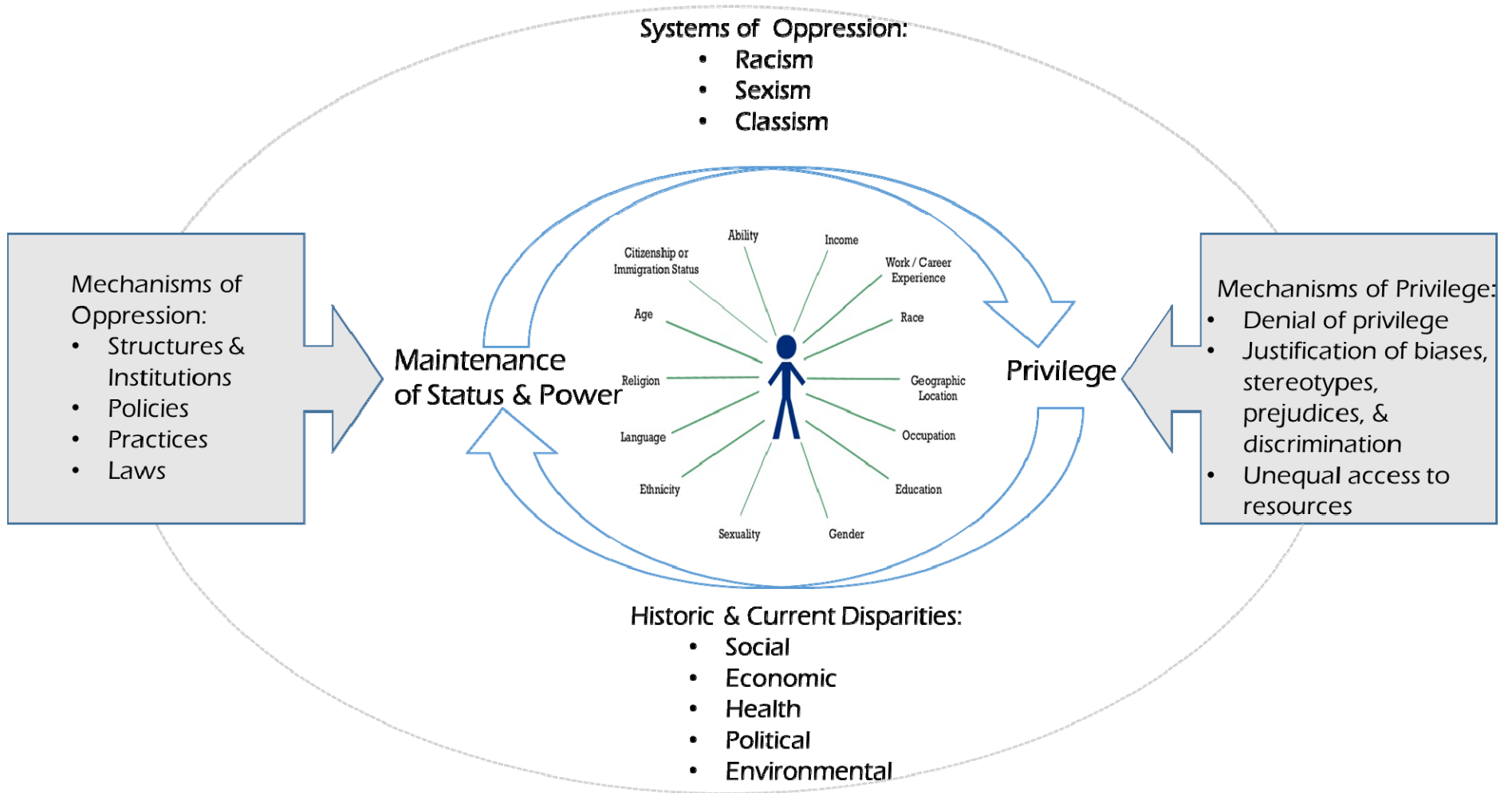
<https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/>

Cycle of Oppression



Ricky Serrano-Marcos
Adapted by Gloria Yessierli/Sep. '01
Graphics by Ricardo Lopez-Peña/Sep. '04

Intersectionality, Oppression, & Privilege Model⁹



Group Activity

First, take a few minutes to write down on your syllabus three powerful things you learned from this lecture. Discuss this with your group and decide collectively on three of the most important group points to share with the class. Then, please use the whiteboard to draw intersectionality as a group to incorporate these three things. Pretend you have to explain this to high school students and use images.



Final thoughts

**Becoming aware of
PRIVILEGE
should not be viewed as
a burden or source of
guilt, but rather, an
OPPORTUNITY
to learn and be
responsible so that we
may work toward a more
just and inclusive world.**



References and Resources

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8. Ford, J. (2012, April 11). Justin Ford - Pedagogy of Privilege [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW9ey3N924Q&sns=em>
9. Simon, J. D., Boyd, R., & Subica, A. Refocusing Intersectionality in Social Work Education: Creating a Safe Space to Discuss Oppression and Privilege. (under review).

Storytelling Podcast-when you need a laugh-<http://themoth.org/posts/stories/not-too-sensitive-just-sensitive>

Excellent Podcast on White Privilege-<http://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/>

Excellent Podcast on Male Privilege-<http://www.sceneonradio.org/men/>

All that we share-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc>

Walk boldly towards your biases-

https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them?utm_source=sms&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=tedsread-a)

TED Talk: A mixed-race perspective-https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=of6PD2-f_XA&feature=youtu.be

Deconstructing White Privilege (Dr. Robin DiAngelo)-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7mzj0cVL0Q&feature=youtu.be>

Links to explore-<https://dulwichcentre.com.au/a-continuing-invitation-to-narrative-practitioners-to-address-privilege-and-dominance/#shame> & <https://www.thesociologicalcinema.com/privilege.html> & <https://medium.com/national-equity-project/implicit-bias-structural-racism-6c52cf0f4a92>

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