



# Psychology of Oppression

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# Defining Terms

# Culture vs Race vs Ethnicity



- Race – a social category that distinguishes individual by physical characteristics
- Ethnicity – social category based on unique social & cultural heritage passed from one generation to the next

# Identity



- Ethnic Identity – degree & sentiment of the attachment to a group based on ethnicity. It can be the result of self-motivation and/or forced psychological attachment due to discrimination.
- Racial Identity – degree & sentiment of the attachment to group defined by socially constructed categories of race. Attachment due to self-motivation and/or forced due to discrimination

# Levels Isms



- Individual - attitudes, beliefs, behaviors of a person with respect to isms
- Institutional – social policies, laws, and regulations whose purpose it is to maintain economic and social advantage of group power
- Cultural Racism – beliefs and customs that promote the assumptions that dominant culture(s) superior

# Definitions of Oppressions

Marilyn Frye



- Lives confined and shaped by forces & barriers that are systematically related to each other – ideology, politics, economics, social system; suffering insufficient.
- System that serves to restrict & limit one group to benefit of another group; single barrier insufficient

# Definitions of Oppressions

Patricia Hill



- Oppression is an issue of subordinate and dominant relationships
- Structured through institutions (purposively, accident, incidental)
- Institutional Oppression
  - Non-additive, but interlocking system
  - Not a matter of whose oppression 1<sup>st</sup> or worst

# Definitions of Oppression



- Symbolic Oppression – Widespread, societally sanctioned ideologies used to justify relationships of domination & subordination
  - Stereotypical or controlling images of diverse groups –race, ethnicity, class, gender central to this process
- Individual Dimension
  - Personal experience of diversity; meanings attached to classifications
  - Differences in power & privilege constrain interactions and relationships.



# Definitions of Oppression

Goldenberg



- Encompasses all of the isms
- Hallmarks
  - Hopelessness
  - Helplessness
  - Survival (no forward progress)
- Experience of Marginality
  - See selves as static, limited, & expendable; spatially linked, psychologically separate

# Definitions of Oppression

Goldenberg



- Symptoms
  - Societal Withdrawal (substances)
  - Violence (similarly or those symbolic of the oppression)
  - Alienation
  - Despair (meaninglessness of life)
- Oppressed are exploited, taken advantage of; primarily survive – not succeed or fail.

# Definitions of Oppression

Goldenberg



- **Conditions**

- **Containment:** limits range of free movement available; psychological, physical or both
- **Expendability:** Can be eliminated or replaced with no loss

# Definitions of Oppression

Goldenberg



- Compartmentalization: Define narrow roles, models, & images that define the group; interference with efforts to define self, express self, be self.
- Ideology: shapes & controls or responses to people & events.

# Historical Oppression



- Indian Removal Act of 1830
- 1871 Government made all native people wards of the federal government. Not recognized as independent and forced on to reservations.
- 1887 Dawes Act

# Historical Oppression



- 1924 American Citizenship Act – Made native people American citizens.
- 1934 Indian Reorganization Act – Attempted to move away from assimilation.
- Termination Act, 1953 – 100 tribes marked for termination.
- 1975 Self-Determination & Educational Asst. Act – allocate funds from the federal government based on needs determined by the tribe.

# Historical Oppression



- 1848 Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo – Mexico lost the southwest territory in the Mexican American War. Mexicans could go to Mexico or stay in US as citizens.
- 1862 Homestead Act – squatters claim vacant land often owned by Mexicans.
- 1917 Puerto Rico becomes a part of the US as a territorial possession.
- 1921 limits placed on immigration & Mexican Americans included.

# Historical Oppression



- **1943 Zoot Suit Riots** - Southern CA, barrios raided by law enforcement.
- **1954-1958** - “Operation Wetback” to remove illegal workers.



# Historical Oppression



- **1849 Gold Rush-** many Chinese come to CA. As they became successful anti-Chinese sentiment grew.
- **1882 Chinese Exclusion Act** barred their immigration. Labeled “Yellow Peril”.
- **1907** US & Japan signed the **Gentleman’s Agreement** set self-imposed quotas on Japanese immigration.
- **1913** CA imposed the **Alien Land Bill** to prevent Japanese Land purchase.

# Historical Oppression



- **Immigration Act of 1924** designed to stop Chinese & Japanese immigration.
- **Dec. 7, 1941** Pearl Harbor bombed.
- Roosevelt issues **Order 9066** interning the Japanese.
- **1944** Supreme Court ruled the internment unconstitutional.
- After WWII anti-Japanese sentiment, but Chinese allowed because they were allies

# Historical Oppression



- **Slavery** became a way of life in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- **The 1863 Emancipation** of slaves.
- Late **1800's Jim Crow** laws created;
- 1883 the US Supreme Court declared the **Sumner Act of 1875**, which had given African Americans equal rights to public accommodations & transportation, unconstitutional .

# Historical Oppression



- Southern states ignored the 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> amendments that gave African Americans citizenship & the right to vote.
- **1896 Plessey vs. Ferguson** made separate but equal the law.
- **Executive Order 8802**, fair unemployment practices under Roosevelt.
- **Executive Order 9981** integrated the armed forces under Truman.
- **1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Topeka, KA**

# Power & Discrimination



- **First-Dimension** – direct force or competition, typically with a winner-take-all perspective.
- **Second-Dimension** – indirect manipulation of rules to shape the outcome of competition – the power to design the rules.
- **Third-Dimension** – the ability to mobilize, often through psychological means, biases, or tacit understandings, “to sell” the underlying rules and structures to the powerless; power to define the discourse about lifestyle, resources, etc.

(Guinier & Torres, 2002)

# Mental Health Service Use



African Americans have been found to:

- Average fewer therapy sessions,
- Terminate from outpatient mental health services earlier (Sue, et al., 1994; Takeuchi, et al., 1995) ,
- More likely to report negative attitudes toward help seeking, and
- Less likely to use mental health services after professional contact (Diala, et al., 2000).
- Most African Americans reportedly contacted physicians, ministers, and hospitals, while only 9% reported using psychologists, psychiatrists, or community mental health facilities (Jackson, Neighbors, & Gurin, 1986) .

# Barriers To Service Use



- ❖ Cultural Sensitivity
  - ✦ Participants believed therapists lacked sensitivity to the community, and knowledge of African American life & struggles
  - ✦ Believed many treatment professionals held stereotypes of the community

# Final Thoughts



- Power & discrimination permit constraint of access to vital resources necessary for income and wealth production.
- Absence of income production & wealth produces educational, occupational, social and health disparity.
- It is in this context that we ask people to live healthy lives.
- Following guidelines that assume equal access and opportunity.