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Conceptual Foundations for Social Justice Courses

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The preceding chapter places social justice education within a broad framework of historically situated discourses on oppression and liberation. In this chapter we describe how the conceptual models that undergird our practices and the curricula presented in this volume developed out of our early practice at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst School of Education, and how they continue to evolve.

Our conceptual model includes a definition of oppression in which individuals play a variety of roles in a multilayered and dynamic script. The model includes the dominant and subordinate social roles, as oppressor and oppressed (or agent and target of oppression), in interaction with the structural characteristics that hold the overall script in place. We introduce a matrix of the systemic aspects of the oppression script and the role relations and interactions within it. Finally, we present a generic model of social identity development based on our earlier work on black identity development (Jackson, 1976a, b) and white identity development (Hardiman 1979, 1982) in order to understand and anticipate how these roles may interact with each other and change over time in relation to a person's various social group memberships.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s we used the identity development models in courses on racism, cultural bias, and counseling from a racial perspective. Our interactions with colleagues and students engaged in the women's, gay liberation, and disability rights movements, and workshops focusing on antisemitism and classism, led us to see striking parallels and commonalities in the manifestations of different forms of oppression. We also explored the applicability of social identity development for other peoples of color (Kim, 1981), biracial people (Wijeyesinghe, 1992), and women and members of other social identity groups within the contexts of racism, sexism, antisemitism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism. We then extended the racial identity models to a generic model that examines how members

of agent and target groups experience internalized domination or internalized subordination and change their sense of relationship to other members of their target or agent group at various stages of consciousness.

Our thinking on these issues was informed by the work of Fanon (1967, 1968), Freire (1970, 1973), Memmi (1965), Goldenberg (1978), and Miller (1976). Rather than asking historical questions, such as “How did this come to be?” or “Which isms are foundational to other isms?” our goal became one of understanding, recognizing, and describing the generic characteristics of oppression. Our starting point is that once systems of oppression are in place, they are self-perpetuating. We want to understand the structures of self-perpetuation, the roles people play in the system of oppression and how these roles interact. Eventually our generic model of social identity development came to be subsumed within the general model of oppression.

According to our model, *social oppression* exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit. Social oppression is distinct from a situation of simple brute force in that it is an interlocking system that involves ideological control as well as domination and control of the social institutions and resources of the society, resulting in a condition of privilege for the agent group relative to the disenfranchisement and exploitation of the target group.

Oppression is not simply an ideology or set of beliefs that assert one group's superiority over another, nor is it random violence, harassment, or discrimination toward members of target groups. A condition of social oppression exists when the following key elements are in place:

- The agent group has the power to define and name reality and determine what is “normal,” “real,” or “correct.”
- Harassment, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, and other forms of differential and unequal treatment are institutionalized and systematic. These acts often do not require the conscious thought or effort of individual members of the agent group but are rather part of business as usual that become embedded in social structures over time.
- Psychological colonization of the target group occurs through socializing the oppressed to internalize their oppressed condition and collude with the oppressor's ideology and social system. This is what Freire refers to as the oppressed playing “host” to the oppressor (1970).
- The target group's culture, language, and history is misrepresented, discounted, or eradicated and the dominant group's culture is imposed.

Social oppression then involves a relationship between an agent group and a target group that keeps the system of domination in place. Recognizing the importance of collusion to the system of oppression does not mean that targets share equal responsibility for their situation with agents, or that they collude willingly. Rather, the collusion of targets is the result of agents taking control over time of the institutions of a society, as well as the minds, ideology, language, culture, and history of the targets.

Part of the method of establishing dominance in the system of oppression is the naming of the target group by the agent group. The ability to name reflects who has power. Agent groups establish their dominance by controlling how targets are named. The eradication or chipping away of a group's identity is not always a visible

of conscious process. Rather it happens gradually, and in many respects, unconsciously. Over an extended period of time, a system of domination becomes institutionalized so that conscious intent is no longer necessary to keep power and privilege in the hands of the agent group.

While oppression is reproduced in the institutions and structures of society, individual people also play a role in its operation and maintenance. Some groups and individuals are victims or targets of injustice and oppression and other groups and individuals are agents who reap the benefits of illegitimate privilege by virtue of their social group membership(s).

The Social Oppression Matrix

In our model, social oppression is maintained and operationalized at three levels: the individual, the institutional, and the societal/cultural. The matrix below illustrates the dynamic workings of these three levels along three dimensions that operate to support and reinforce each other: the context, the psychosocial processes, and the application.

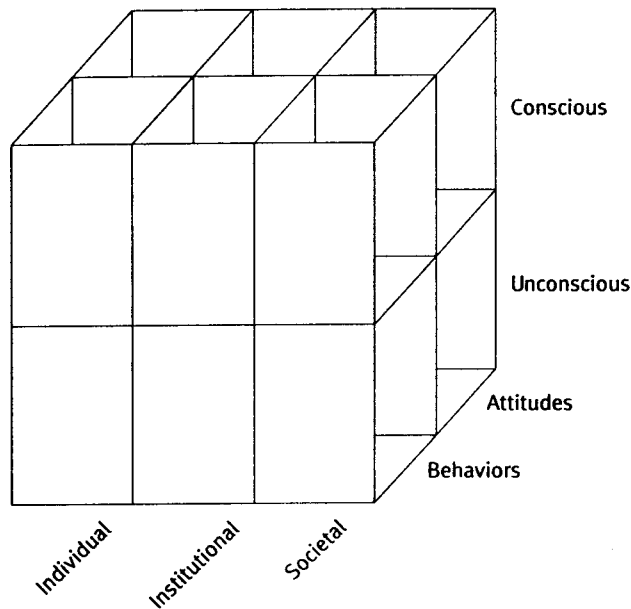


Figure 2.1. *Oppression Model*

The Context

The context axis interacts with all three levels: individual, institutional, and cultural/societal. The actual boundaries are more fluid than the lines in the diagram would suggest and all three levels are mutually reinforcing.

Individual Level: At the individual level, we focus on the beliefs or behaviors of an individual person rather than on institutional or cultural practices. Here we refer to conscious or unconscious actions or attitudes that maintain oppression. Examples include harassment, rape, racial/ethnic/religious slurs, and behavior that excludes targets.

An individual agent or target is also affected by and has an effect on institutions in that individuals are socialized, punished, rewarded, and guided by institutions

that maintain and perpetuate oppressive structures. In turn, the individual has an effect on the institutions and the broader culture to the extent that he/she works, consumes, teaches, votes, and lives the values of the dominant society/culture.

Institutional Level: Institutions such as the family, government, industry, education, and religion are shapers of, as well as shaped by, the other two levels. The application of institutional policies and procedures in an oppressive society run by individuals or groups who advocate or collude with social oppression produces oppressive consequences. Examples are the unequal treatment of African Americans and poor people of all races by the criminal and civil justice system, housing and employment discrimination against gays and lesbians, unequal access to quality education for the poor and working classes, and exclusion from social and cultural institutions such as civic groups and social clubs that have historically excluded women, men of color, and Jews.

Societal/ Cultural Level: Society's cultural norms perpetuate implicit and explicit values that bind institutions and individuals. In an oppressive society the cultural perspective of the dominant groups is imposed on institutions by individuals and on individuals by institutions. These cultural guidelines, such as philosophies of life, definitions of the good, normal, health, deviance, and sickness, often serve the primary function of providing individuals and institutions with the justification for social oppression. Examples of these cultural guidelines and norms abound in the perception of homosexuality as sick or evil, the acceptance of the nuclear family as the only model of a "good" family, and assumptions in the media and court systems about what rape victims did to incur the rape.

The Psycho-Social Processes

Psycho-social processes describe the types of involvement relative to one's advocacy, participation, support, or collusion in a system of social oppression. These processes are conscious or unconscious (Katz, 1978), dominative or aversive (Kovel, 1970), involving active or passive acceptance (Jackson, 1976; Hardiman, 1982). *Conscious* processes involve knowingly supporting the maintenance of social oppression through individual, institutional, and social/cultural attributes. *Unconscious* processes represent unknowing or naive collusion with the maintenance of social oppression and occur when the target or agent comes to accept the dominant logic system and justifies oppression as normal or part of the natural order, for example, Asians who have eyelid surgery, Blacks who use skin-lightening products, and ethnic groups who anglicize their names to sound less Jewish, Polish, or Italian.

The Application

The application dimension acknowledges that oppression is manifested at both the attitudinal and behavioral levels of individual and system interaction. The *attitudinal level* describes the individual and systemic values, beliefs, philosophies, and stereotypes that feed the other dimensions, for example, the stereotype that Jews control the economic system, that gays and lesbians are child molesters, or stereotypes that Asians are sneaky and inscrutable. The *behavior variable* describes the actions of individuals and systems that support and maintain social oppression, such as an individual who threatens a person of color seeking to move into a new apartment or neighborhood, or the institutional practice in banks of "redlining" neighborhoods where people of color live.

The terms we use to describe members of oppressed and oppressor groups are *target* and *agent* of oppression. *Targets* are members of social identity groups that are disenfranchised, exploited, and victimized in a variety of ways by the oppressor and the oppressor's system or institutions. Target groups are those which, in Goldenberg's terms, are subject to containment, having their choices and movement restricted and limited; are seen and treated as expendable and replaceable, without an individual identity apart from the group; and are compartmentalized into narrowly defined roles (1978). Young (1990) says targets are people subjected to exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Targeted or stigmatized people are kept in their place by the agents' ideology which supports oppression by denying its existence, and blames the condition of the oppressed on themselves and their own failings. Memmi (1965) argued that oppression, if it lasts long enough, becomes so familiar to oppressed people that they accept it and cannot imagine recovery from it.

Agents are members of dominant social groups privileged by birth or acquisition, who knowingly or unknowingly exploit and reap unfair advantage over members of target groups. Members of agent groups are also trapped by the system of social oppression that benefits them, and are confined to roles and prescribed behavior for their group. Freire (1970) observes that a paradox of social oppression is that oppressors/agents are also dehumanized because they have engaged in a process of stealing the humanity of others.

Freire notes that oppression is perpetuated from generation to generation as new generations become its heirs and are shaped in its climate. Agents, due to their power to define reality, see themselves and are seen by others as normal or proper, whereas targets are likely to be labeled as deviant, evil, abnormal, substandard, or defective. Unlike targets, agents are frequently unaware that they are members of the dominant group due to the privilege of being able to see themselves as persons rather than as stereotypes. In this way, agents are also subject to psychological colonization because, once the oppressive structures are in place, oppression becomes normalized and succeeding generations of agents learn to accept their inheritance of dominance and privilege as the natural order—the way things are, and always will be.

Agents and targets vary among different nations and cultures, but in the United States, we consider the following groups as agents and targets because of the pervasive and systemic hierarchies that hold in place their unequal status relative to each other:

	AGENTS	TARGETS
Race and Ethnic	Whites	People of Color
Gender	Men	Women
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexuals	Gay men, Lesbians, and Bisexuals
Religion	Christians	Jews, Muslims, and Other Religious Minorities
Physical/ Psychological/ Developmental		
Disability	Able persons	Disabled Persons
Class	Owning and Middle Class	Poor and Working Class
Age	Middle/Adult	Young and Elderly

Multiple Identities: Many people are likely to have both agent and target identities. There are gendered, raced, classed people of different religions and sexual ori-

entations, young and old, able-bodied and -minded or disabled. This adds another level of complexity to our attempt to understand the dynamics of oppression, particularly as it is influenced by the behaviors and attitudes in each role. Although we acknowledge the implications of multiple social group identities and the reality that most people play both the target and agent role, here for purposes of clarity, we focus on specific agent or target identities as a still point in a dynamic picture.

Collusion (Internalized Subordination or Domination): Internalized Subordination

Collusion (Internalized Subordination or Domination): *Internalized subordination* refers to ways in which targets collude with their own oppression. People who have been socialized in an oppressive environment, and who accept the dominant group's ideology about their group, have learned to accept a definition of themselves that is hurtful and limiting. They think, feel, and act in ways that demonstrate the devaluation of their group and of themselves as members of that group. For example, internalized subordination is operating when target group members question the credentials or abilities of members of their own social group without cause, yet unquestioningly accept that members of the agent group are qualified, talented, and deserving of their credentials. Internalized subordination also operates when target group members curry favor with dominant group members and distance themselves from their own group, often unconsciously.

Through internalized subordination, members of target groups learn to collude with their own oppression or victimization. Conscious collaboration occurs when target group members knowingly, but not necessarily voluntarily, go along with their own mistreatment to survive or to maintain some status, livelihood, or other benefit, as when a person of color silently endures racist jokes told by a boss. Such collusion is often seen by the target group member as necessary to "live to fight another day." The more insidious form of collusion is unconscious, not knowing that one is collaborating with one's own dehumanization, as when a woman blames herself for the actions of her rapist or batterer. Likewise, a woman who silently accepts sexual harassment as a condition of work life is colluding with her own oppression, even if not consciously or intentionally doing so.

Internalized domination refers to the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of agents, who through their socialization as members of the dominant group, learn to think and act in ways that express internalized notions of entitlement and privilege. Examples of internalized domination include men talking over and interrupting women in conversation, while simultaneously labelling women as chatty. There is an absence of feeling that one has to prove oneself, or that one's status, talent, and qualifications would be questioned in any situation on the basis of social identity. Agents learn to expect to be treated well and accommodated, as when English-speaking United States citizens travel outside the United States and expect people in other countries to speak English or accommodate their culture to suit Americans. Extreme examples include the "erasure" of target group members by failing to acknowledge their existence or importance. Historical presentations that Columbus discovered America erase the existence of native peoples who preceded him by several thousand years.

Target and Agent Interaction: Vertical and Horizontal Relationships

Because our work involves anti-oppression education in the classroom, we have focused upon how oppression impacts individual consciousness and identity development. To help students understand how oppression is manifested at the

individual level by agents who dominate in interaction with targets who collude, we developed the model of vertical and horizontal relationships presented below. This model draws from Fanon (1968) and Freire (1970) regarding horizontal aggression and violence.

The relationship between agent and target can be viewed as a one-up and one-down pattern, with agents operating out of internalized privilege, in a manner oppressive to targets, who simultaneously collude to some degree out of their own internalized subordination. This representation necessitates isolating for the sake of analysis only one social identity membership at a time. For example, to represent a male-female relationship as one of a dominant male and subordinate female requires ignoring that the male may be gay, or a person of color, or disabled, and the woman may be heterosexual, white, or able-bodied. While we acknowledge that this single identity focus is limiting, and represents neither the complexity of any one person's multiple identities nor the reality of a person's different agent and target identities, we present this scenario to illustrate the hierarchical relationship between agent and target.

Vertical Interaction: Vertical interaction exemplifies conscious and unconscious dehumanization and denial of rights of the target by the agent, as well as the target's collusion with social oppression. We describe this one-up, one-down interaction as a vertical relationship, because the parties occupy different hierarchical positions, with the agent, literally above or over the target. One simple illustration is a male supervisor harassing a female employee (agent behavior: dominance), while the female employee remains silent and does not challenge the behavior (target behavior: collusion)

Horizontal Relationships: The term horizontal is used to reflect relationships and interactions between members of the same social group, who, at least on one dimension of social identity, are "equal" in status. This term comes from the terms horizontal violence, or horizontal hostility, used by Pharr (1988) to represent the phenomenon of oppressed people directing rage at being oppressed inward and back on each other, rather than directing it outward toward the more dangerous and powerful victimizer. Horizontal relationships may take two forms:

- **Target-Target:** The conscious and/or unconscious attitudes and behaviors exhibited in interactions between members of the same target group, that support and stem from internalized subordination (for example, women who ostracize or label other women for not conforming to sex-role defined behavior).
- **Agent-Agent:** The conscious and/or unconscious punishments that agents bestow on other agents who violate the ideology of the oppressive system (for example, teasing and hazing by men toward men who share equal responsibility for child care and household maintenance). Agent/agent relationships also include conscious or unconscious rewards given to those who actively support or passively accept the oppressive system. For example, a reward may be as invisible as retaining membership in an informal social group at work in which valuable information about career opportunities is shared.

Thus far, we have defined social oppression and shown how as a pervasive system it works at the individual, institutional, and cultural/societal levels, and how assigned social roles interact to keep the system in place. The final section of this chapter addresses how oppression affects the identity development of targets and agents as they are socialized into dominant or subordinate social groups. The model presented below and illustrated in Figure 2.2 provides a developmental pro-

file of targets and agents as participants in oppression and liberation who are capable of change.

The generic social identity development theory is an adaptation of black identity development theory (Jackson, 1976) and white identity development theory (Hardiman, 1982). Social identity development theory has also been influenced by other theorists and applications to other social groups (Cross, 1971, 1978, 1991; Helms, 1990; Kim, 1981; Schapiro, 1985). Social identity development theory describes attributes that are common to the identity development process for members of all target and agent groups.

We present the stages, for purposes of conceptual clarity, as if a person were to move neatly from one stage to the next. In reality most people experience several stages simultaneously, holding complex perspectives on a range of issues and living a mixture of social identities. This developmental model can be helpful in understanding student perspectives and selecting instructional strategies, but we caution against using it simplistically to label people.

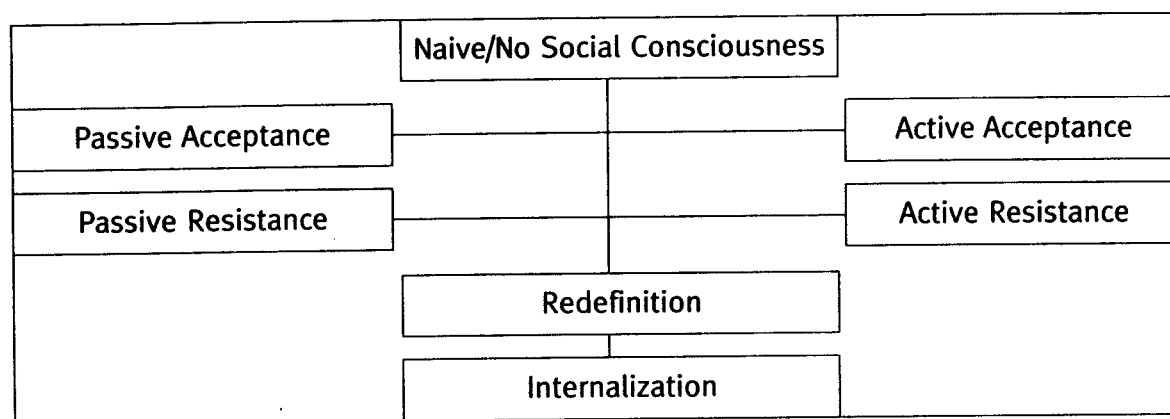


Figure 2.2. Stages of Social Identity Development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992).

Stage I—Naive/No Social Consciousness

At birth and during early childhood, agents and targets are unaware of the complex codes of appropriate behavior for members of their social group. They naively operate from their own needs, interests, and curiosity about social group differences and break rules and push against the boundaries of social identity group membership. Through these boundary violations they begin to learn lessons about what it means to be a member of their social identity group—agent or a target.

In the transition from Naive to Acceptance consciousness, agents and targets become aware of the differences between themselves and members of other social groups. While they may not feel completely comfortable with people who are different, they generally don't feel fearful, hostile, superior, or inferior. Children at this stage display an interest in understanding the differences between people and often ask questions that embarrass or threaten adults, such as "Why do people have different skin color?" or "Can two women get married?" This stage is brief and covers the period between birth and three to four years of age.

The events that transform children from a naive or unsocialized state to a stage of Acceptance of their social dominance or subordination are numerous. The most

significant socializers appear to be parents, who are role models of attitudes and behaviors, and who convey important messages through their words and silences, actions and inactions; the formal education system, including teachers, and the formal and informal curriculum; peers, who set the standards for appropriate and inappropriate behavior; religious organizations; the mass media; and the larger community with its norms, laws, social structures, and cultures that set the limits, formal and informal, for the behavior of citizens. (See cycle of socialization in chapter 5.)

Two related changes take place as the young agent or target moves into the Acceptance stage. One, they begin to learn and adopt an ideology or belief system about their own and other social identity groups. Another is they begin to learn that the world has rules, laws, institutions, and authority figures that permit certain behaviors and prohibit others, even if these rules do not make sense, and violate other principles such as freedom, equality, and axioms such as "do unto others." Both types of learning are immensely powerful, pervasive, and consistent, so much so that the acceptance of this socialization to some degree seems inevitable. This socialization process results in the second stage of identity development, Acceptance.

Stage II—Acceptance

The stage of Acceptance represents some degree of internalization, whether conscious or unconscious, of the dominant culture's logic system. People at this stage have "accepted" the messages about the nature of their group identity, the superiority of agents (Whites, heterosexuals, men, Christians), and the inferiority of targets (people of color, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, women, Jews). The Acceptance stage has two manifestations, passive and active, which refer to the relative consciousness and intentionality with which a person holds to the dominant belief system.

Agent in Acceptance: As agents in the Passive Acceptance stage have learned and to some degree internalized codes of appropriate behavior, conscious effort is no longer required to remind them of what to do and how to think. Dominant beliefs and actions are part of their everyday life, as when a white store clerk carefully watches black customers to see if they are shoplifting, or a Christian manager sets a date for an important meeting on a Jewish holiday. Questions that arose during the naive stage have been submerged and repressed such that individuals are able to live their lives without doubt. When questions occasionally arise, there is a built-in system of rationalization to fall back on and provide answers.

For those raised in the Active Acceptance stage, instruction about the inadequacies, weaknesses, deviance, and basic inferiority of targeted people occurs in a very direct manner. They are told in many ways "that's how those people are"—Mexicans are lazy, Jews control the banks, women are dumb, gays are sinners, and the disabled are objects of pity. People raised in a Passive Acceptance environment learn to blame the victim for the effects of oppression (Ryan, 1971). The key difference between Active and Passive messages is whether they are overt or covert.

Agents of oppression who have adopted an Acceptance consciousness are generally unaware that they have privileges as dominant group members of an oppressive society. They are usually unaware that they think of themselves and other agents as superior. More subtle is the assumption that the agent's experience is normative or "the way things are done." Therefore men should of course be heterosexual and masculine and those who deviate are sick or abnormal. Passive acceptance

of the agent's perspective as normative is more subtle than outright belief in superiority, but in practice it has many of the same negative effects as active acceptance.

Agents of oppression who move from the Naive stage into the entry and adoption phase of Active Acceptance tend to express their superiority more directly. In the extreme form, agents at Active Acceptance may join organizations (KKK, Christian Identity) that are designed to promote supremacy. Many agents who are in the Active Acceptance stage devote their lives to maintaining their dominant perspective and privilege.

Most agents are well into their adult years before encountering events or circumstances which begin the transition to the Resistance stage. This transition marks a confusing and often painful period. Information or experiences that contradict the Acceptance world view have been initially ignored or passed off as isolated or exceptional. Gradually as the individual begins to encounter more conflicting information these isolated incidents form a discernible pattern. The contradictions that initiate the transition period can occur in the form of a personal connection or friendship with a target, or through significant social events or information presented in books, media, and formal education.

Agents begin to experience difficult emotions during this exit phase and entry into Resistance consciousness. Their accepted identity as White, male, Christian, or heterosexual comes under scrutiny and they are often afraid and uncertain what the implications of this self-examination will be. The questioning that begins during this exit phase of Acceptance builds into the stage of Resistance.

Targets in Acceptance: Targets in the Acceptance stage have learned and accepted messages about the inferiority of targets and target culture. Often these negative/oppressive messages are held simultaneously and in contradiction to more positive messages about their social group conveyed by same group adults or social peers. Typically, the person lives with and rationalizes varying degrees of cognitive dissonance on a daily basis.

Some targets operate at a Passive Acceptance consciousness, unaware of the degree to which their thoughts, feelings and behaviors reflect the dominant group ideology. Some women prefer to work for men or to purchase services from male doctors, dentists, and lawyers because of an ingrained belief that women are not smart or capable enough to handle these jobs.

Targets in the Active Acceptance stage more consciously identify with the dominant group and its ideology. For example, some people of color are opposed to civil rights laws and affirmative action because they believe that people of color are less successful due to their own laziness and pathological culture.

Socialization of targets into the dominant world view is essentially an invisible process that is difficult to unlearn. Targets who retain this world view for life successfully rationalize efforts on the part of others to change their consciousness. Even targets who experience an urge to question their current status may find themselves seduced into remaining in place by the rewards offered by agents.

Targets who reach the exit phase of an Acceptance world view begin to acknowledge the collusive and harmful effects of the learned logic system and behavior patterns. Sometimes external events are so blatant that the person is hard pressed not to recognize the existence of oppression. Other times an individual may encounter someone of their own group who is a powerful role model, as when a lesbian in Acceptance encounters an "out" lesbian who spurs her to reject internalized homophobia, and a closeted existence.

The Resistance stage is one of increased awareness of the existence of oppression and its impact on agents and targets.

Agents in Resistance: As a result of experiences and information that challenge the accepted ideology and self-definition, agents entering Resistance reject earlier social positions and begin formulating a new world view. This is a dramatic paradigm shift from an ideology that blames the victims for their condition to an ideology that names one's own agent group as the source of oppression as agents become aware that oppression exists and causes the disparity between agent and target groups. Furthermore, agents begin investigating their own role in perpetuating oppression. For example, a white person may become aware for the first time of white privilege in employment, recreation, travel, or schooling.

Anger is a prevalent feeling at this stage—anger toward other agents and the nature of the agent's social group identity. Some agents wish they weren't members of their dominant group and distance themselves from other agents who don't share their new consciousness. Some zealously confront other agents for their group's oppressive actions and attitudes. Others are ostracized because their behaviors and attitudes threaten other agents who are in the Acceptance stage.

Agents in Resistance begin to develop a systemic view of how their identity has been shaped by social factors beyond their control as they re-examine the roles agents play in supporting oppression. This occurs particularly for liberal agents who have been involved in helping targets assimilate into the agent's culture and society. When the problem is redefined as an agent problem, the strategies for addressing it change. This new understanding helps some move beyond guilt and feeling overwhelmed by personal responsibility. Having negotiated the conflict between their own values and societal definitions of appropriate behavior for their group, they begin to move towards a new identity. At Resistance agents develop an awareness of their social identity, but one which is not necessarily positive. The task of Redefinition then is to engage in a process of renaming and developing a social identity that is positive and affirming.

Targets in Resistance: Acknowledgment and questioning of the cumulative experiences of oppression and their negative effects lead targets to the Resistance stage. Targets generally begin by questioning previously accepted "truths" about the way things are, for example, that men are superior, or that any person of color who works hard enough can realize their dreams. Gradually target group members become more skilled at identifying the oppressive premises woven into the fabric of all aspects of their social experience. They may also begin to feel intensified hostility toward agents, and other targets who collude with agents.

The overt expression of hostile reactions to oppression marks the transition from the entry to the adoption phase of Resistance. At this point the target group member has fully internalized the antithesis of the earlier Acceptance consciousness, and may experience increased and sometimes overwhelming anger, pain, hurt, and rage. The combination of these powerful emotions and the intellectual understanding of how oppression works may feel all-consuming. At this stage members of the target group often adopt a posture as anti-agent, for example anti-White, anti-male, anti-straight. Identity is defined in opposition to the oppressor.

Some targets may find that the Resistance stage results in losing benefits acquired when they colluded with the Acceptance consciousness and may choose a path of Passive Resistance, in hopes that they will be able to stay in favor with

agents, while rejecting oppression. This strategy typically proves too frustrating and contradictory to sustain.

For most targeted people at Resistance the primary task is to end the pattern of collusion and cleanse their internalized oppressive beliefs and attitudes. During the course of the Resistance stage, targets often discover that they have become proactive and do have some power, even if not of the same type and quantity available to members of agent groups. Also, the targets begin to recognize that a considerable amount of energy has been put into "Who I am not." As they move toward the new question "Who am I?" they exit Resistance and enter Redefinition.

Stage IV - Redefinition

The focus of the Redefinition stage is on creating an identity that is independent of an oppressive system based on hierarchical superiority and inferiority.

Agents in Redefinition: At this stage agents begin to redefine the social group identity in a way that is independent of social oppression and stereotyping of targeted group(s). In prior stages agents have not been concerned with their own social identity but focused on targeted people and *their* problems (Acceptance). Or they have *reacted* to the social issue of oppression (Resistance). The experiences in Resistance leave agents feeling negatively about their social group membership, confused about their role in dealing with oppression, and isolated from many other members of their social group. Developing a positive definition of their social identity and identifying aspects of their culture and group that are affirming are necessary parts of this stage. Men who form groups to examine their socialization and critically assess the definition of masculinity that they have internalized illustrate agents at this stage.

In contrast to the negative feelings about their social group identity in Resistance, people in Redefinition develop pride in their group and a sense of personal esteem. There is a recognition that all groups have unique and different values that enrich human life, but that no culture or social group is better than another. The transition from Redefinition to Internalization emanates from the need to integrate and internalize this new social identity within one's total identity. Having established a sense of pride in themselves and their group, they are now ready to act more spontaneously on their values in everyday life.

Targets in Redefinition: In the Redefinition stage targeted people are primarily concerned with defining themselves in terms that are independent of the perceived strengths and/or weaknesses of the agent and the agent's culture. The Redefinition stage is particularly significant for targets because it is at this juncture that they shift their attention and energy away from a concern for their interactions with agents toward a concern for primary contact with members of their own social group who are at the same stage of consciousness. This type of behavior tends to be viewed negatively in an oppressive society and is often seen as counterproductive by liberal agents who view themselves as kind and benevolent. Members of targeted groups who are in Redefinition are generally labeled troublemakers or separatists. Agents who have worked to get subordinates into dominant social institutions will be particularly confused and/or put off by this apparent "self-segregating" and ungrateful behavior by targeted people. Targets in Redefinition, however, do not see interaction with agents as useful in their quest for a positive or nurturing identity.

Renaming is one primary concern in this stage as targets search for paradigms that facilitate this task. This search often begins with the formation of a new reference group consisting of other targeted people with a Redefinition consciousness.

Targeted people who are still embedded in the Acceptance or Resistance stages of consciousness are not likely to share the same concerns and personal needs as those experiencing Redefinition, and they are generally not supportive of the issues that Redefining people are attempting to address. Many targets form support groups and networks of like-minded people to focus on issues of self-definition.

The search for a social identity often involves reclaiming one's group heritage. Through revisiting or exploring one's heritage/culture, targets in Redefinition often find values, traditions, customs, philosophical assumptions, and concepts of time-work-family that are appealing and nurturing. They rediscover many aspects of their heritage that have been handed down through the generations and still affect their way of life today. They become clearer about the uniqueness of their group and come to realize they are considerably more than merely the victims of oppression. As they experience their group identity in a way that engenders pride, they may adopt a new name such as disabled rather than handicapped, or Black or African American rather than Negro. When people in Redefinition begin to contemplate the implications that this new sense of self has for all aspects of life, they exit Redefinition and enter Internalization.

Stage V--Internalization

In the Internalization stage, the main task is to incorporate the identity developed in the Redefinition stage into all aspects of everyday life. Even though targets have internalized consciousness, they are still likely to revisit or encounter situations that trigger earlier world views. For example, a Jew may feel that other Jews are acting "too Jewish" in a corporate setting and suddenly realize how they have bought into antisemitic stereotypes. The process of refining identity can be ongoing as new sources of history or past feelings and thoughts characteristic of earlier stages reemerge. As long as a person lives in an oppressive society, the process of uncovering previously unrecognized areas of Acceptance and Resistance will be ongoing even though their predominant consciousness may be in Redefinition or Internalization.

Agents in Internalization: Agents at this stage, aware of their past and concerned about creating a more equal future, try to apply and integrate their new social identity into other facets of their overall identity, since change in one dimension will undoubtedly affect all others. Implicit in the term Internalization is the assumption that the new aspects become a natural part of behavior so that people act unconsciously, without external controls, and without having to consciously think about what they are doing. The new behavior becomes spontaneous.

Targets in Internalization: At this stage targeted people are engaged in the process of integrating and internalizing their newly developed consciousness and group pride. They realize that the process of redefining identity is a valuable learning and consciousness expanding experience. It is now time to test this new sense of self in a wider context than the supportive reference group focused on in the Redefinition stage and to determine what effects this new social identity will have on the many social roles that people play. Targets at the Internalization stage begin by interacting and often renegotiating with the significant people in their lives for the purpose of establishing the type of social interactions that will serve their new social identity. Even in situations where their perspective is not valued and renegotiation does not succeed they find that their new self-esteem and self-concept can provide the necessary sustenance to prevail.

Another significant aspect of Internalization consciousness is the appreciation of the plight of all targets of any form of oppression. Having moved through the liber-

ation process for their own experience of oppression, it becomes easier for the person with an Internalization consciousness to have empathy for members of other targeted groups in relation to whom they are agents (for example, a heterosexual Latino who can now acknowledge and explore Christian or heterosexual privilege). It is less likely that a target in Resistance or Redefinition consciousness will be able to acknowledge coexistent agent identities. Furthermore, those who find themselves victims of more than one form of oppression (for example, black women or disabled Jews) find that their developmental process in one area of their social identity may be useful in dealing with other of their targeted identities as well. There is essentially no exit phase for this stage; the ongoing task is one of lifelong exploration and nurturance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented a definition of social oppression, a matrix of the interlocking levels and types, a description of the roles and relationships among agents and targets, and a developmental model of the social identity process. These foundational concepts undergird the curriculum designs in chapters 5–12. The next chapter turns from key concepts that underlie course content to the principles that support our pedagogical approach and teaching process.



Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice

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