

Oppression and Education

Oppression: the systematic mistreatment of a group of people by the society and/or by another group of people who serve as agents of a society, with the mistreatment encouraged or enforced by society and its culture

Prejudiced Behavior: individual harmful acts based on pre-judgment

Stereotyping: generalizing in an oversimplified way about an identifiable group (can result in the phenomena of stereotype threat)

Two phenomena result from oppression that would not exist in a non-oppressive society. They are internalized oppression and transferred oppression.

Internalized Oppression: the acting out of oppression on one's self. People believe the messages they receive and because of the oppression, act harmfully toward themselves

Transferred Oppression: prejudicial actions toward someone in one's own group (or in the case of racism) a person of color in another ethnic group

Some thing to remember:

- Everyone has been oppressed— some in more than one way. All young people are oppressed in order to accept, collude with, or perpetuate the oppression of others.
- People outside of the oppression often have difficulty understanding how oppression operates and can never completely understand the effect of it on members from the oppressed group.
- The hurts caused by these phenomena can be healed (through emotional release) and harmful practices eliminated.

Some of the ways oppression affects teaching and learning:

- Educators bring their unaware biases to their work and relationships with each other and students. They relate to people differently as a result of these biases.
- Individual biases, values, and actions get institutionalized in policies and practices.
- The education system does not provide the support or time necessary for (and sometimes actively impedes the) building alliances between individuals from different groups, e.g. people of color/whites, heterosexuals/homosexuals, men/women, etc.
- Experiencing oppression or transferred oppression diverts attention away from learning and interferes with teaching and leadership.