

“Privilege can be defined as benefits, advantages, and power that accrue to members of a dominant group as a result of the oppression of the marginalized group; individuals and groups may be privileged without realizing, recognizing, or even wanting it” (74).

“One of the best known essays on the topic of white privilege is Peggy McIntosh’s “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” where she writes: ‘I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group’ and ‘I have come to see white privilege as a package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.’” (75)

“Within each system of privilege and oppression, we can see that there is a dominant group and a marginalized group, one group who is considered the norm, with their counterpart being the “other.” Audre Lourde calls it a mythical norm, ‘usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure,’ and goes on to argue that ‘it is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society’(116). Those who are outside the mythical norm in one or more ways are seen as lesser as a result of being judged in relation to it . . .

Audre Lourde argues that ‘we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate” (73).

“The term ‘institutions’ and ‘institutional or structural’ forms of oppression are used frequently to highlight the way that systems function to grant resources and privileges to some groups and structures and withhold them from others. Institutions can be formal, organized structures like law and policy-making groups (the House of Representatives and Senate, the Food and Drug Administration, or the medical profession and its related professional organizations), or they can be less formal but still an agreed-upon way of organizing and reproducing social norms (e.g., mass media and popular culture). In other ways, institutions can have a combination of formal and informal structural elements” (78).

“The critical elements differentiating oppression from simple prejudice and discrimination are that it is a group phenomenon and that institutional power and authority are used to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory ways. Everyone is socialized to participate in oppressive practices, either as direct and indirect perpetrators or passive beneficiaries, or—as with some oppressed peoples—by directing discriminatory behaviors at members of one’s own group” (80).

“ideology . . . along with institutions . . . is the primary means or method by which systems of oppression and privilege manifest and are played out. Quite simply, ideologies are sets of ideas or beliefs. Just as there are dominant and marginalized groups in society, so there are dominant ideologies. Ideologies always represent the attitudes, interests, and values of a particular group. Lynn Weber defines dominant ideologies as ‘pervasive societal beliefs that reflect the dominant culture’s vision about what is right and proper’ (80).

“What we invite you to do is to develop a heightened awareness of the ways that ideologies operate in culture at large as well as in your own life and thinking. This involves developing metacognition—or thinking about one’s own thinking or thinking processes. Understanding ideologies means being able to (1) identify patterns of thinking, (2) monitor one’s own thinking for those patterns of belief, and (3) critically reflect on how one’s ideas and attitudes are shaped by those beliefs” (80).

“Institutional and ideological manifestations of privilege and oppression are internalized by members of both dominant and marginalized groups. In other words, it is often the case that members of marginalized groups come to internalize the dominant group’s characterizations of them as lesser and inferior. This phenomenon is called internalized oppression, and can be seen as a marker of the “success” of the dominant group’s use of ideology . . . A related concept is that of horizontal hostility, whereby members of marginalized groups police each other’s behavior and/ or appearance. Horizontal hostility happens when a member of a marginalized group identifies with the values of the dominant group” (87).