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## The Effectiveness Of "The Tunnel Of Oppression": An Exposure Approach to Increasing Awareness of Oppression Among Freshman Students at Wright State University

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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF “THE TUNNEL OF OPPRESSION”: AN  
EXPOSURE APPROACH TO INCREASING AWARENESS OF OPPRESSION  
AMONG FRESHMAN STUDENTS AT WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**PROFESSIONAL DISSERTATION**

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY**

**OF**

**THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

**JENNIFER STOYELL, PSY.M.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF  
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**Dayton, Ohio**

**August, 2016**

**COMMITTEE CHAIR: Julie L. Williams Psy.D., ABPP**

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**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

June 9, 2015

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY **JENNIFER STOYELL** ENTITLED **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF “THE TUNNEL OF OPPRESSION”: AN EXPOSURE APPROACH TO INCREASING AWARENESS OF OPPRESSION AMONG FRESHMAN STUDENTS AT WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY** BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY.

---

Julie L. Williams Psy.D., ABPP  
Dissertation Director

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Associate Dean

## Abstract

While diversity-training programs have gained popularity in the US, limited research has been done to establish the effectiveness of these programs in increasing awareness of oppression. The present study explored the effectiveness of the *Tunnel of Oppression* in increasing awareness of oppression among freshman students at Wright State University. Participants (N= 1736) were given a survey before and after participating in the Tunnel where they rated their awareness of levels of oppression for nine different oppressed groups. Data for this survey was analyzed employing descriptive and non-parametric statistics to determine significance in change of scores (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Wilcoxon Rank-Sum) and a correlation among variables (Spearman's Rho). Results found that students who participated in the *Tunnel of Oppression* reported a significant difference in awareness after participating in the event. Oppressed groups (female and racial minorities) reported higher levels of awareness of oppression prior to participating in the Tunnel. In addition, a gender difference was found in the change in awareness scores where female participants reported a higher rate of change as compared to male participants. In contrast, racial identity did not show an impact in the change in awareness scores. Furthermore, a small correlation between change in awareness and willingness to speak about/take action against oppression was found. Beyond the scope of this dissertation, further research should focus on components of the *Tunnel of Oppression* that are effective at raising awareness of diversity-related issues. Also, it is recommended that a standardization of the event be developed for future implementation and measurements.

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## **Acknowledgement**

Buried under a mountain of deadlines and research articles, the one true constant that made everything worthwhile was my incredible support system. Thank you for the endless encouragement and guidance that fueled my desire to push through in the good times and the bad. I would like to especially thank my committee chair, Dr. Julie Williams for her patience, flexibility and frequent reassurance in this long process. To my mentor and advisor, Dr. James Dobbins, thank you for being my sounding board throughout the entire program and guiding me to be the best version of me I can be. To my parents Richard and Maria del Rosario Stoyell, thank you for taking the time to help with edits and cheering me on along the way; the passion you put in your work and your zest for life has made me the person I am today.

To my best friends Kayla Davidson and Raghav Suri: WE MADE IT! Thank you for your love and support through the endless number of sleepless nights and caffeine-fueled days. The Nerd Herd will live on through our work and future collaboration. To my greatest inspiration and future colleague, Michelle Stoyell, I am indebted to you for life for guiding me through the roughest times, reminding me that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Last but never least, to the love of my life Dan, you inspire me to be a better person and fill my life with the utmost happiness. Thank you for your unlimited patience, you have virtually held my hand throughout some of the hardest times and have not even realized how incredibly grateful I am to have you in my life.

*“Education is the path to permanent liberation: first, individuals must become aware of their own oppression and then through praxis (learning by doing, a continuous action-reflection-action process) change the state of oppression.”*

- Paulo Freire

## **Chapter I**

The development of methods to promote diversity awareness as evidenced by behavioral change and attitudinal shifts has become an emerging area of focus among diversity training experts (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies, 2013). Strategies such as education, exposure, simulations and immersions, to name just a few, have conceptual merit. Additionally, the identification of the most appropriate timing and settings for diversity training to assure maximal benefits have been discussed among diversity experts i.e.- educational settings and work settings. For example, it has been suggested that diversity awareness exercises should be provided at young ages and in settings where diverse groups of people come together. However, measurements of effectiveness have not been consistently identified nor implemented following diversity awareness activities.

The Tunnel of Oppression is a diversity event provided to all incoming freshman students at Wright State University to promote awareness and provide participants an opportunity to make a committed behavioral change. Measurement of change in attitude and behavior was assessed via a pre and post survey given to participants to identify what changes they intend to make as a consequence of this experience.

Research suggests that the earlier individuals are taught about diversity and oppression, the greater number of long-lasting impacts (Hansen, 1998). Specifically, when looking at a college population, freshman students are thought to be entering a critical stage of identity development that serves as an ideal window of opportunity for them to explore their biases and prejudices against others and perhaps make critical attitudinal and behavioral shifts. In response to this rationale, universities within the United States have begun to mandate varying levels of diversity coursework for its incoming students. However, the impact of these mandates and varying approaches has yet to be measured.

Historically, within the US, efforts to address discrimination have come in the form of civil rights legislation. However, despite the passage of civil rights laws, oppression is still prevalent in the US and many times invisible to those who are not targets of it (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008). Consequently, diversity-training experts have emphasized that shifts in attitudinal beliefs and behaviors are critical to promoting long lasting societal impacts (Sue, 1991). Over time, while civil rights legislation continues to be viewed as important in the promotion of social change and equity, the need to develop teaching strategies that cultivate internalized attitudinal shifts and behavioral change has taken hold. Examples of these strategies are diversity training programs offered in work and educational settings aimed at creating a culturally inclusive climate. These attempts have also included strategies such as disseminating diversity relative information, crafting diversity mission statements and instituting rules/consequences that ensure equal opportunity and inclusive working environments (Madsen & Mabokela, 2005).

Currently, oppression is conceptualized as socially constructed faulty beliefs and stereotypes about specific groups of people. And yet, while prejudicial ideas often lead to expressions of inappropriate and even hurtful behavior, these acts can be initiated by well-meaning individuals who are simply unaware of their impact. Unintended impacts can occur as these individuals simply may not be aware of the harmful effect of their inappropriate prejudicial-driven behavior and therefore have no reason to make any change (Haney Lopez, 1996). With unintended impacts in mind, a purely punitive response is likely to be ineffective to correct these oppressive acts and could make acts of oppression more likely to occur when individuals do not understand the consequence or punishment and feel unfairly attacked. Moreover, it is assumed that if individuals are educated and informed about the impact of their behavior, this will in turn reduce the likelihood of future oppressive acts that would have occurred due to ignorance. The approach used by the *Tunnel of Oppression* is through the exposure to provocative images depicting oppression along with the dissemination of information whose purpose is to increase awareness of oppression, in the hope of shifting attitudes and reducing future oppressive acts. The aim of this study is to determine whether the *Tunnel of Oppression* is in fact successful at raising awareness of oppression and promoting committed action to oppression reduction activities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite a commitment to diversity and increasing support for mandatory diversity training in colleges, evidence of oppression, institutional racism, violence against women and LGBT students on college campuses continues to occur (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). Furthermore, attrition rates for those considered targets of oppressive acts on college

campuses remain high. There is much support for the need to develop effective diversity training strategies. This being said, little research has been done to determine the effectiveness of diversity training in general. A specific focus to this research project is the *Tunnel of Oppression*, which was launched in 1994 by Western Illinois State University and has since been replicated and offered in multiple states and universities. The *Tunnel of Oppression* has been both applauded and criticized for its use of provocative images as well a hands-on, experiential approach to diversity training. Given the growing evidence of continued oppression in colleges, it is now imperative that diversity training be evaluated for its effectiveness as it lacks support via formal research of its effectiveness or impact on the students that have participated in said experience (Kothary et al., 2006).

### **Aim and Purpose**

The goal for this research was to determine the effectiveness of the *Tunnel of Oppression* as measured by an increased awareness and committed motivation to change behavior. Furthermore, the data was also analyzed to identify changes needed to the training, surveys and/or other aspects of the training that might enhance its effectiveness.

In recent years, many studies have reviewed the strengths and limitations of different approaches to diversity training (French, 1992), which has served as guidelines for the implementation of adequate training experiences. In addition, said research has explored the effectiveness of utilizing windows of opportunity to train students (e.g. freshmen college students) in subjects of oppression and prejudice (McLauchlin, 2006).

Another desired outcome for this study on the *Tunnel of Oppression* was to determine whether there was a difference in the impact of the experience on specific

demographic groups, particularly those who have experienced greater oppression throughout their lives, which could translate to a higher overall awareness of oppression.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

In order to understand oppression and how it impacts society as a whole, one must first define key terms used in the literature and comprehend how oppression is created and maintained. The following chapter will explore how societal members create and maintain attitudes and beliefs about self and others as a consequence of the following: 1) individual group membership, 2) the creation of group stereotypes, and 3) the manifestations of stereotypes in oppressive acts. The chapter will then briefly define the most common ‘isms’ found in the literature. The chapter will further explore dominant groups and how their group membership translates into oppressive acts that serve to maintain power and privilege. Finally, an exploration of the literature on oppression-reducing activities will be detailed.

### **Identity development/group membership**

An individual’s self-understanding is the cognitive representation they hold of themselves in relation to the roles and groups they ascribe to (Santrock, 2012). Some of the groups an individual may belong to can be chosen while others are imposed on them (Cudd, 2006). For example, an individual can choose to be part of a religious group, simply by affiliation, but they cannot choose what sex they are born with. In developing a sense of self, an individual internally negotiates who they are in relation to others. This identity process is flexible and adaptive, beginning with the first appearance of attachment and can change throughout one’s life in response to changing social and environmental presses (Santrock, 2012).

Tajfel and Turner proposed that individuals first categorize people into groups assigning specific characteristics to each group. Then, the individual identifies and associates themselves with one of the groups comparing themselves to others (Myers, 2005). Identity shapes how an individual perceives, feels and thinks; given that the group they belong to establishes a shared set of values, beliefs and goals about an individual's role in a social world (Cudd, 2006). This categorization of the individual as a member of a particular group contributes to a separation between the 'self' and the 'other' and hence provides a distinction between those who belong to the same group (in-group) and those who do not (out-group) (Franzoi, 2006).

Social identity theory suggests that individuals are essentially driven to develop a positive self-concept and therefore believe that they have a positive distinctiveness when compared to the out-group (Cudd, 2006). Therefore, individuals are more likely to emphasize the positive attributes of the in-group and negative aspects of the out-group.

### **Stereotypes**

Stemming from the need to develop an identity in relation to others, individuals automatically develop social categories based on a person's shared characteristics. This categorization results in a labeling of the in-group as "normal" and the out-group as "other" (Franzoi, 2006). Thus, stereotypes emerge from in-group/out-group dynamics. (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008).

Social psychologists have postulated that stereotypes are "shortcuts to thinking" that provide the individual with information about others prior to knowing them. These shortcuts are a product of the evolution of the human brain that allows quick generalizations of the environment with the purpose of survival (Marsiglia & Kulis,



2008). These shortcuts allow individuals to invest less cognitive resources in identifying each stimulus they encounter freeing them up to instead focus on other tasks (Franzoi, 2006).

There has not been an established consensus for the definition of a stereotype. However, for the purpose of this research, stereotypes are defined as the beliefs individuals hold about the perceived characteristics members of an out-group possess. In other words, it is the mental image that individuals hold about a particular group, with the assumption that all members of the group are the same (Jackson, 2011). Therefore, a stereotype is a generalization of characteristics that a group holds. While functional in that it allows for cognitive efficiency, these generalizations are often inaccurate and resistant to new information (Myer, 2005).

Stereotypes shape how people perceive others by biasing their impressions of others in an unconscious way. In fact, people who consciously reject stereotypes can be influenced by a cultural stereotype without realizing it is occurring (Jackson, 2011). Stereotypes are learned through anecdotes and/or personal experience. However, many stereotypes are widely endorsed within a culture (Jackson, 2011). Once exposed to a group's societal stereotype, an individual is likely to perceive any member of that group as possessing those characteristics, focusing on attributes that confirm the stereotype and ignoring aspects that do not (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008).

## **Prejudice**

From the understanding that stereotypes are the mental image that individuals have of people in a particular out-group, prejudice is the attitude towards others that results from that initial stereotype. The term prejudice implies that individuals are

judging another before they have ever had an interaction with them; assuming that they hold the same beliefs and values as the group that individuals believe they are a part of. The nature of this attitude, usually suggests that individuals from the out-group deserve an inferior social status (Franzoi, 2006).

Prejudice results in a bias towards a person based on their perceived group membership (Myers, 2005). Prejudice can take many forms and usually refers to feelings, beliefs and inclinations to act that are influenced by perceptions of another person's group membership. These biases can present themselves in indirect ways and be masked behind a conflict between personally held group values versus out-group values (Jackson, 2011).

### **Discrimination**

Discrimination occurs when the negative attitudes or prejudices individuals hold towards members of an out-group, results in a negative action or an unequal treatment of individuals, based solely on their group membership (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008).

Discrimination can present itself in multiple ways. It can be conveyed as an interpersonal interaction in which individuals choose to treat others differently based on their group membership, it can be reflected in policies and procedures that systemically disadvantage one group, or it can be presented as the dominant group defining cultural values and norms that disadvantage a specific group (Jackson, 2011).

### **Oppression**

Oppression is the systemic discrimination of groups. Instead of individual acts of discrimination, oppression is the institutionally structured system put in place by those with more power, which permits unequal and unjust treatment of individuals belonging to

a particular group (Cudd, 2006 & Harvey, 1999). Examples of oppression include such things as the disenfranchising, exploiting, marginalizing and ostracizing of individuals or groups by those in power (Pincus & Sokoloff, 2008).

When asked to provide examples of oppression, most people refer to historical events such as the crusades and the holocaust. Therefore, the experience of oppression in the minds of many may be regarded as historical and no longer relevant. In reality, oppression is occurring daily, leaving most people affected by oppression to some degree. However, the invisibility of oppression leaves many unaware that what they are experiencing, doing and/or witnessing is oppression (Miville & Ferguson, 2006).

A particular misconception about oppression and discrimination is that it is intentional. However, more often than not, oppression and discrimination are a result of ignorance, rote learning and a lack of understanding of the oppressed group (Cudd, 2006). Regardless of the good intentions most have, it is still important to create awareness and personal responsibility for those who engage in oppressive acts. Dermer, Smith & Barto (2010) explain that oppression can be understood as a continuum. They suggest that Primary oppression occurs when an individual with privilege is directly involved; Secondary oppression occurs when an individual or group remains silent when witnessing or is aware of another group who is perpetrating oppression and Tertiary oppression occurs when a member of an oppressed group seeks the acceptance of the dominant group at the expense of others by implicitly accepting the validity of said oppression in their own group, often referred to as internalized oppression and/or “selling out.” This understanding of different levels of oppression also suggests that one does not

need to have privilege or belong to the dominant group in order to participate in oppressive behavior.

## **ISMS**

The term “Ism” is used as a global representation of the attitudes, beliefs and behavior that assume that one group is better than the other based solely on group membership. In a sense, Isms are the descriptions of prejudice, discrimination and oppression pertaining to and unique to specific groups. There are as many different types of isms as there are categorical groups of people.

As explained earlier, the group membership each individual identifies with comes to form part of that individual’s identity. However, people can ascribe to multiple groups resulting in multiple and intersecting identities by which people define themselves and their roles. For example, an individual can be a woman, lesbian, Wiccan and Deaf. All of these identities form a composite of that individual’s life, their belief system and the value they place on their personal experiences relative to others. Further understanding of isms suggests that individuals do not experience their identity as a list of different characteristics, but rather as an interaction of multiple identities.

Another important issue to address is the fact that individuals’ identities are dynamic and changing from moment to moment (Anzándua, 1998). This can come about in different ways. For example, individuals confronted with discrimination based on their gender are more likely to identify their gender as one of their salient variables. At another moment, they may feel their ethnic background is more salient when engaging in a celebration of values or shared thinking with members of their community. Consequently, an individual’s context largely determines, in a dynamic manner, varying

degrees of importance and levels of awareness placed on parts of their identity at any given moment. Additionally, visibility of identity variables may influence levels of salience placed on visible versus invisible characteristics. For example, the saliency of disability as an identity variable will be heightened when navigating inaccessible environments for an obvious visible disability impacting ambulation; while saliency for invisible learning disabilities may be heightened by environments requiring related cognitive abilities to be demonstrated.

Furthermore, isms represent attitudes and beliefs dominant groups hold towards the oppressed. However, these can also become internalized by the oppressed group resulting in discrimination and stereotyping among members of the same group against each other, increased loathing of themselves and members of their own group and an aspiration to become member of the dominant group (Pyke, 2010 & Rosenwasser, 2000).

**Sexism.** In order to define sexism, one must first understand the term “Sex”. Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define an individual as male, female or intersex. These characteristics are defined through biological indicators such as sex chromosomes, gonads, reproductive organs and external genitalia (APA, 2011).

Sexism is defined as the attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and cultural practices that reflect negative evaluations of individuals based on their sex; supporting unequal status of individuals based solely on the biological indicators of their sex (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008). When considering the available literature on sexism, it is evident that, despite efforts to eliminate sexist attitudes, society continues to view sex as a binary construct, ignoring individuals who are intersex.

Sexism is the result of cultural norms and expectations that are given to people of each sex. Given the invisibility of individuals who are intersex, the literature limits references regarding sexism to the positioning of women in a subordinate place in society relative to men (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008). This dichotomous view of sex and lack of reference to individuals who are intersex is in itself an example of systemic oppression in that it makes this group invisible and, by doing so, suggests that they are somehow deviant from the norm.

A follow-up of 20 individuals born with undifferentiated genitalia who received treatment over a span of 50 years reveals that there are multiple variations of sex in which genitalia, chromosomes and hormonal production vary (Palma Sircili et al., 2014). Research found that sex diversity is more common than typically believed by society (Dreger, 1998).

Research suggests that in most cases, sex assignment surgeries do nothing to enhance quality of life but rather only serve to force societal paradigms of sex on these individuals; with the exception of medically necessitated issues, such as surgical interventions that correct urological functions and/or removal of cancerous tumors. Therefore, researchers have concluded that sex diversity is not in and of itself unnatural nor poses health risks, warranting corrective interventions (Dreger, 1998). Despite these conclusions, medical providers continue to pressure parents of children who are born with undifferentiated genitalia to make a decision on what sex they want their child to be (Intersex Society of North America, 2008). Parents are encouraged to “normalize” their child by consenting to gender assignment surgery and a lifetime of hormone treatment so that their child can conform to societal standards of sex (Dreger, 1998).

Another example of systemic sexism is reflected through the inequity of pay for men and women, irrespective of a comparable level of qualification for the same job. As of 2013, female full-time workers earned, on average, 22% less than their male counterparts for the same job (Hegewisch, Ellis & Hartmann, 2015). In addition, the gendering of jobs forces men and women to seek out employment that societal norms deem “best fit”, regardless of their individual preferences and interests (Hegewisch, Ellis & Hartmann, 2015).

**Genderism.** Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behavior that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; those viewed as incompatible are labeled as gender non-conforming (APA, 2011). For example, a stereotypic gender norm can be that women are gentle and soft spoken while men are aggressive and outspoken. Consequently, when men or women violate gender norms, they are likely to be judged as deviant and experience Genderism. It is important to note, that given the intersectionality of gender and sex, Sexism is often misused in the everyday vernacular to refer to both issues of sex and gender. However, it is important to differentiate the nuances of Sexism from Genderism as they provide a distinction between a paradigm of biological normalcy versus a socially constructed appraisal of assigned roles based on gender assignment.

Genderism is typically associated with the oppression of women. However, all genders can experience Genderism (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008). For example, gender norms establish that women should be the primary caregivers of their children and therefore, stay home to raise them. Functioning in the role of caregiver is not a form of oppression, unless women are prevented from having a choice and/or have experienced a

reduced quality of life as a consequence of functioning as the primary caregiver.

Moreover, another example of Genderism is when women are denied equal access to job opportunities or equitable pay stemming from the belief that women are not as valuable as men. Another example of Genderism is when in the process of a divorce, men are more often denied custody of their children as a consequence of the assumption that women are better caregivers (Grall, 2009).

Genderism restricts the understanding of sex and gender to a binary construct in which masculinity and femininity fall into one of two discreet categories: male or female and their related prescribed roles. However, when language encapsulates the intersection of biological models of sex and self-identified gender, the vernacular can evolve and then becomes inclusive of a range of gender identities such as androgyne, bigender, cisgender, transgender, womyn genderqueer, pangender, etc (Drewlo, 2012). This broadening of language rejects the idea that people are deviant if their experience of sex and gender is incongruent to the binary construct (Drewlo, 2012).

**Heterosexism.** Heterosexism is a form of discrimination that is grounded on an individual's sexual orientation. Sexual orientation refers to an individual's sense of identity based on the feeling of attraction they have towards people of the same sex, other sex, or both (APA, 2011). Heterosexism stems from the belief that heterosexuality is the norm and all other sexual orientations are a deviation from it (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008).

Examples of heterosexism range from assumptions that all people are attracted to the opposite sex, to laws that discriminate against same-sex couples in the areas of immigration, adoption, marriage and inheritance (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008). Using marriage as an example, prior to 2003, same-sex couples were not only viewed as



unnatural but as violating social and religious norms around sexuality resulting in punitive measures and denial of basic civil rights and more specifically the right to marry. The rationale behind the denial of their right to marry was the view of these relationships as a threat to the institution of marriage and the belief that heterosexual relationships are sustainable, natural, for the purpose of procreation and the foundation of the family unit. In 2004, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to allow same-sex marriage. After many years of fighting for marriage equality, as of 2015, thirty-seven states have legalized gay marriage, while thirteen other states have reacted to this by adding a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage (Pew Research Center, 2015.) The fact that same-sex couples continue to fight for their right to be legally recognized, while heterosexual couples have the freedom to marry, reflects a pervasive culture of heterosexism in the US.

**Racism.** Fred Pincus (2006) defines race as “a group that is socially defined as having certain biological characteristics that set them apart from other groups, often in invidious ways.” Biologically speaking, it is impossible to define where one race begins and ends, therefore it is important to note that the concept of race is socially defined based on the physical characteristics of skin color, hair texture, facial shape, eye shape, etc. (Pincus, 2006).

Racism is the discrimination of individuals based on the belief that one race is inherently superior to others (Henslin, 2007). In the history of Britain’s colonization of the US, Native Americans were perceived as savages and nearly exterminated. The high rates of violence, newly introduced epidemic diseases and the enslavement and displacement of Native Americans from their lands resulted in an overwhelming decline

in the Native American population making room for English colonizers to take control. During this time, African slaves were introduced to the United States as an integral part of the economy. Plantation owners purchased Africans as slaves to increase their production of rice, tobacco and cotton and considered them to be valuable property. In order to justify a racial separation where Caucasians held a privileged position, Africans were considered naturally inferior and most disturbingly, not even as human. Initially, biblical passages were used to substantiate slavery, maintaining that black men and women were condemned by God to be servants. In an attempt to further justify the slavery of Africans, slave owners dehumanized them, treating them like animals and stripping them of their basic human rights. Whippings and brandings were routinely implemented to encourage male slaves to be more productive while black women were raped and abused. In response to unwanted pregnancies between African women and their “owners”, laws were introduced forbidding marriage between whites and blacks and discriminating against mixed offspring.

The initial religion-based notion that African ancestry was something to be ashamed of evolved into a racial hierarchy in which direct European descendants held most power and privilege and African slaves had no rights. However, the mixed offspring (mulattos) were considered to be more intelligent and more respected than their African parents despite being viewed as physically degenerate relative to Caucasians. Furthermore, people who emulated whiteness culturally, ideologically, economically and even aesthetically were rewarded (Hunter, 2007). Because of this, mulattos often held leadership positions among the slaves and were given preferential treatment and privileges that were unattainable to those of darker complexion (Hunter, 2007). This

hierarchical view of race in which lighter skin is considered superior and given more privileges is known as *Colorism* (Hunter, 2007).

In 1865, US Congress introduced the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment into the Constitution abolishing slavery and thus mandating the immediate release of African American slaves. However, despite this change in laws, White supremacy remained unchanged: the notion that dark skin represented savagery, irrationality, ugliness and inferiority remained. Hence, white skin denoted the opposite: civility, rationality, beauty and superiority (Hunter, 2007). The Black codes were created in response to the release of slaves in which they were granted some civil rights such as the right to marry and own property while placing restrictions on their freedom. As a consequence, overt forms of racism and discrimination were routinely practiced promoting segregation between African descendants and Whites. Despite a push to protect the rights of the newly emancipated slaves, the majority of Caucasians resisted these changes, manifested by the lynching of African Americans, the refusal of employment opportunities and by the creation of secret societies such as the Klu Klux Klan (KKK), aimed at intimidating African Americans and thus maintaining White supremacy.

Throughout history, figures such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X, to name just a few, advocated for the rights of African Americans and firmly opposed the ideology of White supremacy. Currently, African Americans hold the same constitutional rights as Caucasians may argue they do not experience the same level of overt racism as they once did. However, that is not to say that racism is no longer a problem in the US. Moreover, although overt expressions of prejudice may have

declined over time, pervasive and subtle manifestations of bias, referred to as micro-aggressive acts still persist (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000).

Gaertner & Dovidio (1986) propose that racism has evolved to include a less conscious process in which individuals who regard themselves as non prejudiced and endorse racial equality will continue to discriminate others in inconspicuous ways. They explain that this aversive form of racism implies that, despite supporting egalitarian principles, Caucasians harbor negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks and other disadvantaged groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). This contradiction between the endorsement of racial equality and prejudiced attitudes impacts the development of policies and results in economic, social, educational and political adverse consequences for minority groups (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986).

The pervasive White supremacy mentality impacts people of color who then internalize beliefs regarding color and then discriminate against people of their same race as in the example of discrimination against darker skinned individuals by light skinned members of the African American community. The emulation of Whiteness continues to be rewarded at an unconscious level where standards of beauty, success and power reflect the vision of “White culture.”

**Ethnocentrism.** Whereas race refers to the supposed biological characteristics that distinguish people, ethnicity applies to a group’s cultural characteristics that set them apart from others (Henslin, 2007). Members of an ethnic group also see themselves as having the same goals, values and a common past (Pincus, 2006).

Given the propensity to establish a sense of identity through group membership, people accentuate the positive characteristics of their own group in order to build a

positive self-concept (Cudd, 2006), resulting in the minimization and rejection of other groups. Ethnocentrism refers to the discrimination of individuals based on their membership to a particular ethnic group. It begins with the misconception that one ethnicity is the standard to which all other cultures are compared; suggesting that one ethnicity is superior to the other. An example of this is seen through the Eurocentric view of the world which suggests that countries that have a European standard for architecture, economy and agriculture are perceived as “first world” or “developed” countries while countries that do not fit these standards are viewed as “third world” or “developing countries.”

Examples of ethnocentrism can be found in every culture. In the US, examples include the rejection of eastern medicines as being legitimate (despite many being equally if not more effective), the promotion of democracy over other forms of government to other countries, and even in the term used to refer the US as “America” instead of the “USA”. In all of these examples, the US is considered the standard to which other countries are compared, placing itself in the forefront.

Extreme forms of ethnocentrism include unwarranted fears of the unknown or foreign referred to as *Xenophobia*. Stemming from a fear of losing one’s identity, individuals may respond to foreigners by immediately rejecting them, becoming suspicious of their activities and attempting to displace them. An example of this can be seen in US immigration laws that are more flexible for European travelers who are seen as more similar, while having more restrictive laws for Latin American and Asian travelers who are seen as more dissimilar.

**Lookism.** Lookism refers to the discrimination or prejudice of an individual based solely on physical attributes resulting in socially constructed ideas of beauty and acceptance. These can constructs such as height, weight, and eye color (McDonald, 2010). Given that standards of beauty are socially defined, they change overtime to reflect the cultural zeitgeist. This poses an inherent challenge as to the definition of what is attractive/beautiful therefore making it harder to change the vulnerability of individuals who may be experiencing discrimination based on their physical appearance (McDonald, 2010). Overall, throughout history, young individuals with fair, smooth skin, well-proportioned and symmetrical bodies have been considered the most beautiful. It is important to note that the standards of beauty hold a predominantly Eurocentric view of attractiveness and therefore physical characteristics that are not consistent with Caucasian features are often deemed as undesirable. Furthermore, the biological nature of these traits suggests that social standards of beauty are unattainable to most (Burkley et al, 2014). Because of this, it is impossible to discuss lookism without exploring the intersection of these attitudes and beliefs with racism, ableism, sexism, heterosexism and ageism.

Individuals who attain socially constructed standards of beauty receive advantages and privileges, limiting opportunities and resources to those who are deemed average or unattractive. Studies have found that physical attractiveness has been linked to higher ratings of personal value, competence, virtues such as being friendly or a good person and even have impact in areas of employment, education and law. This concept is known as the *beautiful-is-good effect* (Johnson et al., 2010).

Evolutionary psychologists propose that physical attractiveness serves to communicate individuals' fertility and health suggesting they are viable mating candidates. Attention to physical characteristics is believed to increase reproductive success and therefore ensures a greater representation of those individuals' genes in the population (Bondke & Persson 2013). Therefore, attributes that are seen as desirable for the population are deemed more attractive. In contrast, characteristics that are perceived as "ugly", "offensive" or "repulsive" are rejected and avoided.

In considering factors of physical attractiveness, symmetry, youthfulness and health are constant attributes seen as appealing among all individuals. These valued traits automatically yet covertly marginalizes the elderly and the disabled deeming them as undesirable and even punishable. For example, until 1970 several US cities enforced *ugly laws* that made it illegal for people with "unsightly or disgusting" disabilities to appear in public (Schweik, 2009).

Other attractive features are more gender specific and reflect cultural gender norms. For instance, heterosexual men, on average, tend to be attracted to women who are shorter than they are and exhibit features such as full breasts, full lips, and a low waist-hip ratio. These physical characteristics are generally related to perceptions of reproductive success such as the ability to nurse and carry a child (Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005). Similarly, heterosexual women, on average, tend to be attracted to men who are taller than they are, have broad shoulders, a relatively narrow waist, and a V-shaped torso; characteristics usually associated with physical strength or protection and the ability to provide nutritional resources (Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005). Little research has been done on standards of physical attraction for homosexual men and women.

**Ableism.** Disability has been defined by socially constructed models reflecting past and current ideas about what it means to have a disability. Kaley Roosen describes five distinct models of disability that impact the way people conceptualize disability and therefore how they behave towards and view people with disabilities. The first three models are representative of predominate views on disability at different time periods. However, each model continues to influence the way people treat and perceive people with disabilities today.

The first model is the *moral model*. This model is formed by a religious point of view in which disability is perceived either as a punishment by God due to sin or a burden they must face as penance for the same. The overarching message of this model is that disability is a personal tragedy in which the individual is then placed in a position of perpetual suffering. People who ascribe to this model hold beliefs of pity and shame, resulting in treating them as objects of charity in need of help and forgiveness. This model results in marginalizing individuals with disabilities and excluding them from everyday activities. The moral model places expectation on those with disabilities to maintain a spirit of acceptance and more specifically, gratitude for charitable treatment and to ask for nothing more. This model was recognized in the pre-enlightenment era, in Judea-Christian culture, where individual differences were understood through biblical references (Roosen, K.M., 2009). During this time period, individuals with disabilities represented family shame and were therefore hidden from the public eye. Locked and chained in institutions “for their own safety”, individuals with disabilities were feared and excluded from professions, denied education and forced to participate in often ineffective and dangerous medical treatments (Braddock & Parish, 2001). Given the



marginalization of individuals from society, issues pertaining to disability were overlooked and deemed irrelevant. Even today, these beliefs exist. In Bolivia for example, children with disabilities are called “second patio children” and kept hidden from their communities due to shame. It is said that only 1-3% of children with physical disabilities in Bolivia ever enter a classroom (Hannah, 2013).

The second model is the *medical model* in which disabilities are seen as a biological anomaly resulting in functional impairments which views people with disabilities as abnormal and needing correction. Similar to the moral model, this perspective assumes that people with disabilities are suffering and seen in a negative light. However, although this model does not ascribe a moral failing to the disability, it does impose a need to fix the anomaly in order to reduce the suffering it brings. The prevailing message within this model is the creation of a paradigm of normalcy as a consequence of a distinction made between the “disabled” and “non-disabled” (Roosen, K.M., 2009). More importantly, to be “disabled” meant to be abnormal and deviant from the norm. This model was prevalent in the enlightenment era and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution where the term *disability* was coined to describe individuals who were unable to contribute to the workforce. During this time, people born with disabilities were treated as non-human case studies where they would be displayed in “freak shows” or studied to understand the “errors” in their physiology (Braddock & Parish, 2001). Ugly laws were established making it illegal for individuals with “unsightly” or “disgusting” disabilities to appear in public (Schweik, 2009). Efforts to eradicate the “disabled” and “improve” the genetic composition of the population came in form of eugenic laws where individuals with disabilities were sterilized without their consent,

prevented from marrying or having children and denied medical treatment resulting in premature deaths (Braddock & Parish, 2001). The expectation placed on individuals with disabilities within this model, is to adjust and strive to fit in and not be a burden on society.

The third model is the *Social Minority model*, which emerged from the disability rights movement during the 1960's as a direct contrast to the previous views of disability. In this model, disability is seen as a social problem in which people are not a consequence of biological deficiencies or a punishment from God but rather a consequence of the societal environment, which creates barriers that exclude individuals who behave, learn and/or move around the world differently. The view of people with disabilities, as defined by this model, is that people with disabilities are members of a minority group and therefore are subject to discrimination from a society that promotes the view that "non-disabled" people are superior (Roosen, K.M., 2009). The model calls for social change and empowerment for people with disabilities.

Advancements in the treatment of individuals with disabilities occurred in part due to historical events, specifically, wars in which healthy men without disabilities returned home with disabilities and forced society to consider them as valuable human beings entitled to services. The emergence of veteran services as well as the need to expand veteran services for returning war veterans particularly in the 1960's paralleled civil rights movements occurring in the US. Following each of the major wars in the US, the needs of returning veterans became a motivation to address a myriad of disabilities and related issues, due to increasing survival rates for soldiers in combat. Soldiers began to return with more and more disabilities considered severe and complex, resulting in a

need to develop more comprehensive medical and rehabilitation interventions. Disability scholars refer to the emergence of veteran services as an example of attitudinal tolerance and worth given to those with disabilities acquired as a consequence of fighting for their country relative to those with disabilities not caused by combat. Expansion of veteran services eventually impacted civilians with disabilities leading to rehabilitation legislation, social security programs and standards for barrier-free buildings (Braddock & Parish, 2001). In conjunction and parallel to co-occurring civil rights movements, groups within the disability community joined forces and formed independent living centers and demanded rights for equal access to housing, jobs, education and healthcare. Eventually and after years of battling on specific aspects of disability rights, the American with Disabilities Act was signed in 1990 acknowledging that discrimination and unequal treatment of individuals with disabilities was real and most importantly finally acknowledged as unlawful. Another important benefit of a disability rights law, was that “the problem” became acknowledged as a social problem (Braddock & Parish, 2001). This legislation in theory ensured that individuals with disabilities would no longer be excluded from their communities and would be afforded “reasonable” accommodations for all needed aspects of their life (Braddock & Parish, 2001). As with many other civil rights laws, oppression of individuals with disabilities continues to be prevalent as evidenced by high poverty rates, unemployment, abuse and health disparities in addition to lower levels of education (Parish & Saville, 2006).

The next two models are not acknowledged as ‘official’ models of disability but can be recognized in the current culture as views and beliefs that influence behavior and attitudes towards people with disabilities. The Fourth model is the *humanistic model* in

which people view disability as part of the human condition. This model presumes that a person's abilities change and exist along a continuum; therefore, there is no disconnection between the "disabled" and "non-disabled."

The last model is the *cultural model* that promotes the idea that, despite the diversity among people with disabilities, all are part of a unique community that has their own form of communication, interests and beliefs. This perspective promotes the idea that having a disability is something to be proud of and not a curse, a punishment or something that needs to be fixed (Roosen, K.M., 2009).

Ableism is a form of discrimination based on the belief that being able-bodied is the "normal" human condition and therefore all forms of disabilities are a deviation thereof. Examples of this can be seen through the differences in the many definitions of disability, as they reflect various attitudes and beliefs about those that have disabilities. According to the American with Disabilities Act, "disability" refers to a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012). This definition reflects a view of individuals with disabilities from a medical model point of view, suggesting that any deviation in function that impacts accomplishments of roles is abnormal. This medical perspective then positions the correction on the individual in an attempt to help the person "fit in" and/or adjust.

In contrast, the American Psychological Association defines disability as the outcome of the interaction between a person with an impairment and the environmental and attitudinal barriers they may face. This perspective is reflective of the social minority model as it does not place blame or judgment on individuals with disabilities, but instead

recognizes that ableist norms create unnecessary barriers resulting in an individual's impairment.

Studies suggest that ableist perceptions of people with disabilities consists of beliefs of pity and sympathy, or viewing individuals with disabilities as “inspiring.” Behavioral responses to these beliefs and or views include attempts to disengage and avoid individuals with disabilities because people with disabilities serve as troubling reminders of human fragility and mortality (O'Connor & McFadden, 2012). In response to inspirational beliefs, society may treat those with disabilities in a unidimensional manner by praising any small accomplishment as an exception, realized in spite of a disability. Disability rights and scholars refer to this as “inspirational porn” when we objectify an exploit an individual based on their disability and make all other aspects of themselves invisible and unimportant (Miller, 2014). Furthermore, attitudes towards people with disabilities reflect an overgeneralization of their impairment by which an individual with a visible disability is presumed to be less competent in other areas of their life (i.e. - cognitive impairments, sexual functioning, health, among others.) More specifically, parents with disabilities are often scrutinized and forced to undergo parenting evaluations to demonstrate their competence as a parent, regardless of any evidence or not of parenting difficulties (Swain & Cameron, 2003).

Despite changes in legislation in the US, ableism continues to be an issue in dire need of attention. Standards for employment, education and health remain tailored from an able-bodied perspective in which individuals with disabilities are meant to “adapt.” Even sexual education and health classes in schools provide information from an able-bodied perspective of sexuality. Specific services and accommodations for employment

for people with disabilities tend to require lengthy evaluations in which individuals are forced to “prove” their disability in order to be considered for services. Due to all these reasons, individuals with disabilities represent the largest group of unemployed individuals in the US (US Department of Labor, 2014).

**Classism.** The US social class system is based on the interconnected socioeconomic differences in income, education, and occupational status (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2008). Individuals often believe that the US is a meritocracy where resources are allocated based on individual merit alone (Pincus, 2006). However, members of lower socioeconomic classes are given limited opportunities while those who are already in power are afforded more (Pincus, 2006). Unequal access to resources also allows the top 5% of US households to have over 22% of the total national income while 16% of individuals in the US live in poverty (Lott, 2012)

The research on class is varied given that the categorical descriptors of class are not clearly defined. Some researchers suggest that there is a clear definition of class based solely on income, others refer to the interaction between income and education level, while still others argue that talking about class is a moot point as people should instead focus on the impact of capitalism on US families. (Pincus & Sokoloff, 2008)

For the purpose of this research, class is defined as the interaction between two different schools of thought that categorize people based on their financial power in the US. On one hand, stratification theorists define class as a ranking of people according to income, family lineage, profession and level of education. On the other hand, Marxist views define class as a relational concept based on economic exploitation and power (Pincus & Sokoloff, 2008).

The combination of these two ideologies suggests that individuals are perceived as falling into distinct categories based on their financial power. These means of power include not only the concrete monetary value an individual holds, but also the power they hold in reference to education level, skills, social connections among other contributors of financial success. The categories are best described as those with financial power (wealthy/high class), those with some financial power (middle class) those with limited financial power (working class) and those with no financial power (poor). Through this stratification, individuals that hold the majority of financial resources own the means of production and profit from the work of the lower classes that sell their labor to them. In an effort to maximize profits, those who control the means of production may exploit the laborers for their benefit.

Classism is defined as the prejudice and discrimination based on socioeconomic level or class that is a result of assigning high status to the affluent due to their wealth (Pincus, 2006; Fiske-Rusciano & Cyrus, 2005). In other words, individuals are attributed value based on the material possessions they have and are treated as inferior human beings if they do not have the means to sustain themselves in a level of comfort or luxury. Classism is reflected through a financial system that oppresses the subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen those who already have financial resources.

Stereotypes surrounding issues of class suggest that individuals from the upper class are smarter and more articulate and therefore define what is expected of the population as a “standard to follow.” The powerful ideology of the “American Dream” reinforces the belief that if individuals simply work hard enough, some day they can become part of the elite and affluent. However, systemic barriers impede the escalation of

social class because people with power are given many unearned privileges that maintain their position of power. These privileges may include personal contacts with employers, “legacy admissions” to higher education, inherited money, good childhood health care, quality education and having knowledge of how the systems of power operate (Lott, 2012). Classism is often described as a “lottery of birth” in which the financial status and positioning in society are ascribed to an individual at birth, depending on the family they are born into. Access to health, education, employment and overall power in society many times is not dependent on merit, but on legacy.

When discussing issues pertaining to class, it is impossible to ignore the intersection of these issues with sex and race. The inheritance of power and unearned privilege awarded to Caucasian males ensures that they sustain control of legislation and policies that perpetuate this cycle of systemic oppression.

Examples of classism can be seen through the creation of laws in the US that serve to benefit a few people at the expense of the greater population, such as the reduction of income tax for the wealthy (Eley, 2010). For example, on multiple occasions a repeal of the tax on inherited wealth surpassing 5.3 million dollars has been proposed as the rich argue that their “hard earned property” should not be subject to future taxation. However, despite the fact that these taxes only impact the wealthy and are meant to limit the possibility of a permanent landed gentry, many people’s aspiration of some day reaching the American dream and owning valuable property has resulted in strong support to eliminate this tax despite the severe repercussions this might imply for the US economy.



**Ageism.** Ageism is defined as the discrimination of an individual based solely on their perceived age. It is premised on the assumption that youth equals beauty, health, vitality and power, and ageing is a progressive decline of these highly valued characteristics (Schade, 2014). Ageism is expressed through age segregation, discrimination, prejudice and a stereotyping of older adults (Palmore, Branch, & Harris, 2005). This form of discrimination is not as often researched given that the institutionalization of ageism is widely accepted in US culture and not perceived as having a negative impact on the oppressed (Nelson, 2009). Ageism is a unique form of prejudice given that it is directed toward a group of people to which many individuals will eventually belong.

O'Connor & McFadden (2012) suggest that ageism is multidimensional as it may present itself with a mix of age-related stereotypes and emotions associated with older adults. On one hand, older adults are perceived as incompetent who can no longer contribute to society; while on the other hand; individuals express a paternalistic prejudice where they assume older adults are warm and admirable (Fiske et al., 2002). Research on ageism suggests that individuals perceive older adults as rigid and inadaptible, lacking in health, intelligence and alertness, and therefore treat them as less valued members of society (Palmore, 2005).

O'Connor & McFadden (2012) suggest that ageism occurs because older adults are associated with mortality which reminds individuals of the vulnerability of the human body and hence triggers an existential angst. Examples of ageism are reflected in societal paradigms that perceive the elderly as incapable of thinking clearly, learning new things, enjoying sex, contributing to the community or holding responsible jobs. These beliefs

result in children of older adults placing their parents in nursing homes without their consent. During this process, the elderly are stripped of their possessions, their real estate and their freedom. Stereotypes about older adults can also result in a drastic change in their quality of life. For example, assumptions that older adults no longer engage in sexual relationships may result in decreased levels of privacy and a vilification of the elderly who express sexual desires. In addition, the negative preconceptions of aging result in older adults being less likely to receive new treatments for illnesses such as heart attacks or cancer treatment (People's Medical Society Newsletter, 1998).

An issue that is often ignored in the limited literature on ageism is that ageism can also affect individuals who appear significantly younger than their stated age. Given the social standards of ageing, individuals have a preconceived notion of what an individual of a certain age should look like. Because of this, when individuals do not fit these social standards, they are often treated as inexperienced and unable to cognitively understand certain "adult" issues. These difficulties are most problematic in employment settings and romantic interactions, given that individuals treat young looking adults like children, dismissing them in positions of power and assuming that they are too immature for adult relationships. However, these condescending views of individuals who appear young are often dismissed because people highly value youthfulness and assume that their "mistake" will somehow be constructed as a veiled compliment.

**Discrimination based on religious affiliation.** Religion is an organized collection of beliefs that allow for individuals to understand the world that surrounds them, which also gives purpose to their existence (Dobbelaere, 2011). Religious

discrimination is the unequal treatment of individuals based on their religious beliefs and affiliation with a specific religious group.

Following the European colonization of America, the Christian faith became the predominant faith for a great majority of citizens of the US (specifically Protestant and Catholic religions). Because of this, Christian views are perceived as the norm and all other religions a deviation from it. Discrimination based on religious affiliation begins from the assumption that all people in the US should be Christians and therefore should share the same values and beliefs about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. These expectations can extend into other aspects of an individual's life including, employment, reproductive rights and education.

Historically, religious discrimination has even taken the form of genocide and an indoctrination of dominant religious views upon those who were considered to be devil worshipers or savages. Events like the period of colonization of the US led to a belief that Native Americans were primitive savages that had not been saved by God and needed redemption and conversion into the Christian faith.

At present, discrimination based on religion affiliation is most often part of an intersection between other isms such as ethnocentrism and racism. Individuals make assumptions about others based on their religious beliefs and treat them as deviant. Examples of this can be seen in the mistreatment and discrimination of Muslims in the US after 9/11 where the behavior of extremist groups resulted in a widespread perception of Muslims as dangerous "anti-Americans" terrorists who infiltrate the country with the purpose of killing innocent people. (Mosquera, Khan & Selya, 2013). Religions that are

perceived as more culturally similar are less likely to be targets of discrimination, while those who are significantly different many times are not tolerated.

### **Power and Privilege**

The process of socially defining identity variables results in the assignment of differentiated levels of power and unearned privilege to various identities (Malloy, Dobbins, Williams, Allen & Warfield, 2009).

Privilege is an unearned special advantage or benefit enjoyed by anyone in a favored position (Harvey, 1999; Johnson, 2006; McIntosh, 1989; Whitley & Kite, 2006). If one group is disadvantaged and discriminated against, as a consequence another group will have an advantage and thus be privileged. The essence of privilege is that it comes from mere group membership. Because privileges are inherited rather than learned, they are often overlooked (Jackson, 2011; Johnson, 2006; McIntosh, 1989). As a consequence, members of dominant groups respond to others with prejudicial attitudes, discrimination or undeserved negative treatment (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986) which can take the form of avoidance, exclusion and outright rejection (Johnson, 2006; Feagin & McKinney, 2003).

Privilege results in a belief that being part of the dominant group is normative and an assumption that the benefits that have been granted to them are attainable to everyone if they work to earn them. The hidden nature of privilege allows for those who are part of dominant groups to be oblivious of the entitlements they receive as they see themselves as persons rather than stereotypes (Feagin & McKinney, 2003).

As a consequence to these unearned advantages, individuals from dominant groups are placed in positions of power over those who are “different.” This power is defined as the control over social institutions and their various resources, enabling the

power holder to establish rules, initiate action, make decisions and impose rewards and punishment to others. The use of legitimized power by dominant social groups leads to oppression or the exclusion of less powerful groups from valued resources (Worell & Remer, 2003). Therefore, power is defined as the ability to access personal and environmental resources to effect personal and/or external change (Worell & Remer, 2003).

As mentioned previously, given the intersectionality of individuals' identity variables, individuals may hold both privileged and oppressed identity variables simultaneously that shape their experience. For example, a homosexual white male may be privileged in areas of race and gender yet be oppressed in terms of sexual orientation.

### **Social Justice/Activism informed by social constructionism**

Parallel sociopolitical civil rights movements in the US define social justice in various ways. There is no clear consensus of the definition of social justice as the terminology changes to reflect the movement of groups it is meant to protect (Moody, Ybarra, & Nabors, 2009). For the purpose of this research, social justice is defined as the fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights and treatment for marginalized individuals and groups who do not share equal power in society (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi & Bryant, 2007). Therefore, social justice consists of providing equal access and opportunities to all groups, being inclusive of all members of society and removing individual and systemic barriers for marginalized groups (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Marsiglia & Kulis (2008) suggest that “oppressed individuals, groups and communities can reach empowerment through a collective process of freeing themselves

of the conditions that dehumanize them. This process of liberation must occur for both those who are deprived of the opportunities to advance socially and those obstructing that advancement.” Therefore, in order to achieve social justice, both oppressed and dominant groups need to acknowledge the need for systemic changes. Because of this, the power of relationships is vital to social justice work. Through relationships, an environment can be created that cultivates social and economic justice, respect for human rights and a context for healing (Freire 1994). Given that most forms of oppression stem from a place of ignorance, where the individual makes assumptions about an individual prior to knowing them, it is expected that education about oppression should help reduce oppression to some degree (Case, 2007).

### **Teaching programs and strategies to reduce oppression**

A general awareness of the importance of addressing diversity issues in the US began in the 1960’s through two educational movements (the ethnic studies and multiethnic education movements) that launched a reform of pedagogy approaches and laid the foundation for academic programs that are taught today (Moody, Ybarra & Nabors, 2009). As a result, greater attention to teaching diversity flourished in the areas of education and psychology.

However, a review of the literature on oppression reduction interventions and strategies revealed a systemic problem. The majority of authors focused on strategies and competencies for professionals in the field of psychology, social work, counseling and education. Suggesting that, despite the implementation of programs in schools and work settings, limited attention has been given to not only the effectiveness of these programs, but also to the content and proposed structure those programs should have, in order to

have a positive impact on the people who attend. Given the limited research available on programs developed for the general population, this section will draw from the literature on competencies for professional fields and draw a parallel based on theories of identity development.

In recognizing the importance of diversity competence, the American Psychological Association suggests that individuals should be exposed to the influence of a diversity of human experience. When assessing for competency in this area, the APA provides guidelines in three distinct categories: Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills (Roysircar, Dobbins & Malloy, 2010). For the purpose of this research and the application of these competencies to the general population, this review will focus on the knowledge and attitude competencies.

Attitudes in diversity training are understood as the tendency to evaluate something/someone with some degree of favor or disfavor. These attitudes are developed through the individuals' context and shape their affect, beliefs and behavior (Malloy, Dobbins, Williams, Allen & Warfield, 2009). Researchers in the field of diversity training suggest that in order to establish a foundation for cultural competency, individuals need to explore their attitudes and beliefs regarding the world and widen their awareness of the different perspective of others (Malloy, Dobbins, Williams, Allen & Warfield, 2009). This exploration facilitates the understanding of the social construction of identity variables as they relate to issues of privilege, power and oppression (Malloy, Dobbins, Williams, Allen & Warfield, 2009). The exposure to new information helps challenge negative attitudes and can result in the reshaping of individuals' perspective towards oppressed groups.

This process of reassessing individuals' attitudes is the result of exposure to information regarding diverse groups and therefore increases the individuals' knowledge of power, privilege and oppression (Malloy, Dobbins, Williams, Allen & Warfield, 2009). Therefore, an increase in knowledge is the precursor to making personal and social change.

Across the US, different diversity training programs have been developed as interventions for discrimination and oppression in the areas of employment and education. These interventions are aimed at increasing awareness of individual differences and building skills to promote diversity and oppression reduction (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies, 2013). A meta-analysis on the impact of training programs on dominant groups revealed that while 50-60% of participants display less prejudice after participating in a training, 15-20% of participants displayed increased prejudiced attitudes towards oppressed groups (Paradies et al., 2009). These results highlight the importance of developing intentional training programs that consider the potential negative reactions of some participants.

Multiple approaches to diversity training have resulted in the development of different training programs with inherent strengths and limitations. Approaches include web seminars, immersion experiences, classroom exercises, conferences, field trips and brief lectures, among others. Kowal, Franklin & Paradies' (2013) analysis of racial diversity training programs suggest that diversity training can be divided into two main approaches: 1) diversity awareness and 2) anti-ism training.

Diversity awareness training programs are developed with the purpose of providing information about relevant oppressed groups. Individuals are presented with



background regarding group practices and general information regarding oppressed groups. These approaches have been subject to considerable criticism, as diversity experts argue that the provision of information about a group without challenging the individuals' prejudices may result in heightened stereotyping and reinforce negative beliefs and practices rather than improve them (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies, 2013). In addition, the simplistic portrayal of oppressed identity variables results in a false sense of mastery of diversity and an accentuation of group differences (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies, 2013). A good example of this type of approach is seen in disability simulations where able-bodied individuals are invited to simulate the experience of disability by engaging in activities that mimic different types of impairments. Simulations are thought to change individuals' perspectives about disability and increase empathy, self-awareness and tolerance for ambiguity. Critics argue that these experiences focus on what people with disabilities can't do, emphasizing the negative and difficult experiences of disability rather than addressing the social factors that impact people with disabilities. As a result, the experience may reinforce negative attitudes and beliefs about disability (French, 1992).

In contrast, anti-ism training is referred to approaches that reflect upon the sources and impacts of oppression on society. These trainings encourage participants to examine their own experience and become aware of their multi-dimensional identities as they acquire knowledge about interactions with oppressed groups. Notions of power and privilege are discussed in an attempt to encourage dominant groups to develop personal responsibility regarding oppression. Criticism to this approach suggests that oppressed groups are perceived as automatically knowledgeable about isms and oppression and

therefore portrayed as morally pure. They further argue that discussions about power and privilege result in an accusation and bias against dominant groups resulting in negative emotions such as discomfort, guilt, fear, anxiety, anger and withdrawal (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies, 2013). The *Tunnel of Oppression* is an example of this type of intervention as it provides both information regarding oppression and discussions regarding the impact of power and privilege.

### **Tunnel of Oppression**

The “Tunnel of Oppression,” is an interactive diversity awareness program that is designed to provide an affective and thought provoking educational experience about injustice worldwide and in the United States. The experience is designed to create cognitive dissonance and promote understanding between those who experience oppression and those who unknowingly participate in oppression and benefit from privileges, by utilizing vivid images, writings, music and art, depicting various forms of injustice historically and in the present. Participants are instructed to walk through a series of rooms that are designated to represent a specific form of injustice, such as ableism, racism and/or sexism. The concept of the Tunnel of Oppression began at Western Illinois State University in 1994 inspired by the *Museum of Tolerance*, located in Los Angeles CA, a museum that not only records the historical experience of the Holocaust but engages visitors affectively to the atrocities experienced by those targeted in the Holocaust. It was developed to increase awareness of oppression and its effects on society as a whole. Since the first appearance of the tunnel, it has spread to universities all across the US, including Wright State University in the year 2000. It is important to note, that as this approach to diversity awareness gained popularity, it has been adapted to

fit the unique needs of each university. Therefore, there is no uniform or standard protocol for the *Tunnel of Oppression*, in terms of specific content or images or overall mode of delivery of content, rather an adherence to the original spirit and intent behind the experience.

The “Tunnel” is set up as an interactive display of information about different forms of discrimination and oppression that exists in our society, including ableism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, lookism and discrimination based on religious affiliation. The last display in the “Tunnel” affords the opportunity for participants to express their commitment to acts of oppression reduction and to align themselves with an ally role by providing participants brochures and literature related to campus groups and organizations that are committed to heightening awareness and building a wider sense of community.

As mentioned before, the *Tunnel of Oppression* has been both celebrated and criticized since its development. Many universities support the program and continue to promote it by arguing that the experience allows students to consider the impact that oppression has on people and re-think what role they can take in creating positive social change (Settle, 2006). Some believe “students cannot understand oppression until they are able to experience it first-hand” (Lechuga, Clerc & Howell, 2009). Other universities suggest that the *Tunnel of Oppression* promotes a dialogue in which students are encouraged to continue the discussion and learn how they may perpetuate oppression by staying silent or ignoring the impact their actions have on others (Lechuga, Clerc & Howell, 2009). In contrast, other universities have decided to discontinue the program in response to complaints from oppressed groups who stated that they did not believe the

experience reflected a realistic perspective of oppressed individuals and even further perpetuated negative stereotypes (Lechuga, Clerc & Howell, 2009).

Rebecca Barrett-Fox, a teacher at the University of Kansas (KU), argued that the *Tunnel of Oppression* not only fails to make any significant change regarding oppression; it actually “serves to reify the righteousness of dominant groups” (Barrett-Fox, 2007). She explains that the examples used in the *Tunnel of Oppression* at KU ignored the structural nature of oppression in which some groups are systemically advantaged over others. In addition, the author argues that the examples provided over-simplify an individual’s experience, suggesting that some people are more deserving of empathy than others. Furthermore, the author indicates that the perpetrators of oppression in the examples are often extreme historical figures (i.e.- Hitler, members of the Klu Klux Klan, or Nazi soldiers) that do not allow the participants to identify with the role of oppressor and instead reinforce their lack of responsibility for oppression. Overall, Barret-Fox argues that the very nature of the event requires participants with most power to respond with indifference, guilt or condescension. She suggests that participants will leave the experience unchallenged and with the illusion that they have never been responsible for oppression (Barrett-Fox, 2007).

The training event at Wright State University is a collaborative between the Student Affairs office and the Counseling and Wellness Services on campus. Teams of Doctoral level psychology trainees are responsible for creating a room devoted to each ISM by displaying, pictures, videos, messages or statistics around the room. The experience is tailored to promote a dialogue in which participants can consider concepts of privilege and oppression in relation to different identity variables. The student

organizers have all attended at least two diversity-training classes in which they are asked to identify their own identity variables and reflect on the biases and prejudices they may have been exposed to. In addition complete an orientation in which they are given the opportunity to reflect on their own experience with oppression and the potential for bias while leading discussion groups (see Appendix C). Topics of discussion include strategies and information needed to discuss in order to ensure adequate debriefings of the experience. Additionally, the group discussed potential questions that may arise and strategies to address the participants' reactions to the "Tunnel".

Psychology trainees change every year, therefore, the "Tunnel" also changes to reflect the perspective of each cohort. The trainees are given the materials used in past years as a starting point but are encouraged to add updated information and display it in whatever way they see fit under the supervision of licensed psychologists.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

In order to accomplish the goal of this study, five research questions were posed. Hypotheses for each question were developed drawing on literature about awareness of oppression. The following questions represented the research questions and their respective hypothesis.

*Research Question 1:* Is there an increase in awareness of oppression before and after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*?

*Hypothesis 1:* Exposure to information of oppression will increase the knowledge and awareness of oppression.

*Research Question 2:* Do Caucasian students report less initial awareness of oppression than do other racial groups?

*Hypothesis 2:* Caucasian participants experience a lower initial understanding and awareness of oppression.

*Research Question 3:* Does race have an impact on change in awareness of oppression?

*Hypothesis 3:* Students of color will reach a ceiling effect and have smaller increase in awareness scores than Caucasian students.

*Research Question 4:* Does gender have an impact on change in awareness of oppression?

*Hypothesis 4:* It is expected that women will show a smaller change in awareness of oppression.

*Research Question 5:* Is there a relationship between increased awareness scores and an increase in motivation to act against oppression?

*Hypothesis 5:* It is expected that participants who report an increase in awareness of oppression will report an initial motivation to participate in activities to reduce oppression.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

This project utilized archival data from a pre-post survey gathered in 2011 and 2012 that was developed to evaluate the *Tunnel of Oppression* program, to gauge the effectiveness of the experience and to identify the participants' awareness of oppression of different groups before and after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*. Approval to carry out this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Wright State University as an exempted study.

Before participating in the "Tunnel", all undergraduate students were provided with a bracelet containing a five-digit number that was used to pair the pre and post surveys. This procedure protected the participants' anonymity. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary and did not prevent students' ability to participate in the experience. After completing the pre-test, participants were directed to walk at their own pace through a large room divided into ten partitioned sections or "rooms" containing information about oppression in multiple modalities. A student's time in the tunnel averaged between fifteen and twenty minutes. Once they concluded their experience, they were asked to complete the post-test to assure that the results were not impacted by any other interfering stimuli or information upon leaving the project.

Finally, the students were directed to a separate room where trained volunteers and mental health professionals led a twenty to thirty minute discussion debriefing their reactions to the experience. This provided the students with an opportunity to ask

questions, to process difficult emotional reactions within a supportive group setting and to discuss the importance of this event within a campus environment.

### **Procedure**

Annually, *The Tunnel of Oppression* is constructed in collaboration between Wright State University's Residence Life office and the Counseling and Wellness Services' office. Personnel and volunteers research and create the stimuli displayed in each room including video clips, audio segments, newspaper articles, posters and props. The exhibit is open for three days, allowing for a greater number of students to participate in the experience. In order to maximize the impact of the tunnel, university instructors are encouraged to attend the event with their class. E-mails and flyers are utilized to invite Wright State University's campus and surrounding community members.

*The Tunnel of Oppression* utilizes volunteers who welcome participants to the event, assist participants as they completed the pre and post questionnaires and escort participants to their debriefing groups. To ensure that volunteers were prepared to answer questions and lead the debriefing groups, they were trained in the process ahead of time and provided with instructions on how to greet and direct participants during the event (Appendix A and B.)

### **Participants**

A total of 2339 participants completed the survey, consisting of university students, university personnel and surrounding community members. From the collected surveys, 1739 were completely answered and utilized for data analysis. Table 1 depicts a participant demographic breakdown for the data gathered from both 2011 and 2012. A more detailed analysis of participants in the study can be found in Appendix E.



Table 1.

Completed Surveys

Participants	Total
First Year Students	1634
Upper-Class Students	71
Faculty/Staff	27
Non WSU	4
All	1736

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

In order to participate in this study, individuals must have visited the *Tunnel of Oppression* and have completed in its entirety both the pre and post surveys. It was also imperative that the surveys included the corresponding participant number on both surveys. Given that the *Tunnel of Oppression* has been running at Wright State University since the year 2000, only the data for freshman students was included in the analysis in order to avoid practice effects and to fully gauge the impact of a first-time experience on said students.

**Recruiting participants**

Emails were sent to students and faculty to invite them to participate in the “Tunnel”. The event was advertised across campus with flyers and instructors for courses designed to teach students skills that foster college adjustment (UVC 101) were asked to encourage their students to participate in the experience. After given a choice, our participants expressed interest in partaking in this survey.

## **Stimulus**

**Tunnel of Oppression.** Wright State University's *Tunnel of Oppression* was held in the University's Multipurpose Room. This area was separated into ten partitioned rooms with floor to ceiling curtains. Each room was dedicated to one form of oppression with a display of information in multiple modalities. Facts, anecdotes and stereotypes were depicted with pictures, audiovisual materials, props, etc. The last room was dedicated to information on how individuals can promote change and how oppression can be alleviated.

**Debriefing Groups.** One of the room separations was designated for the facilitation of a group debriefing following the *Tunnel of Oppression* experience. Given the emotionally charged content present in the experience, students were given the opportunity to participate in a debriefing where they were invited to express their thoughts and feelings as well as engage in a dialogue about the experience's impact on them. In preparation for a thoughtful discussion, group facilitators were trained volunteers that were given a series of reflection questions as a guideline (see Appendix C.) Discussion groups lasted between twenty and thirty minutes and were aimed to help students identify their biases and the impact that their beliefs can have on others. Professional psychologists and counselors were available throughout all the process, in case the stimuli triggered an intense emotional reaction for any participant.

## **Instruments**

Participants were asked to complete a survey before and after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*. The pre-test survey gathered demographic information (age, race, gender, and current academic standing) as well as surveyed their awareness of oppression

reference to nine different variables (individuals with a disability, racial minorities, individuals that are religious, people who are not Christian, individuals who are gay, lesbian or bisexual, people with a mental illness, people who are greater than average size, women and individuals that are poor.)

The post-test surveyed change in their awareness of oppression in reference to the same groups after participating in the tunnel, their experience with oppression and their willingness to participate in creating positive change by increasing the dialogue regarding oppression and by their willingness to take action. Finally, this survey asked for the participants' feedback on the experience by having them identify the room that had the most impact on them and what room they believe needed the most improvement.

**Tunnel of Oppression Pre/Post Assessment.** The pre/post survey was created by a group of psychologists and psychology trainees from the Counseling and Wellness Services at Wright State University with the purpose of evaluating the program and determining whether there was a need for changes in the way that the tunnel was presented. The assessment consisted of seven questions that followed a five point Likert scale format that differed based on the question at hand. The questions were aimed at assessing the participants' awareness of oppression, past experience with oppression and willingness to participate in the reduction of oppression for nine different oppressed groups. The post-test also included a section with three questions asking for feedback on the materials presented, as well as the participants' willingness to recommend the experience to others (Appendix D.)

## **Research Design and Data Analysis**

The study utilized a non-experimental survey that provided a quantitative description of the participants' attitudes and opinions about their perceptions of oppression in the United States of America. To answer each research question and test the hypotheses, this study utilized descriptive statistics including means, percentages and frequencies. The data was tested for normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk analyses. The data was then further evaluated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS V.21) to determine whether there was a significant difference in scores between groups and to establish a relationship between the variables. Finally, in order to determine whether the results reflected a practical significance, the effect size was calculated using G\*Power software.

## Chapter 4: Results

A total of 1634 first year undergraduate college students completed the survey. From the sample, 631 participants identified as Male (38.62%), 976 identified as Female (59.73%), 17 identified as transgender (1.04%) and 10 participants preferred not to disclose their sex (0.61%). With regard to participant age at the time of the study, the range was from ages 17-30 where the majority of students fell between the ages 17-20. The racial makeup of the sample consisted of 297 African American/Black/African (18.18%), 4 American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.24%), 4 Arab American/Arab/Persian (0.24%), 29 Asian American/Asian (1.77%), 4 East Indian (0.24%), 1139 European American/White/Caucasian (69.71%), 15 Hispanic/Latino (0.92%), 110 Multi-racial (6.73%), 4 participants identified as Other race yet did not elaborate on how they identified racially and 28 participants preferred not to disclose their race (1.71%). For a more detailed depiction of the sample by year, refer to Appendix E below.

### Question 1

The first research question considered whether students who participated in the *Tunnel of Oppression* reported an increase in awareness of Oppression after participating in the experience. In order to assess for an increase in awareness, participants were asked: “How often does oppression occur in the United States of America because of biases based on oppressed group membership?” They were asked to rate the frequency on a 5-point Likert scale where a rating of 1 is ‘Not at All’ and 5 is ‘Very Often.’ Participants scored an average of 3.96 (SD= 0.79) prior to participating in the Tunnel and increased

scores to an average of 4.61 (SD= 0.65) after the experience. The sample distribution was not representative and was positively skewed; therefore non-parametric statistics were used. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was calculated at an alpha value of 0.5 in order to determine significance in change of scores. Results indicate that there was a significant increase in scores ( $Z = -25.840$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) suggesting that participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression* resulted in a significant increase in awareness of oppression with a confidence level of 95%. The experience, therefore, had an impact on students' reported levels of awareness of oppression in the United States. The Cohen's  $d$  value of 0.885 and the observed power of 0.95 represent a high practical significance for the population as it accounts for over 25% of the variance.

## **Question 2**

Beginning with the assumption that exposure to lived oppression makes an individual more likely to recognize oppression (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994); the data was analyzed to determine whether minority students reported a higher level of awareness than Caucasian students prior to participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*. The first question of the pre-test was used to compare differences in initial ratings of oppression awareness among students. Students rated the frequency of oppression in the United States of America because of biases based on oppressed group membership on a 5 point Likert scale where a rating of 1 is 'Not at All' and 5 is 'Very Often.' The sample distribution was not representative and was positively skewed; therefore non-parametric statistics were used. The data was divided into two racial groups (Minority students and Caucasian students.) The scores were analyzed through a Wilcoxon Rank-Sum test at an alpha value of 0.5. A significant difference was found between initial scores for Minority

students and Caucasian students. Minority students reported higher scores in awareness of oppression on the pretest than did the Caucasian students with a confidence level of 95% ( $W = 911941$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ). The Cohen's  $d$  value of 3.51 and the observed power of 0.954 represent a high practical significance for the population as it accounts for over 25% of the variance.

### **Question 3**

After determining the difference between initial awareness scores among Caucasian and Minority students, the data was further analyzed to determine whether race had an impact on the change in awareness of oppression after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*. The change in scores on question 1 of the pre and post tests ("How often does oppression occur in the United States of America because of biases based on oppressed group membership?") was compared between two groups (Minority students and Caucasian students.) The sample distribution was not representative and was positively skewed; therefore non-parametric statistics were used. A Wilcoxon Rank Sum test was calculated at an alpha value of 0.5. There was no significant difference found between the groups ( $W = 923855$ ,  $p = 0.366$ ). Racial identity had no impact in the change in awareness of oppression with a confidence level of 95%; therefore, Minority students have the same level of change in awareness after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression* than do Caucasian students. The Cohen's  $d$  value of 1.64 and the observed power of 0.963 represent a high practical significance for the population as it accounts for over 25% of the variance.

#### **Question 4**

In line with the assumption that an experience of oppression leads to a higher awareness of oppression (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994), the initial awareness scores (question 1) were compared among gender identity variables. Given that the sample did not have a representative number of transgender or other gender identity participants, the results for these groups were not meaningful and were therefore excluded from the analysis. Because of this, the sample size was reduced to 1607 participants.

The scores were first analyzed through a Wilcoxon Rank-Sum test at an alpha value of 0.5 to determine whether there was a difference in the initial reported scores for awareness of oppression. A significant difference was found between initial scores for Male and Female students. Female students reported higher scores in awareness of oppression on the pretest than did the Male students with a confidence level of 95% ( $W = 452456.5, p = 0.000$ ).

The data was further analyzed to determine whether there was a difference between students' change in scores based on their gender identity. A Wilcoxon Rank-Sum test at an alpha value of 0.5 was used. A significant difference in the change in awareness was found ( $W = 480822, p = 0.001$ ), where Female students had a higher increase in scores than males did with a 95% confidence level. The Cohen's  $d$  value of 1.476 and the observed power of 0.961 represent a high practical significance for the population as it accounts for over 25% of the variance.

#### **Question 5**

After establishing that the *Tunnel of Oppression* in fact has some positive impact in the reported awareness of oppression, the data was further analyzed to determine



whether this increase in awareness translated to a reported increase in motivation to talk about oppression and take action against it. This question was divided into two separate components in order to address the willingness to talk about oppression versus the motivation to take action.

In order to measure students' willingness to talk about oppression, students were asked "How likely are you to talk about discrimination or diversity with your friends?" before and after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*. They rated the likelihood on a 5 point Likert scale where a rating of 1 is 'Not at All' and 5 is 'Very Likely.' The sample distribution was not representative and was positively skewed; therefore nonparametric analyses were used. A small positive correlation between the variables was found  $r(1634) = 0.058$ ,  $p = 0.02$  using Spearman's Rho analysis at a 95% confidence interval. This suggests that exposure to the *Tunnel of Oppression* in fact may lead to an increase in reported willingness to talk about oppression. However the relationship is so small, that it does not represent any practical significance.

In order to measure the students' willingness to take action against oppression, students were asked, "How likely are you to participate in creating positive change for oppressed groups?" Students rated the likelihood on a Likert scale where a rating of 1 is 'Not at All' and 5 is 'Very Likely.' The sample distribution was not representative and was positively skewed; therefore nonparametric analyses were used. A small positive correlation between the variables was found  $r(1634) = 0.071$ ,  $p = 0.04$  using Spearman's Rho analysis at a 95% confidence interval. This suggests that after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*, students report a slight increase in their willingness to take action

and create positive change for oppressed groups. This relationship, however, is negligible and does not represent any practical significance.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

Despite the challenges inherent in a large sample and the threat of a ceiling effect for the data, students reported a significant change in awareness scores after participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*, suggesting that exposure to the experience had the desired effect of increasing awareness of oppression. As mentioned before, the literature on the impact of diversity training suggests that exposure to knowledge is key to increasing awareness of oppression (Case, 2007). Because of this, the operationalization of the question focused on the participants' knowledge of current affairs relating to oppression and discrimination of different groups in the US. Therefore, *The Tunnel of Oppression* focused on increasing awareness by impacting our participants with articles, media coverage and general factual information regarding these issues. We can then conclude that, the increase in awareness scores is consistent with the aforementioned literature.

When projecting the potential for change in behavior, an assessment of readiness to make change could further our learning in reference to diversity-training approaches. A better understanding of participants' common reactions to diversity-related information and prescriptive strategies to promote a productive and impactful dialogue of oppression, would help assure that individuals that are participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression* leave the experience gaining a higher level of awareness and consideration of their role in promoting societal change. Furthermore, an understanding of stages of change as it relates to identity development can help create more effective programming that is

targeted to participants in their identified stage of change and provide appropriate interventions to assist their multi-dimensional identity development (see Appendix F).

For example, Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross' trans-theoretical model (TTM) for stages of change (1992) presents us with a theory around readiness to make change which is often used for individuals who are attempting to make health-related changes, i.e. - lose weight, abstain from substances, quit smoking, etc. (Prochaska, J., DiClemente, C., & Norcross, J., 1992). One could argue that when attempting to make a change in one's way of thinking and behaving which stems from a lifetime of learning, individuals will most likely go through similar stages. Draycott (2012) suggests, that when an individual is exposed to information that is inconsistent with their beliefs or behavior, they experience an uncomfortable internal state known as *cognitive dissonance*. This feeling serves as a strong motivator to reduce the discomfort by either resisting the information or committing to change. In other words, people are resistant to change because they strive for internal consistency and homeostasis (Draycott, 2012). Because of this, research on resistance to change for both diversity training and health habits suggest that prior to making life changes, an individual must believe that they are vulnerable, that the benefits of change will outweigh the costs and that they are capable of making a change. Due to the parallel experiences of resistance to change experienced in both medical populations and participants of diversity training, application of the stages of change model to the *Tunnel of Oppression* is appropriate. Specifically stages of change constructs can be used to inform elements as well as format of the Tunnel of Oppression.

Rita Hardiman's White Racial Identity Development model (1982) provides a relevant and useful example of the parallel stages a Caucasian individual will experience

when confronted with the concept of race and their racial privilege. In this, she suggests that individuals begin their journey of identity development from a *naïveté stage* in which they have a complete lack of awareness of bias or prejudice (Sue & Sue, 2008).

When introduced to new information that makes an individual confront a new reality for them, they first experience cognitive dissonance and discomfort. At that time, they try to reject the information as untrue and attempt to hold onto their former reality in hope of regaining cognitive internal consistency (Sue & Sue, 2008). This would be reflective of an individual who is in the *Pre-contemplation stage* of change according to Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross' TTM. In this stage, individuals become defensive if their reality is challenged and attempt to hold on to their beliefs at all cost. People in this stage are most likely to react to diversity-related information by believing there is no problem (i.e. - "Sexism is not real, women have the same rights as men", "I treat all people as people regardless of the color of their skin", "If you just work hard enough you can make it anywhere.") Because individuals in this stage lack a perceived need or intent to change, appropriate interventions should be supportive and non-directive (Petrocelli, 2002). In this stage, strategies to motivate individuals towards change include consciousness-raising through a dialogue and exposure of information about the behaviors that need to be addressed (Petrocelli, 2002).

Upon continued exposure to the same information, the discomfort of cognitive dissonance becomes impossible to ignore (Draycott, 2012). At this point, individuals become aware of issues of bias and prejudice, yet have no intention to make a change. Hardiman's model would refer to this stage as the *acceptance stage* of identity development. In this stage, individuals' oppressive beliefs begin to be identified and

considered (Sue & Sue, 2008). Similarly, according to the TTM, this would fall under the *Contemplation stage* as individuals in this stage feel ambivalent regarding change and are not prepared to take action against issues of prejudice and oppression. Individuals are likely to respond to information about oppression in a defensive way (i.e. - “It’s not my fault that I get treated differently, I didn’t ask for it”, “Why should I feel guilty for something that I haven’t even done?”). Because individuals in this stage are considering diversity-related information, yet are not ready to take action, appropriate interventions should be non-judgmental and acknowledge the discomfort of cognitive dissonance. Non-confrontational dialogues in which specific prejudicial behavior is identified would help individuals continue to consider the information presented and increase the sense of importance to make changes. An exploration of values, personal goals and recognition of necessary actions for change are also recommended (Petrocelli, 2002).

After considering the repercussions of prejudice and discrimination, individuals begin to challenge assumptions of power and privilege. Exposure to concrete evidence of oppression forces individuals to face a reality that can no longer be denied. According to Hardiman’s model, this stage is known as the *resistance stage*. Individuals become more aware of their role as the oppressor and the pervasiveness of oppression in their society (Sue & Sue, 2008). At this moment, individuals begin to ask themselves challenging questions as they attempt to gather a better understanding about oppressed minorities and their own role as the oppressor (Sue & Sue, 2008). TTM refers to this stage as the *Preparation stage*. This stage is characterized by an active decision to make changes in their ways of thinking and behaving as well as an active effort to gain more information about oppressed groups (Petrocelli, 2002). Individuals in this stage are likely to respond

to diversity-related information by feeling guilty and hurt and expressing feelings of anger and rage towards their own racial group (i.e.- “Yes, racism exists but what can I do about it?” “I just wish everyone could get along!” “It’s so frustrating when people say that women can’t drive, I happen to know a lot of women who are great drivers!”). Because individuals in this stage have made a conscious decision to change, appropriate interventions may include establishing a concrete plan for ways in which they can make desired changes in their life. A discussion on potential obstacles for change and sources of social support are then recommended (Petrocelli, 2002).

This active exploration of knowledge regarding diversity-related issues through difficult dialogues results in individuals confronting their biases and prejudice and taking responsibility for their role as oppressor through unearned power and privilege. According to Hardiman’s model, this stage is known as the *definition stage* (Sue & Sue, 2008). Similarly, the TTM defines the *action stage* as a commitment to make change through overt behaviors and an effort to sustain diversity dialogues (Petrocelli, 2002). At this point, individuals are most likely to respond to diversity-related information by accepting that they play a role in perpetuating oppression and then increase their motivation to take action against inequality (i.e.- “As a White Male I am aware that I have advantages that others don’t have, I try to explain this to my friends all the time”). Because individuals in this stage have demonstrated effort and commitment to change through purposeful behavior and an engagement in difficult dialogues, appropriate interventions include reinforcing their efforts and encouraging a maintenance of current actions. In addition, a dialogue regarding challenges for future growth and potential relapse are recommended.

Through an active engagement in diversity dialogues, individuals are able to form a new social and personal identity in which they are able to accept responsibility for effecting personal and social change. According to Hardiman's model, this stage is known as the *internalization stage* (Sue & Sue, 2008). Given the plethora of individuals' different intersecting diversity variables and the life journey of diversity awareness and health habits, individuals are likely to cycle through these stages multiple times. According to the TTM, the process of sustaining a diversity dialogue and attempting to remain culturally sensitive is referred to as the *Maintenance stage* (Petrocelli, 2002). When presented with diversity-related information, individuals in this stage are likely to express understanding and awareness of information presented (i.e.- "I have been taught a lot of different stereotypes throughout my life, I realize that sometimes these thoughts are out of my control and what do is catch myself before acting" "I believe that overcoming racism equally benefits white people and people of color"). Given these individuals' active engagement in exploring the impact of their thoughts and behavior on others, appropriate interventions in this stage include continued opportunities to engage in difficult discussions as well as reinforcing individuals to become involved in training others.

It is important to consider that because identity development is an ongoing process, an individual may struggle with many pitfalls in which they may lose track of their goals for change and may even return to their original patterns of behavior by entering the *Relapse stage* (Petrocelli, 2002). In the world of health habits, relapse can be triggered from unexpected life events, social/emotional triggers and the occurrence of new health issues. The same may be expected from diversity awareness.



When looking at the *Tunnel of Oppression*, the intervention itself provides information regarding multiple different “Isms” that impact the US’s diverse population. This intervention is meant to produce cognitive dissonance in the participant in hope of ‘planting seeds’ for change. It allows individuals, regardless of what stage of change they are currently in, to learn about difficult issues that need to be addressed and are often ignored. Hence, this intervention can help promote change at every stage and allows for people to receive the support needed to continue progressing. The debriefing dialogues following the experience, provide a unique opportunity for participants to receive appropriate interventions tailored to their current stage of change. Through an overall non-judgmental dialogue of the individuals’ reactions, each participant can gain a broader understanding of actions they can take to make changes, as well as discuss their reactions to the material presented. In addition, through an understanding of participants’ expected reactions related to their stage of change, debriefing group leaders can identify specific strategies to aid in the continual growth of all participants.

The data was analyzed to determine whether a lived experience of oppression translated to a higher level of initial awareness of oppression prior to participating in the *Tunnel of Oppression*. Pope-Davis & Ottavi (1994) argue that lived oppression makes an individual more likely to recognize oppression. The data analysis was consistent with this literature, as it found that female and racial minority participants reported higher levels of awareness of oppression prior to participating in the Tunnel.

Stemming from these findings, the data was further analyzed to explore whether a lived experience of racism and sexism resulted in a ceiling effect in which participants did not show improvements in awareness scores after participating in the experience. The

data did not reflect a ceiling effect as significant changes in awareness scores were also noted for both female and racial minority groups. In fact, not only did female participants report a higher rating of initial awareness, they also demonstrated a significantly higher change in awareness scores than their male counterparts.

Both the dominant and oppressed student groups reported an improvement in their scores suggesting that despite an initial higher level of awareness, oppressed groups still benefited from the intervention. The literature suggests that individuals from minority groups are exposed to the same stereotypical messages regarding their own group and internalize these beliefs in a way that can perpetuate the oppression experienced by their own group (Russell, 1996). Therefore, consistent with this literature, exposure to information regarding oppression had the desired effect of increasing awareness of oppression. In addition, the question used to measure awareness referenced the frequency of oppression experienced by all oppressed groups and was not specific to race or gender. The literature suggests that while individuals may be oppressed in some aspects of their identity, they may also hold power and privilege in other areas where they serve as the oppressors (Rogers, Scott & Way, 2015). This increase in awareness scores is therefore consistent with the literature, as individuals are likely to gain awareness of oppression regarding other identity variables, to which they may hold privilege, as well as react towards internalized negative messages regarding their own group.

Finally, the data was analyzed to determine whether there was a relationship between the increase in awareness scores and the reported change in motivation to talk about oppression and to take action against it. Small positive correlations were found between both of the variables, yet the results did not reflect a practical significance.

According to the TTM's stages of change, the individuals' willingness to take action against oppression would be dependent on their readiness for change. Given that the data did not include the participants' current level of change, it is not possible to determine whether the results are consistent with the literature. However, given that all participants were freshman students, it is likely that many of them were exposed to this type of diversity awareness activity as well as related information for the first time. If this were the case, results would be consistent with the literature as we should not expect participants in a pre-contemplation stage of change to demonstrate a willingness to take action.

### **Limitations and Future Direction**

Due to the archival nature of this study, there are inherent limitations that need to be discussed and can inform future directions and approaches. The list of oppressed groups on the survey was not extensive and excluded groups that should have been included (transsexual, mental illness, intersex, etc.). Additionally, in order to gauge whether belonging to a specific demographic group would increase the individuals' awareness of oppression towards that group, more detailed demographic data would have been necessary. Examples of this would be religious affiliation, disability status, ethnicity, etc. Further research would greatly benefit from including these variables in order to adequately assess oppression awareness based on other group membership. Also, given the nature of the omissions, for example the exclusion of transgender and disability being listed in one aspect of the survey but not the other is suggestive of oversights and limited lenses of those who developed the questions and likely the absence of those members of the community in the development of the surveys. This is problematic.

Given that the *Tunnel of Oppression* has been at Wright State University since the year 2000, it would have been helpful and potentially informative in evaluating benefits of repeat exposure to the Tunnel to ask if participants had ever participated in the experience or a similar event prior. This information would have been helpful because it reduces variability due to a practice effect, which would have resulted in a larger sample size for this study. This was not particularly problematic for this specific study given that the great majority of participants were first year students. Furthermore, since the display changes every year, it is recommended that future research on this experience include a comparative analysis by year to determine whether the way information is presented has had an impact on the participants' awareness. This could further our understanding of what components of diversity training are most effective and hence facilitate the creation of a more standardized way to present the experience across different universities.

Another limitation to this study was found in the survey itself, given that the creation of this tool was not grounded nor informed by research identifying critical components of attitude change and behavioral change to query. The validity of some of the survey questions was problematic due to the lack of clarity in definitions and complexity of language used. The creation of the survey consisted of collaboration between professionals and did not include a systematic approach to measuring the validity of responses. Additionally, the omission of some groups in the survey is suggestive of an absence of members from those omitted groups in the development and/or review of the survey. It is therefore recommended that a new assessment tool be created drawing from the literature on readiness for change and current research of the common reactions to the exposure to diversity related information. Members from the

diversity groups omitted, students and faculty as well as diversity training experts should be invited to review and revise the surveys as well as the quality of each room prior to the event. Despite the limitations overall, some of the survey questions were adequate and allowed for analysis suggesting there is an impact on awareness and committed action when using this form of training. Further, this limitation, however, had little impact on the intent of this current study as the questions selected for this study represented an overall measurement of self-reported awareness of oppression and were not meant to establish relationships among the variables.

Another limitation refers to statements by Kruger and Dunning (1999) who say that people have the tendency to overestimate their abilities and fail to recognize the extremity of their incompetence in certain areas. Therefore, it is expected that individuals in this research overestimate their knowledge of oppression and fail to recognize their role as an oppressor. Because of this, the methodology of the survey is likely to underestimate the actual impact that the experience has on participants as they may reach a ceiling effect when rating their understanding and awareness of oppression. Kruger and Dunning suggest that individuals fail to recognize their inadequacy because they do not have the cognitive information to judge their abilities as inadequate. They propose that if an individual is exposed to training for the skill they are lacking in, they are better able to acknowledge and recognize their skill deficit. Because of this, it is recommended that future research assess the individuals' change by having the participants rate their prior knowledge of oppression after experiencing the *Tunnel of Oppression*, thus allowing for a more accurate, subjective measure of change. Given that the survey already relies on the

participants' self-reported awareness, integrating this approach should not pose any additional challenge.

Also, given the digital skill of college students versus longhand writing, it would be of great benefit for this target group to structure future surveys in a digital format. This proposed change would not only increase the efficiency of the study but also would allow for greater accessibility for participants with disabilities and ensure for a higher completion rate of the surveys by implementing prompts for unfilled sections. This could also facilitate the data collection process and provide for a faster analysis of the survey with its corresponding recommendations. In implementing these changes, it is recommended that the survey be available in multiple modalities (auditory, digital and hardcopy) in order to be inclusive of participants who may need accommodations. In addition, it is recommended that personnel running the Tunnel be available to assist participants who may need assistance with technical support and/or disability related accommodations. This increase in accessibility is not only recommended for the survey component of this research, but also for the presentation of materials along the Tunnel.

The language used in the survey assumes that individuals are familiar with and aware of terms of oppression. Many of the collected surveys included comments on the margins of the pre-test such as: "what is oppression?" "I don't understand the question" among others, which suggests that some students were confused as to how to respond to the survey. As detailed in the literature review, many of the concepts and isms discussed do not have a clear definition even among diversity experts. While some may focus on the impact of attitudes on the oppressed, others discuss a more holistic approach that considers the social structures that perpetuate oppression (Pincus & Sokoloff, 2008). In

order to avoid these difficulties in the future, it could be beneficial to include a section with definitions in the survey so that the researchers can ensure that respondents are giving more accurate answers. In addition, some of the questions were vague and did not differentiate between witnessing and participating in oppressive acts. Because of this, many students marked on the surveys crossing off “participated” in order to separate themselves from the role of “oppressor.” Other students provided two separate responses in an attempt to maintain a separation from frequency of witnessing oppression and frequency of participation. This decreased the number of usable surveys as these responses were excluded in order to properly measure change. Thus, future research of the *Tunnel of Oppression* should include a more detailed survey that addresses knowledge of oppression and differentiates between participation and witnessing of events. It is recommended that the terms utilized in the survey be understandable to the layperson instead of terminologies that might confuse them. It is suggested that a new assessment tool be implemented to assure comprehensible, appropriate and consistent terminology. The current survey assumes that diversity and discrimination dialogues, witnessing and participating in discrimination and acceptance and appreciation of diverse groups are the same. The use of this imprecise terminology may increase the variability of responses and therefore hinder the participants’ ability to respond accurately.

The survey utilizes an inconsistent Likert rating scale that may pose a challenge for participants when responding to survey items. For example, when talking about frequency on a five-point Likert scale, it is assumed that the lowest rating (1) will represent no frequency (i.e- None, not at all, Never, etc.), whereas the highest rating (5) should represent extreme frequency (Always, All of the time, etc.) For the current survey,

a rating of 4 is labeled as “A lot” and a rating of 5 is labeled as “Very Much” which linguistically speaking does not reflect a difference and may confuse the participant when providing a rating. In creating a new assessment tool, it is recommended that the survey be tested on a representative sample of students followed by a focus group in which participants’ feedback on the tool would serve as a guide to modifications to increase the understanding and validity of questions. Furthermore, it is recommended that the questions be constructed based on current literature on diversity interventions.

In order to fully explore the impact of the experience on students, it would be beneficial to track attitudes with a 3 and 6 month follow-up study to determine whether the experience has a long-lasting effect or to what extent participants forget what they learned (decay). Moreover, one could position the *Tunnel of Oppression* as a strategy to market a new way of thinking in which oppression is challenged. Research on the frequency of exposure needed for optimal effectiveness of a message, suggests that in order to see change in behavior and a long lasting attitudinal shift, participants must be exposed to the same content a minimum of three times (Cannon, 2001 & Kamin, 1978). Because of this, it is recommended that information presented in the *Tunnel of Oppression* be woven into classroom exercises and discussed with more frequency on college campuses.

Finally, the *Tunnel of Oppression* is a self-paced display of information. This poses a unique problem because it assumes that all individuals that participate in the experience are motivated to fully and equally engage in all of the rooms. It becomes challenging to determine whether participants have had adequate exposure to the material versus others that simply glanced over the information. Although this poses a unique



challenge to measuring change for this study, it is the researcher's opinion that this methodology is likely to have a greater impact on students that are motivated to learn from the experience. Research on the implementation of diversity training suggests that individuals respond better and retain diversity related information when there is a member of the oppressed group and a member of the dominant group present, encouraging a productive, non-confrontational dialogue. Because of this, it is recommended that the *Tunnel of Oppression* collaborate with student organizations and place volunteers that represent the discussed oppressed groups in each room in order to guide participants through each room and fully engage participants in the information presented. Research on diversity interventions suggests that having members that represent both the dominant and oppressed groups present reduce the participants' social distance and therefore increased their engagement with the information.

In making these changes, the *Tunnel of Oppression* would further serve to empower oppressed groups giving them voice to discuss the injuries of oppression experienced in their own community. It is important to note, however, that student volunteers should engage in an orientation in which stages of their identity development and readiness to engage in a non-confrontational diversity dialogue are assessed.

The lack of standardization of the *Tunnel of Oppression* suggests that individuals who participate in the Tunnel will learn different things and have a different reaction to the experience depending on the university that is sponsoring the event. Many opposed to the *Tunnel of Oppression* described scenarios in which participants were called names, humiliated or exposed to role-plays about rape, suicide and other situations that elicit a strong emotional reaction (Barrett-Fox, 2007). Because of this, the Tunnel of Oppression

has gained a reputation as an immersion experience that is meant to “shock and awe” participants and forces them into the role of “victim” (Barrett-Fox, 2007). As defined, the Tunnel experience does not meet the parameter of an immersion experience and even an immersion experience would not advocate for strategies that involve humiliation and mistreatment of participants. A confrontational and hostile approach will injure and increase the defensiveness of participants. Studies suggest that when diversity related information is presented in a confrontational way, participants are likely to experience a “fight or flight” reaction, resulting in feelings of anger and an overall dismissal of the information presented (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies, 2013). When individuals are in a high level of stress, they are unable to cognitively process information and therefore will not be able to fully understand the material presented. Information should be presented in a non-judgmental way where students’ discomfort is based on cognitive dissonance, not on a reaction to verbal attacks. Furthermore, exposure to diversity related information that is inaccurate and results in strong negative feelings may lead to more negative attitudes towards oppressed groups (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies, 2013). Having members of oppressed groups and diversity experts collaborate on how and what information is presented would assure that the experience represents accurate common experiences of oppression and does not solely focus on extreme forms of oppression. In order to better assess the effectiveness and impact of the *Tunnel of Oppression* on participants and integrate the experiences of oppressed groups, it is recommended that researchers utilize focus groups with participants after they have gone through the Tunnel to provide a platform where participants can share their experience and reactions to the material presented.

It is recommended that future research focus on developing a standardized manual of the *Tunnel of Oppression* drawing from current literature on diversity training. The creation of this manual would assure that the experience adheres to the desired intent and impact on people who participate, as well as informs methods and outcome measures. An alternative approach could use the advances of technology that are appealing to younger generations. Specifically, with the new development of holographic technology including Microsoft's HoloLens ©, the *Tunnel of Oppression* could be designed using a virtual reality platform that would allow for a standardization of the experience for all participants. The digital format of the Tunnel would facilitate the collaboration among universities, diversity experts and members of oppressed groups allowing for better presentation of information that is based on current diversity research and incorporates the perspective of oppressed groups. This collaboration would permit faster updates of presented information, a direct platform for feedback and recommendations from diversity experts and would allow for a more personalized format of the experience for individuals needing accommodations.

The use of Holographic technology could allow for participants to narrate their experiences as they walk through the Tunnel providing in-vivo qualitative data for further research. In addition, eye-tracking software could be integrated to explore what information participants are most drawn to, as well as track the amount of time individuals spend reading the materials in each room. Using this technology could facilitate translation of information into multiple languages including ASL and provide disability-related accommodations for all participants to maximize inclusion of all participants.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### Steps for group process leaders:

1. Please pass out surveys to be completed and collected before beginning the discussion.
2. DO NOT allow persons to complete surveys after the discussion has begun.
4. Please give appropriate hand-out to instructors and use process group questions provided if appropriate.
3. Please do not allow the completion of the surveys or the subsequent discussion to last beyond **30 minutes** after the class is scheduled to arrive at the group! DO NOT WAIT TO BEGIN. There will be other classes scheduled to meet with you after 30 minutes has elapsed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!!!!

## Appendix B

### UVC class script for greeters:

- Thank you for coming to the *Tunnel of Oppression*.
- Please proceed inside to the table to the left of the door to complete a short survey **BEFORE** entering the tunnel. The arrows located on the floor will guide you. There are blank surveys and pens in one box. There is another box to place your survey after you have completed it. Please leave the pen for the next person.
- After walking through the tunnel please proceed to your group area where the group facilitator will give you a brief survey to complete **BEFORE** the process group begins.
- Your process group will begin 15 minutes after the time your class signed-up to begin the tunnel.
- Please do not rush through the tunnel to meet with your class' process group. You may enter the group after it has already started. The groups can last up to 30 minutes.

### Non-UVC class script for greeters:

- Thank you for coming to the *Tunnel of Oppression*
- Please proceed inside to the table to the left of the door to complete a short survey **BEFORE** entering the tunnel. The arrows located on the floor will guide you. There are blank surveys and pens in one box. There is another box to place your survey after you have completed it. Please leave the pen for the next person.
- After walking through the tunnel please proceed to the tables to the right of the tunnel exit to complete a short survey. Again, there will be boxes to pick up a blank survey and to drop-off your completed survey. Please leave the pens provided for the next person. Your feedback is appreciated!
- Persons with "Hello" name tags will be available to discuss your reactions to the "Tunnel of Oppression"

## Appendix C

### Questions to ponder before leading a process group:

1. What oppressive beliefs do you harbor? Have you ever acted upon your oppressive beliefs or not attempted to prohibit an oppressive act?
2. Have you done anything to modify your oppressive beliefs, behaviors, or passivity?
3. Do you feel oppressor guilt? Have you resolved what to do about this?
4. Do you feel accusatory towards an oppressor? Have you resolved what to do about this?
5. Is there a particular “ism” that seems less difficult to endure than the others? Do you become annoyed when this “ism” is discussed? Have you resolved what to do about this?

## Appendix D

### PRE-TEST

No. \_\_\_\_\_

I am a: \_\_\_\_\_ WSU First-year Student      \_\_\_\_\_ WSU Upper-class Student  
                   \_\_\_\_\_ WSU Faculty/Staff                      \_\_\_\_\_ Non WSU Affiliate

I am in a UVC 101 class:    \_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_ No

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male    \_\_\_\_\_ Female    \_\_\_\_\_ Transgender    \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to answer

Race/Ethnicity:

___ African-American/Black/African	___ American Indian or Alaskan Native
___ Arab American/Arab/Persian	___ Asian American/Asian
___ East Indian	___ European American/White/Caucasian
___ Hispanic/Latino/a	___ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
___ Multi-racial	___ Prefer not to answer
___ Other (Please specify: _____)	

Please circle your best **GUESS** for the following questions regarding persons that belong to oppressed groups based on disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, class, gender, and mental health.

1. How often does oppression occur in the United States of America because of biases based on oppressed group membership?

Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

2. How frequently do the following groups experience oppression?

	Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Persons with a disability	1	2	3	4	5
Racial minorities (non-white)	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are religious	1	2	3	4	5
People who are <b>not</b> Christians	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are gay, lesbian or bisexual	1	2	3	4	5
Persons with a mental illness	1	2	3	4	5
Persons <b>greater than</b> average size	1	2	3	4	5
Women	1	2	3	4	5
People that are poor	1	2	3	4	5

3. How much personal development is needed for you to appreciate/accept persons within the following groups?

	None	A Little	Some	A Lot	Very Much
Persons with a disability	1	2	3	4	5
Racial minorities (non-white)	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are religious	1	2	3	4	5
People who are <b>not</b> Christians	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are gay, lesbian or bisexual	1	2	3	4	5
Persons with a mental illness	1	2	3	4	5
Persons <b>greater than</b> average size	1	2	3	4	5
Women	1	2	3	4	5
People that are poor	1	2	3	4	5

4. How frequently have you witnessed or participated in discrimination of one of the following groups?

	Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Persons with a disability	1	2	3	4	5
Racial minorities (non-white)	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are religious	1	2	3	4	5
People who are <b>not</b> Christians	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are gay, lesbian or bisexual	1	2	3	4	5
Persons with a mental illness	1	2	3	4	5
Persons <b>greater than</b> average size	1	2	3	4	5
Women	1	2	3	4	5
People that are poor	1	2	3	4	5

5. How frequently have you been the target of discrimination because you are affiliated with one of the oppressed groups?

Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

6. How likely are you to talk about discrimination or diversity with your friends?

Not at All	Very Unlikely	Possibly	Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

7. How likely are you to participate in creating positive change for oppressed groups?

Not at All	Very Unlikely	Possibly	Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5



**POST-TEST**

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your best **GUESS** for the following questions regarding persons that belong to oppressed groups based on disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, class, gender, and mental health.

1. How often does oppression occur in the United States of America because of biases based on oppressed group membership?

Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

2. How frequently do the following groups experience oppression?

	Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Persons with a disability	1	2	3	4	5
Racial minorities (non-white)	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are religious	1	2	3	4	5
People who are <b>not</b> Christians	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are gay, lesbian or bisexual	1	2	3	4	5
Persons with a mental illness	1	2	3	4	5
Persons <b>greater than</b> average size	1	2	3	4	5
Women	1	2	3	4	5
People that are poor	1	2	3	4	5

3. How much personal development is needed for you to appreciate/accept persons within the following groups?

	None	A Little	Some	A Lot	Very Much
Persons with a disability	1	2	3	4	5
Racial minorities (non-white)	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are religious	1	2	3	4	5
People who are <b>not</b> Christians	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are gay, lesbian or bisexual	1	2	3	4	5
Persons with a mental illness	1	2	3	4	5
Persons <b>greater than</b> average size	1	2	3	4	5
Women	1	2	3	4	5
People that are poor	1	2	3	4	5

4. How frequently have you witnessed or participated in discrimination of one of the following groups?

	Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Persons with a disability	1	2	3	4	5
Racial minorities (non-white)	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are religious	1	2	3	4	5
People who are <b>not</b> Christians	1	2	3	4	5
Persons that are gay, lesbian or bisexual	1	2	3	4	5
Persons with a mental illness	1	2	3	4	5
Persons <b>greater than</b> average size	1	2	3	4	5
Women	1	2	3	4	5
People that are poor	1	2	3	4	5

5. How frequently have you been the target of discrimination because you are affiliated with one of the oppressed groups?

Not at All	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

6. How likely are you to talk about discrimination or diversity with your friends?

Not at All	Very Unlikely	Possibly	Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

7. How likely are you to participate in creating positive change for oppressed groups?

Not at All	Very Unlikely	Possibly	Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

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**Please offer feedback to improve the Tunnel of Oppression.**

-Would you recommend this experience to your friends? Why or why not?

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-What room or part of the Tunnel had the most impact on you and why? What parts of the Tunnel did you most like?

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-Which Tunnel of Oppression room needs the most improvement? How would you improve it?

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### Appendix E

# participants	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Count	Totals
2011				
First Year Students	Male	African American/Black/African	48	957
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	2	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	8	
		East Indian	4	
		European American/White/Caucasian	254	
		Hispanic/Latino	4	
		Multi-racial	29	
		Other	2	
		Prefer not to answer	10	
	Female	African American/Black/African	127	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	11	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	389	
		Hispanic/Latino	6	
		Multi-racial	44	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	5	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	4	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	1	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	3	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
Asian American/Asian		0		
East Indian		0		
European American/White/Caucasian		1		
Hispanic/Latino		0		
Multi-racial		0		
Other		0		
Prefer not to answer		2		

Upper-Class Students	Male	African American/Black/African	2	39
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	11	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	1	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	1	
	Female	African American/Black/African	11	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	3	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	9	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
Prefer not to answer		0		

Faculty/Staff	Male	African American/Black/African	1	11
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	2	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Female	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	8	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
Hispanic/Latino		0		
Multi-racial		0		
Other		0		
Prefer not to answer		0		

Non WSU affiliate	Male	African American/Black/African	2	4
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Female	African American/Black/African	1	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	1	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
Hispanic/Latino		0		
Multi-racial		0		
Other		0		
Prefer not to answer		0		

UVC class members	Male	African American/Black/African	45	913
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	2	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	7	
		East Indian	4	
		European American/White/Caucasian	250	
		Hispanic/Latino	4	
		Multi-racial	27	
		Other	2	
		Prefer not to answer	8	
	Female	African American/Black/African	117	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	7	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	372	
		Hispanic/Latino	6	
		Multi-racial	44	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	5	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	4	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	1	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	2	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	1	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
Other		0		
Prefer not to answer		2		

2012				
First Year Students	Male	African American/Black/African	35	677
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	7	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	204	
		Hispanic/Latino	2	
		Multi-racial	15	
		Other	1	
		Prefer not to answer	4	
	Female	African American/Black/African	81	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	2	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	277	
		Hispanic/Latino	3	
		Multi-racial	22	
		Other	1	
		Prefer not to answer	4	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	1	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	8	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	1	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	3	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	3	



Upper-Class Students	Male	African American/Black/African	2	32
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	6	
		Hispanic/Latino	1	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	1	
	Female	African American/Black/African	4	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	13	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	4	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
Arab American/Arab/Persian		0		
Asian American/Asian		0		
East Indian		0		
European American/White/Caucasian		0		
Hispanic/Latino		0		
Multi-racial		0		
Other		0		
Prefer not to answer		1		

Faculty/Staff	Male	African American/Black/African	0	16
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	1	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	2	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Female	African American/Black/African	1	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	6	
		Hispanic/Latino	1	
		Multi-racial	2	
		Other	1	
		Prefer not to answer	1	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	1	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
Hispanic/Latino		0		
Multi-racial		0		
Other		0		
Prefer not to answer		0		

Non WSU affiliate	Male	African American/Black/African	0	0
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Female	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	0	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	0	
Hispanic/Latino		0		
Multi-racial		0		
Other		0		
Prefer not to answer		0		

UVC class members	Male	African American/Black/African	35	645
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	8	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	185	
		Hispanic/Latino	2	
		Multi-racial	15	
		Other	1	
		Prefer not to answer	4	
	Female	African American/Black/African	78	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	1	
		Asian American/Asian	2	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	266	
		Hispanic/Latino	2	
		Multi-racial	23	
		Other	1	
		Prefer not to answer	4	
	Transgender	African American/Black/African	1	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	8	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	0	
	Prefer not to answer	African American/Black/African	1	
		American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	
		Arab American/Arab/Persian	0	
		Asian American/Asian	0	
		East Indian	0	
		European American/White/Caucasian	3	
		Hispanic/Latino	0	
		Multi-racial	0	
		Other	0	
		Prefer not to answer	3	

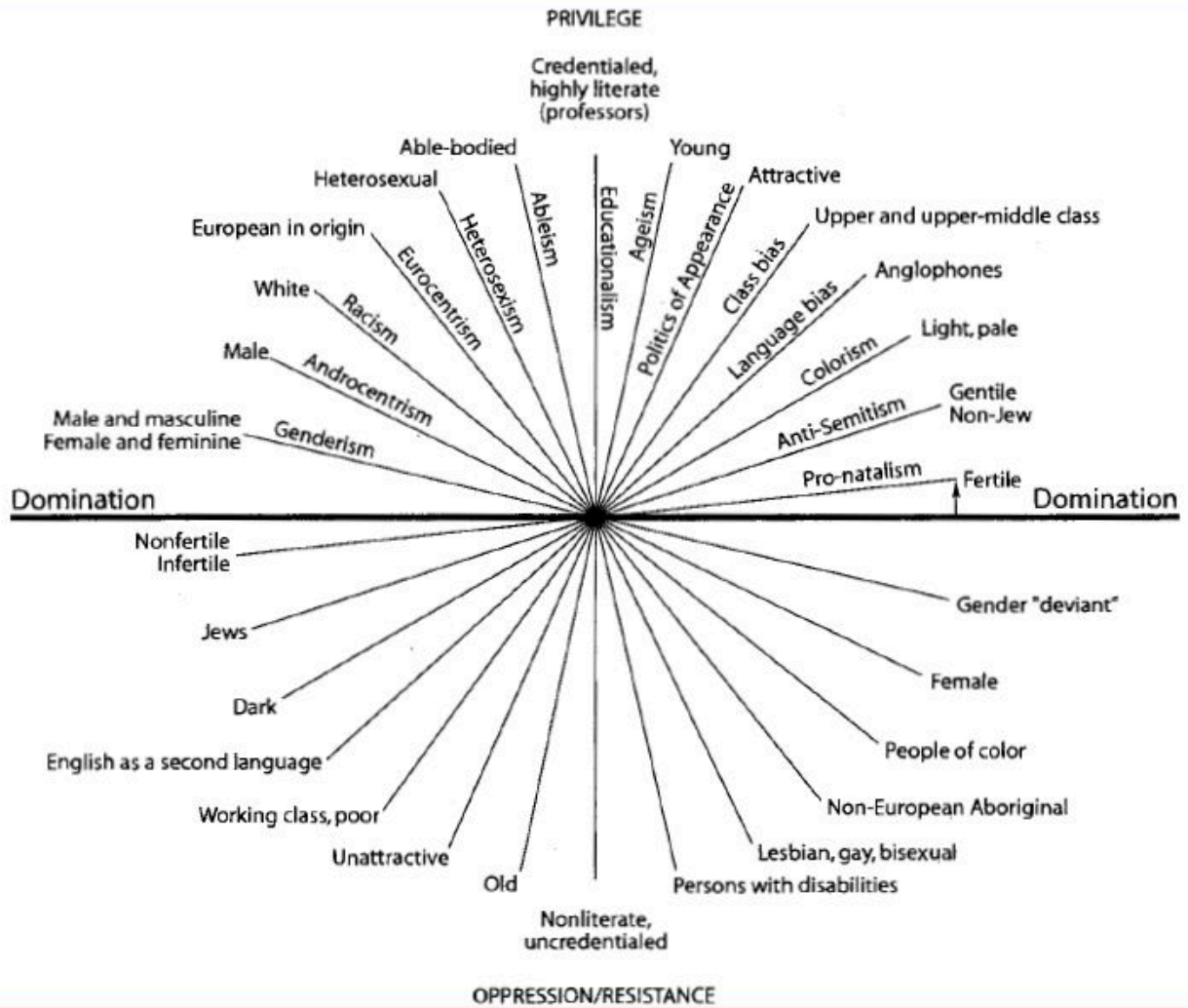
## Appendix F

<b>Identity Development</b>	<b>Stages of Change</b>	<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Modifications to Tunnel of Oppression</b>
<i>Naïveté</i>	Pre-contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consciousness-raising.</li> <li>• Exposure to information regarding oppression.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psycho educational materials prior to entering the Tunnel about the process of learning about diversity and wrestling with privilege</li> </ul>
<i>Acceptance</i>	Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalizing discomfort of cognitive dissonance.</li> <li>• Non-confrontational dialogues identifying specific prejudicial behavior.</li> </ul> <p>An exploration of values, personal goals and recognition of necessary actions for change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide participants with a survey to assist in the identification of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs regarding oppression and allowing participant to reflect on their own experience prior to entering the tunnel</li> <li>• Use change ruler techniques to rate level of confidence and importance to make change on a scale from 1-10 where 1 represents no confidence and 10 certainty of ability to change</li> </ul>

<i>Resistance</i>	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a concrete plan for ways in which they can make desired changes in their life. Discussion of potential obstacles for change and sources of social support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a discussion group after participating in the tunnel where participants are allowed to discuss their reactions to the information presented and are encouraged to identify specific behavior that they will work on changing and develop a plan of when and how they propose to make these changes.</li> </ul>
<i>Redefinition</i>	Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforcing efforts to make change</li> <li>Encouragement of maintenance of current actions. Dialogue regarding challenges for future growth and potential relapse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement follow-up with participants within a period less than six months after experiencing the tunnel of oppression and discuss informational materials about diversity competence and ask participants where they are in their commitment for change.</li> </ul>
<i>Internalization</i>	Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide continued opportunities to engage in difficult dialogues</li> <li>Encouragement of individuals to become involved in training others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite participants to become a volunteer for future presentations of the tunnel and provide participants with information about activities and events they can get involved in to continue in their journey for change</li> </ul>

## Appendix G

**Intersecting axes of privilege, domination, and oppression.** Source: From *Feminist perspectives in therapy empowering diverse women* by Worell, J., & Remer, P., 2003. (2nd ed.). New York, New York: Wiley.



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