



Oppression is the denial of access to material resources and social power. Oppression can be covert or overt. It is important to be able to identify and name the types of oppression to be able to transcend them. Oppression can manifest in four distinct ways.

FORMS OF OPPRESSION

Individual Oppression

An individual’s active or passive participation in oppression can take the form of conscious or unconscious beliefs. Leads to stereotypes, bias and prejudice.

Interpersonal Oppression

Interpersonal oppression is the action that accompanies stereotypes and prejudice in group interactions. Leads to the unequal treatment of people in different identity groups or discrimination.

Systemic Oppression

Systemic oppression is found in institutional structures and are designed to privilege some and oppress others. Results in inequity.

Cultural Oppression

Cultural oppression is found in norms that impose a sense of inferiority or superiority. For example, a group can be thought of as inferior if they do not speak or use “proper” grammatical English.

Adapted from: The Program on Intergroup Relations, IGR Insights (2019), University of Michigan.



Office for Inclusion &
Intercultural Initiatives
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY