

# Health Equity and Social Justice



**Safe & Supportive Schools Grant Conference  
October, 2012**

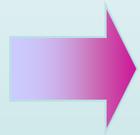
# Objectives



**Understand what it means to apply a social justice perspective to educational systems change work.**



**Identify how oppression and unearned privilege occur across many types of difference, and at four levels (personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural).**



**Recognize the work that needs to be done at the personal level in order to engage authentically across differences such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.**

# Guidelines for Learning and Dialogue



Listen with an open heart and an open mind.



Respect that our experiences and realities are different from one another.



Practice “both/and” thinking.



Try on.



Practice self-focus.

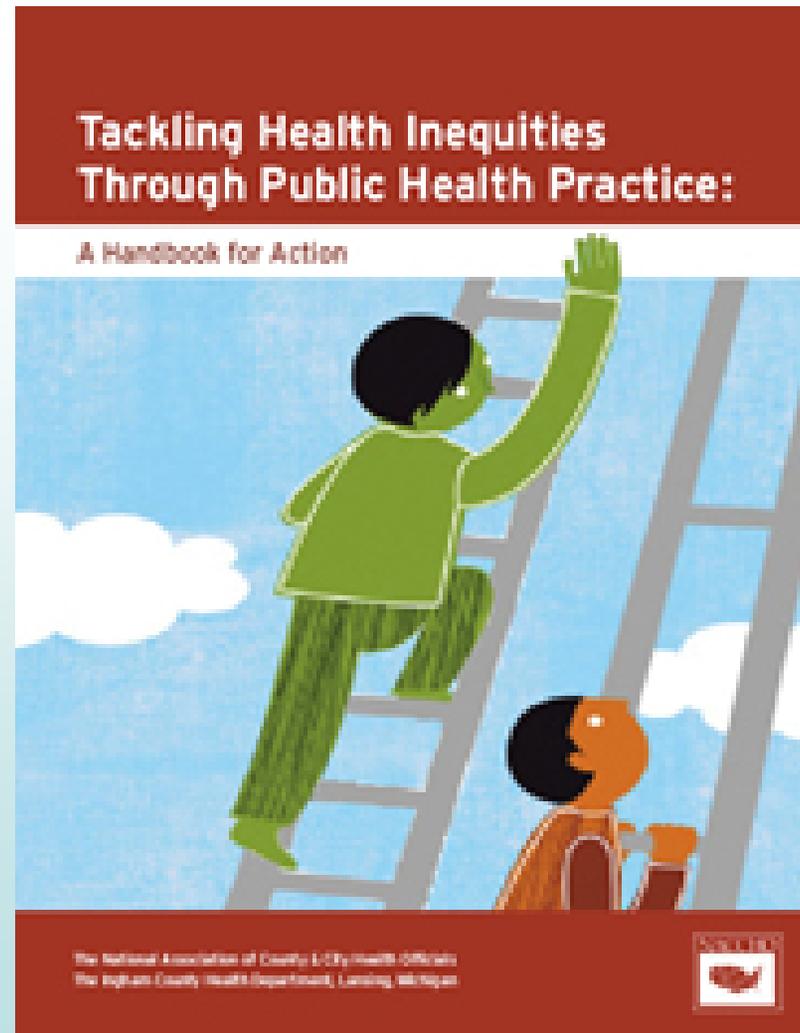


Notice intent and impact.



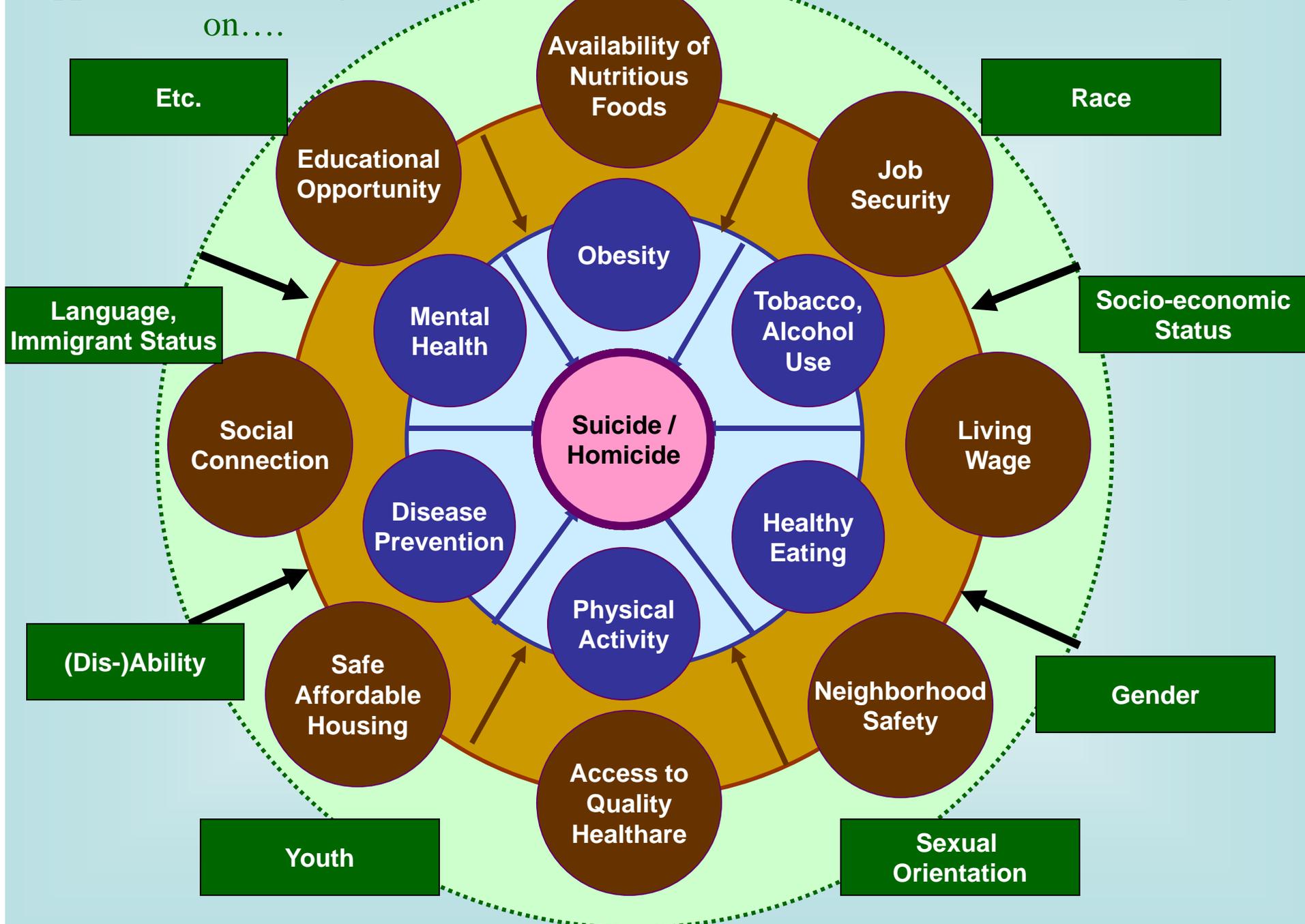
Make space for discomfort.

# Distinguishing Between Disparity and Inequity



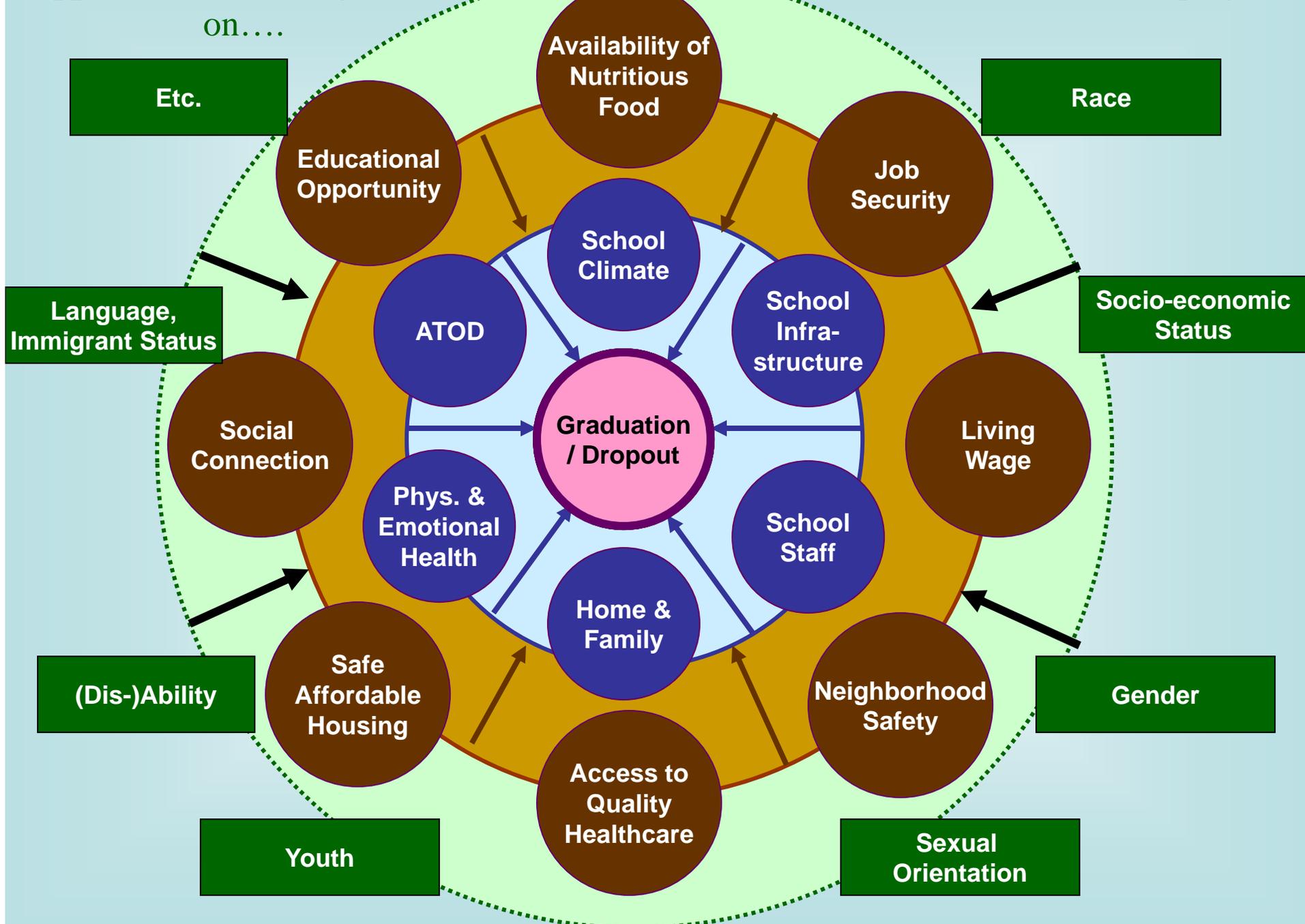
Oppression & Privileges based on....

Root Causes of Inequity



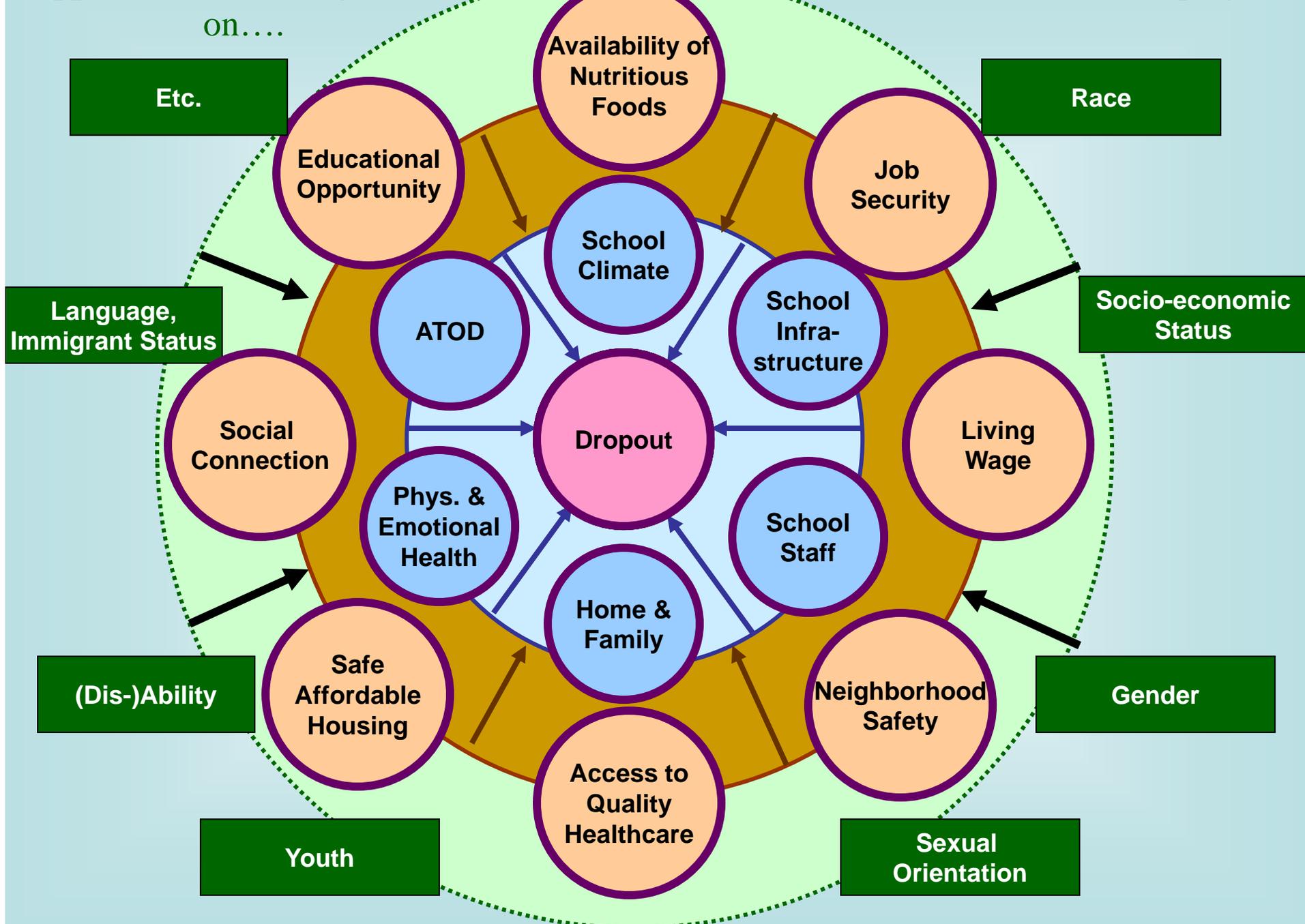
Oppression based on...

Root Causes of Inequity



Oppression & Privilege based on....

Root Causes of Inequity



# Target and Non-Target Identities

Type of Oppression	Target Group	Non-Target Group
Racial	People of color	White people
Class	Poor; working class	Middle, owning class
Gender	Women	Men
Sexual Orientation	Non-heterosexuals (lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc)	Heterosexual people
Ability	People w/ disability	People w/o disability
Religion	Non-Christian	Christian
Age	People over 40	Young people
Youth	Children, youth, young adults	Older adults
Rank/Status	People w/o college deg.; low status in org.	People w/ college deg. High status in org.
Military Service	Vietnam Veterans	Veterans of other wars
Immigrant Status	Immigrant	U.S.-born
Language	Non-English	English

Adapted from Valerie Batts' article, "Is Reconciliation Possible? Lessons from Combating Modern Racism"

# Target and Non-Target Identities

## Target Groups

Groups that are historically “targeted” as *less than* because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, role, class, ability or other type of difference.

## Non-Target Groups

Groups most likely to receive unearned privileges and benefits because of group membership.

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**Find a partner.**

**Select one of your TARGET GROUP statuses.**

**(You and your partner can select different ones.)**

**Think back to your earliest awareness of this particular type of difference.**

**Think about the messages you received about this TARGET group that you belong to?**

**How did you learn were people in this group treated differently from the NON-TARGET group?**

**Share with your partner:**

**How old were you?**

**What was the situation?**

**What feelings did you experience as a result?**

**This time, select one of your  
NON-TARGET GROUP statuses.**

**(You and your partner can select different ones.)**

**Think back to when you became aware of this type of difference.**

**Think about the early messages you received about people in this  
NON-TARGET group.**

**How did you learn that people in this group were treated “better  
than” people in the TARGET group?**

**Share with your partner:**

**How old were you?**

**What was the situation?**

**What feelings did you experience as a result?**

**Finally, select one of your  
NON-TARGET GROUP statuses.**

**(It can be the same one as last time of a different one.)**

**This time, consider any phase of your life, not just childhood.**

**Try to remember a time you treated someone in the corresponding  
TARGET GROUP as *less than*.**

**(May be intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious.)**

**Share with your partner:**

**How old were you?**

**What was the situation?**

**What feelings do you experience now,  
remembering?**

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

A cashier resents it  
whenever a customer

A receptionist at a youth  
center opens his front  
window a few inches when

John is dropped from

In a popular TV series,  
most of the female characters  
are portrayed as submissive  
or subservient to males;  
those who are not are seen  
as aggressive and  
unfeminine

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

When the students from the suburban school went to the inner-city school for a Forensics competition, they made fun of the run-down facility and lack of high-tech equipment.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

In the teachers' lounge, whenever Mr. Gonzalez and Ms. Ramirez started speaking to each other in Spanish, the other teachers wondered what it was they didn't want everyone else to hear.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

The Army recruiters spent 90% of their time recruiting in high schools where most of the students were low-income or African American.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

Through elementary school, Steven was teased and bullied about his weight. By the time he reached high school, he had learned to make fun of himself, playing along with the stereotype that all overweight people are stupid and lazy.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

After Rachel refused to have sex with Dylan, he accused her of being a lesbian.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

The school promoted the boys' basketball games with pep rallies and cheerleaders, and their games were always packed. The girls games were attended by a few friends and family of the players.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

Media coverage of the HIV crisis in the U.S. declined when the most of new HIV cases were African American.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

Mrs. Norton resented the new policy that allowed Muslim students in her class to leave the room for prayers at certain hours of the day.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

The school had a clear Zero Tolerance policy on violence, but Mr. Franklin never applied it when Adam, the son of a school board member, was involved.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

The names of students that are considered difficult to pronounce are changed to more “American-sounding” names.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

The wealthy, suburban school district refused to release the results of its survey of student alcohol use, claiming that it was not an accurate reflection of their student body.

# 4 Levels of Oppression and Change

## Personal

Feelings, beliefs, values

## Interpersonal

Actions, behaviors, language

## Institutional

Rules, policies, procedures, norms

## Cultural

Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right, beautiful

Even though Jacinda often tried to participate in class, the teacher thought it would be better to spare her the embarrassment of giving the wrong answer.

# Scenarios for Analysis and Reflection

## Scenario #1

**Darnell is an African American young man who will drop out of school after finishing his junior year. He was often disruptive in class when he was elementary school, frequently getting into fights and swearing at both classmates and teachers. In middle school, he was frequently suspended. His grades were poor but he managed to avoid failing. From age 13 on, he was generally withdrawn and uncommunicative.**

**Labeled a “problem” student from an early age, most of Darnell’s teachers quickly gave up on him, seeking only to keep him from disrupting the classroom. One teacher in particular, a white male named Mr. Archer, feels deeply that the system fails kids like Darnell all the time. He counsels him to stay in school at least until he is old enough join the armed services. Darnell replies, angrily, “So I can get shot like all the other black kids?” Darnell is devoted to his mother and his younger siblings. The main reason he is dropping out is to go to work to help his mother out financially. He does not tell Mr. Archer this.**

If you had a chance to change what happened in this scenario—not just for Steven but for all students who might have a similar experience—what would you do? How would you go about creating **systemic change**?

**In your group, read over your scenario and try to answer the three questions together.**

**In answering the final question,  
be sure to think in terms of  
systemic change rather than simply  
improving the situation  
for one individual.**

# Scenarios for Analysis and Reflection

## Scenario #2

**Emily is white tenth-grader being raised by a single mom who is dying of cancer and receiving in-home hospice care. Emily often comes to school wearing dirty, foul-smelling clothes, usually Army fatigues, and her long blonde hair is stringy and matted. Students refuse to associate with her and tease her, calling her “trailer trash.”**

**Emily misses a lot of school because of her mom’s illness. When she is in class, she is attentive. When she is not in class, she does not make up the work, and falls further and further behind. Emily is often marked down on her work because it is turned in late, although it is accurate and well done.**

**Emily’s report on a science project is due today. When the class was given time to work in teams to finish their projects, her stomach started to growl and the other students on the team made fun of her. Emily went to her desk, put her head down, and did nothing else until the class was over. When the science teacher, Ms. Walton, heard the laughter, she did not intervene because she didn’t want to embarrass Emily further. Emily got a zero grade for participation for the day and the project. Ms. Walton believes very strongly that no student should be given preferential treatment.**

**If you had a chance to change what happened in this scenario—not just for Emily and Ms. Walton but for all students who might have a similar experience—what would you do? How would you go about creating *systemic change*?**

# Scenarios for Analysis and Reflection

## Scenario #3

**Steven is a fairly bright student genetically predisposed to obesity. Throughout elementary school, Steven was teased and bullied about his weight. Teachers who witnessed this usually intervened, warning and disciplining the other students; however, this continued each year, with each year's teachers treating it like a new problem rather than an ongoing pattern of behavior. The school buildings Steven attended were old and rundown, with limited technology, and his mother often complained to teachers and administrators that he wasn't being challenged enough. Steven's mother, who is also obese, felt that the teachers didn't take her seriously because of her weight, and eventually stopped complaining because she was afraid she was only making things worse for her son.**

**In high school, Steven was given the nickname "Big Guy" by the principal, and before long everyone was using it. In his sophomore year, he had learned to gain acceptance by making fun of himself and playing along with stereotypes of overweight people as stupid and lazy. Despite his demonstrated intelligence, he did poorly in most classes and graduated with a 2.10 GPA. He has no plans to attend college.**

If you had a chance to change what happened in this scenario—not just for Steven but for all students who might have a similar experience—what would you do? How would you go about creating **systemic change**?

# Scenarios for Analysis and Reflection

## Scenario #4

**Rachel is an African American tenth-grader who enjoys sports and has excelled on the girls' basketball and track teams. She has been interested in Dylan, an eleventh grader who plays on the boys' basketball team and is one of the team's stars. Rachel is known for speaking her mind in school, and has often complained that the school and the student body do not support girls athletics in the same way that they support the boys' teams. Generally, the school staff has praised her for being so outspoken but nothing has changed and her complaints have become louder and more bitter. More than one teacher and several students have told her that if she would stop being so aggressive, more people might listen to her.**

**At the start of the track season, Dylan and Rachel start spending more time together, and at a party at a friend's house he asks her to have sex with him. She refuses, in no uncertain terms. Dylan says, "I knew you were a dyke." After a loud fight, Rachel leaves the party angry. Dylan immediately tweets to all of his friends that he knows for a fact Rachel is a lesbian and that he saw kissing another girl from the track team. On Monday, it's the thing that everyone is talking about. Teachers or administrators are also aware of the rumor, but take no action.**

**Rachel, who is a devout Christian, is mortified. She is afraid to tell her parents what has happened. She pretends to be sick for the rest of the week, and seriously considers taking her own life.**

**If you had a chance to change what happened in this scenario—not just for Rachel but for all students who might have a similar experience—what would you do? How would you go about creating *systemic change*?**

*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
1963

# Contact Us

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