
Resilience Practice: Identifying Your Unique Social Identity

Privilege and Oppression Matrix

The goal of this resilience practice is to help you to start seeing the intersections of your social identities with your experience of privilege and oppression. Circle or highlight the social identities in the table that apply to you, so you can visualize your individual mix of privilege and oppression social identities.

Social Identity	Privilege Status	Oppression Status
Ability Status	Able-bodied	Developmental/physical/mental disability
Age	Adults	Children, adolescents, older adults
Education Level	Access to higher ed	High school/ GED/noncompletion
Geographic Region	Urban/suburban	Rural
Gender	Men, cisgender	Women, trans
National Origin	Western Europe, US Citizen	Asian, African, Eastern European, Latina/o/x, Middle Eastern
Race Ethnicity	White	People of Color
Religion/Spirituality	Judeo-Christian	All others: Muslim, Eastern, Jewish, Pagan, secular, and so on
Sexual Orientation	Straight/Hetero	LGBTQ+, Polyamorous
Social Class	Middle to upper class	Poverty & working class

As you circled your various identities, you may have noticed you have more social identities of privilege than you realized. These privileges may protect or buffer you from oppression... so your resilience may or may not be as challenged in these areas. For instance, a white, queer, cisgender man can be protected from some of the oppressive experiences associated with disability and sexual orientation, based on his racial/ethnic and gender privilege. On the other hand, you may notice you have many social identities associated with oppression. These identities can make you more vulnerable to decreased resilience, especially if you have many social identities associated with oppression. For example, a Latinx, lesbian, trans woman may experience oppression related to her sexual orientation, gender identity, and race/ethnicity.

Consider Will Mellman's description of his multiple identities:

For those who don't know anything more than what they see, I am a White man- a husband, father, brother, and son. Being a White man means, regardless of intent, I have access to certain spaces, privileges, and resources that others do not. However, unlike many White men, I recognize the privileges bestowed upon me, because I am also trans and Jewish. As a trans man, I am uniquely situated to understand the role of gender in a social and cultural context, having lived for twenty years as female. Being Jewish, which I claim as a cultural and ethnic identity, has also provided me a unique perspective from which to understand rejection and persecution simply based on one's beliefs. Both of these identities are easily concealable, regardless of my desires to outwardly claim membership in these groups. As a result, when I walk down the street, go to the supermarket, shop in a store, or even go to the doctor, I am a White man. This fact is not lost on me and, on a daily basis, shapes who I am,

-Will Mellman, White, Jewish, trans man, father