

CONFRONTING OPPRESSION THROUGH AN INTERDISCIPLINARY
UNDERSTANDING OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE FEAR

By

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ABSTRACT

No one is free from the causes and effects of fear, oppression and privilege. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach to these global issues, we can effectively move away from emotional rationalization and disassociation and towards equity and connection. By conducting qualitative interdisciplinary research, this paper argues that oppression and inequity are enabled by fear and privilege at the individual and collective level, and, to effectively address oppression, fear must be understood. An interdisciplinary approach must be adopted to achieve a holistic understanding of fear and its complex causes and effects; we can effectively address oppression through this holistic understanding.

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Introduction

We live in a highly reactive and interconnected ecosystem that is comprised of internal thoughts, feelings, experiences and relationships, with others and our self, that result in real external and physical effects (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon & Walsh, 2009; Mullaly, 2010, Philips, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). We all contribute to and are affected by, consciously or otherwise, the relationship between the individual and the collective (Bishop, 2002; Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010). For most, we are both the oppressed and the oppressors (Crenshaw, 1991; Crisp, 2014; Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010). An essential aspect of this relationship is that while injustice, namely oppression, and inequity, is deeply embedded in unyielding social structures, it is regularly enacted in interpersonal or relational contexts – meaning, our individual interactions with the collective, and vice versa, creates and allows inequity and oppression (Tummala-Nara, 2016; Winker & Degele, 2011). Concepts such as the matrix of oppression and intersectionality illustrate that there are intersecting issues of oppression and inequity, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, colonialism, classism, ageism, capitalism, and more, that create and perpetuate norms, values, and beliefs that shape our internal and external worlds (Collins, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991; Whitesel, 2017). Remedio and Snyder (2018) contribute that those who experience multiple points of stigma and discrimination are very aware of the distancing, silencing, and invisibility they endure from the dominant majority; and, that such invisibility represents a source of further oppression. With this knowledge, we can enact change that has a massive impact; however, equity and social change are difficult pursuits that require collective engagement, and individual commitment (Mullaly, 2010, Stahl, 2017).

For this research, I sought out resources grounded in social work, theory and practice, psychology, women and gender studies, sociology, law and philosophy, to produce my best efforts for a fully comprehensive understanding and discussion on fear, oppression, and privilege. I will discuss that oppression and inequity are enabled by fear and privilege at the individual and collective level, and, to effectively address oppression, fear must be understood. An interdisciplinary approach must be adopted to achieve a holistic understanding of fear and its interconnected and complex causes and effects; we can effectively address oppression through this holistic understanding.

There is an undeniable power within self-efficacy, community, and collaboration in the pursuit of equity and connection; I have come to recognize and appreciate these same qualities within interdisciplinary work. These interests have led me to propose the following research questions, by which to explore and support my thesis: What is the relationship between the collective and individual fear and the causes effects of oppression and inequity; and, what benefits does interdisciplinary work bring to the pursuit of equity? To address the first question, I will establish the connection between the individual and the collective by examining the internal and external functioning of the emotion of fear. I will illustrate that fear is triggered by real, imagined, and anticipated threats, both consciously and unconsciously, and is dealt with in hardwired and learned ways to eliminate current threats and to prevent the possibility of future ones (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001). I will link the concept of the fear of death and failure to the social processes of oppression and privilege - dominate as not to be dominated. Finally, addressing the second question, I will argue that the existence, causes, and effects of oppression must be looked at with an interdisciplinary lens to understand the complicated phenomenon that is oppression,

entirely. I will argue that to look at oppression with anything less than an interdisciplinary lens is to privilege some further and, consequently, oppress the rest.

Fear: Individual and Collective

Our systems are continually processing stimuli, acting and reacting to what we feel internally and are experiencing externally (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, Morgan, 2002). Ben-Ze'ev (2001) identifies fear as being “the most basic and typical emotion” (p. 475). It is complex and has physical and psychological effects (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001; Morgan, 2002; Mullaly, 2010; Rosenthal, 2016). It is centered around an individual's “own fortune” and is directed at future things or events that are unknown (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, p. 473). Responses to fear can be delayed and have impacts that come forth well after a significant event has occurred causing continued, and extended suffering and misunderstanding, if not confusion, within the individual as to what triggered such a response (extreme cases of these types of reaction are known as PTSD) (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001; Holmes, Facemire, and DaFonseca, 2016). Fear has two essential intentional elements, “a desire to be in or avoid a certain situation” (evaluative and motivational) and “a belief that the desired or undesired situation is probable” (cognitive) (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010, p. 475). The intentional components of fear are cognitive - attach a probability to the undesired situation; evaluative - includes a negative evaluation of the undesired situation - and, motivational - expresses a strong desire and readiness to act (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001). Ben-Ze'ev (2001) notes that most fears center around objects that threaten survival (e.g., potential predators and unfamiliar places). Interestingly, fear can be “self-fulfilling,” as it inhibits hope and optimism, which, promote success (p. 479). “Fear has evolved as a response to existential threats,” it is adaptive, emerges early in development (around eight months of age) and some responses can be

hardwired (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, p. 480). The objects of fear are a specific situation, another person and oneself (e.g., losing one's reputation and status) (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001). Fear manifests the most intense “warning sign” to the individual; therefore, one's resources are concentrated on the threat, especially existential threats (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, p. 480, Morgan, 2002). Fear within developed societies typically focuses on social issues that center the cognitive focus on one's activities and relationships (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001). Through Ben-Ze'ev's (2001) and Morgan's (2002) examination of fear, it can be deduced that fear: is prevalent in individuals and society; is concerned with survival by avoiding threats (real, imagined and unknown) to one's survival and social standing; has responses that are inherent, learned and hardwired; is a powerfully responsive emotion that does not discern between types of threats; and, can manifest even well after an event has occurred.

Through interdisciplinary research, I identify that established emotional reactions to the fear of being oppressed, socially, and physically, weaves into individual and collective states of oppression and privilege (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, Holmes et al., 2016, Morgan, 2002). This invasion works by infiltrating learned norms, beliefs, and myths, and perpetuates the atomization of humankind through rationalizing the domination and oppression of others (Mullaly, 2010; Ramsy, 2014; Ritzer & Dean, 2015). Fear and the will to survive drives individuals to draw distinctions and make classifications, and these irrational conclusions become rationalized, all to soothe the fears of the dominant groups losing safety, social status and comfort (Freire, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010).

Dominant groups form by creating the “other”- meaning, to create distinction, based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, physical ability and appearance, religion, sexuality, marital

status, education and so on, from the approved dominant majority (Anthias, 2014; Mullaly, 2010; Johnson, 2018; Tummala-Narra, 2016). These groups then create systems organized around three key characteristics: dominated by privileged groups; identified with privileged groups; and, centered on privileged groups (Mullaly, 2010). These characteristics reinforce that privileged groups are superior to all others and therefore deserve their privilege and that those outside of them do not (Mullaly, 2010).

Ben-Ze'ev (2001) states that fear keeps us conscious of our accepted norms and prevents activities that would contravene them while pointing out the dangers that threaten that which we love and value. With this understanding, Ben-Ze'ev (2001) fails to acknowledge the dangerous, discriminatory, and oppressive norms (accepted or exposed) that can be accepted and protected. When our understanding of who and what we should fear and why, is set in myths, norms and values based in urges to dominate and oppress, society shifts away from a foundation of collaboration, trust and acceptance (Freire, 2018; Golash-Boza, 2019; Johnson, 2018; Morgensen, 2010; Mullaly, 2010, Turner, 2007). When fear becomes the driving force of individuals, communities, and nations, we see phenomena like social stratification, and the creation and distinction of the dominant majority and the subordinate minority groups becoming the norm (Ritzer & Dean, 2015; Mullaly, 2010).

Stratification and Rationalization

Problematic individual and collective action, like social stratification, can be traced throughout history and processes such as the rationalization of emotions - a process sparked during the Enlightenment that continues to inflict severe implications for the emotional well-

being of individuals and collective social connections (Foucault, 1995; Marsden, 2016, Morgan, 2002, Mullaly, 2010). Rationalization has five components -efficiency, quantifications, calculation, predictability, and control- that it injects into the consideration of social action (Bauman, 2001, Marsden, 2016). As social relations become rationalized, so too “is the capacity and the efficiency of the social production of inhumanity” – which, I suggest, includes negative social phenomena such as oppression (Bauman, 2001). In other words, the oppressive tactics, elicited by fear, against othered individuals and groups become accepted and normal.

Rationalization causes a disassociation from one's own authentic emotions and ethical and moral respect and compassion for the self and others – the end justifies the means (Bauman, 2001). To rationalize human emotion is to silence it, force it underground, and create a disconnect between it and the individual experiencing it (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001; Marsden, 2016; Morgan, 2002). Such a disconnect between the self and emotions creates confusion, unrest, and fear, which is considered a form of personal and social suffering and pain; thereby creating, even more, fear responses, yet this time in response to one's own existence (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001; Marsden, 2016; Morgan, 2002).

Social suffering including poverty, exclusion, oppression, exploitation, and violence are legitimate, painful and devastating; individuals avoid experiencing it, even at the expense of others (Karcher, 2017, Morgan, 2002; Tummala-Narra, 2017). Considering what we now know about fear, we can begin to examine some of the darker aspects of the individual and collective experiences, inequity, and oppression with a lens calibrated to look beyond the surface.

Oppression

There is an abundance of literature spanning the disciplines that focus on defining and dissecting oppression and privilege (Ferber, Jimenez, O'Reilly Herra, Samuels, 2009; Freire, 2018; Johnson, 2018, Mullaly, 2010). Chen (2017) defines oppression “as an institutional hierarchy that unjustly harms lower-tier groups,” ultimately depriving the capability of an individual, or group, to self-develop (p. 421). From a social work perspective, Mullaly (2010), identifies the basis of oppression as how we respond, or not, to difference. Windsor, Pinto, Benoit, Jessell, and Jemal (2014) specifically define oppression as a multilocational structure of power imbalance perpetuated by governing “images and unrealistic social norms and expectations” to ensure the failure of certain groups’ ability to belong and thrive (p. 403). Similarly, from a women and gender studies perspective, Crisp (2014) contributes that it is a system that “works to maintain advantages and occurs at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels” (p. 116). Tummala-Nara (2016) reflects on oppression within the lens of psychotherapy and identifies that generalizations about groups (e.g., racial and sexual minorities) reify structural inequities with such force that even those professionally trained to deconstruct the human experience cannot seem to “escape the stronghold of unconscious and conscious discrimination” (p. 141). Kira, Al-Huwailah, Alawneh, Shuwiekh, Lewandowski, and Ibraheem (2018) identify that experiencing oppression creates trauma and pain and all intersecting stressors of oppression target different aspects of the same individuals’ social status identities that determine a person’s or group’s position in the “social hierarchy” (p. 2). While Holmes et al. (2016) argue that Complex PTSD is not referenced regarding the experiences of oppression despite its insidious

and chronic nature and urge for the experiences of oppression to be formally acknowledged as trauma (Holmes et al., 2016).

Oppression is a system that works to maintain advantages and occurs at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels (Crisp, 2014). Privilege and oppression exist through systems (e.g., family, schools, religion, workplaces, and patriarchal and colonial-based powers) and individuals' participation in them (Johnson, 2018; Tummala-Nara, 2016). Assumptions, stereotypes, misinformation, myths, and partial histories that glorify some vilify others and erase people and events are learned through socialization by these systems (Mullaly, 2010, Failler, 2009). Dominant institutional and cultural structures (e.g., media, schools, religion, government, legal systems, traditions, and customs) reinforces misinformation (Mullaly, 2010, p. 293). Myths and misinformation form how we see our self and others; they “bolster or deflate our self-identity,” according to our social positions (Mullaly 2010; Wilson, 1999). As we bump up against new learnings that puncture old assumptions, we must choose to disseminate the old misinformation and carry on with behaviour that marginalizes peoples, or interrupt the cycle and become allies with those who are oppressed and defy and dispute privilege and oppression (Bishop, 2002; Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010).

Experiencing Oppression as an Individual

Acts of oppression at the individual level mainly consist of conscious acts of aggression and hatred, including violence (Dover, 2016; Mullaly, 2010,). This violence is: systemic - if it is directed at members of a subordinate group because they are members of that group; a social practice - when members of a subordinate group are sought out to be assaulted, raped or taunted;

legitimized - when it is tolerated or found to be unsurprising because it happens frequently or when perpetrators receive light or no punishment; mostly irrational and xenophobic; and, a form of injustice - that a theory of distributive justice does not capture (Mullaly, 2010). Violence results in members of subordinate groups existing in constant individualized and collective fear of “random and unprovoked physical attacks on themselves, their family or their property” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 71). When we consider intersectionality, it becomes very apparent that the frequency and intensity of threats to any given oppressed individual are numerous and bring with them significant impact and far-reaching consequences (Collins, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991; Holmes et al., 2016 Kira et al., 2018).

Oppression also manifests through unconscious acts of aversion and avoidance (Mullaly, 2010). This type of oppression is less evident as outward hate and violence as personal level oppressive behaviour have gone underground (Mullaly, 2010). These unconscious acts include hostility, fear, avoidance and feelings of superiority expressed by dominant group members in mundane contexts of interaction by gestures, speech, tone of voice and body movements; through acts including avoiding eye contact, increasing physical distance, kinetic gestures of defense and aversion or going out of their way to avoid interaction or sharing the same approximate space. (Mullaly, 2010, p. 73). Members of dominant groups who exhibit these aversive and unconscious acts often deny being prejudice or acting oppressively, they may even be active in pursuits equity and respect for members of all social groups (Mullaly, 2010). I suggest that we can draw parallels between this denial and Ben-Ze’ev’s (2001) examination of fear, to admit that we have acted in such ways would threaten our understanding of our self, and

ultimately our social and moral standing, and bring shame and embarrassment. I conclude that to avoid considering such facts is to prevent this threat of the self.

In a fear-based effort to survive, we have rationalized harming others and justified the effects of this harm (Bauman, 2001; Morgan, 2002). From a psychological lens, the interpersonal and structural oppression has been identified as creating insidious intersectional impacts and effects on individuals and behavior, which can manifest via individual and collective avenues (Collins, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991; Holmes et al., 2016; Mullaly, 2010, Rosenthal, 2016).

Oppression creates threats to the development and existence of a healthy identity - sense of self (Karcher, 2017; Kira et al., 2018; Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010; Ramsy, 2014; Remedio & Snyder, 2018; Tummala-Nara, 2016). A healthy identity is crucial to being an autonomous self directing individual; consequently, the oppressed individual will develop coping strategies to protect their identity (Kira et al., 2018; Mullaly, 2010, Tummala-Nara, 2016). Oppressed individuals use intentional and unconscious strategies to deal with threats against their identity such as removing components of the social context that contain the threat, moving into a different social position that is not as threatening, and revising the content or value dimensions of identity structure (Mullaly, 2010). Intrapsychic coping mechanisms (cognitive and emotional levels rather than action) include: deflecting the implications of the threats to identity; accepting the threat as real and modify parts of one's identity to escape from or reduce it; and, re-evaluate and change the contents of identity (Mullaly, 2010). These coping mechanisms can be understood as fear responses to threat (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010).

Oppression also negatively affects the psychological functioning of an individual (Mullaly, 2010). These psychological effects can result in a loss of personal identity, a sense of

inferiority or low self esteem, fear, powerlessness, suppression of anger, alienation and isolation and guilt or ambivalence (Mullaly, 2010). The insecurity of members of subordinate groups often create heightened insecurity and anxiety, which leads to lowered self esteem and the development of misdirected inner guilt (Kira et al., 2018; Mullaly, 2010; Tummala-Nara, 2016). We can recognize fear responses in oppressed groups in the theory of identity development that include the responses of compromising for the purpose of reconciling experiences, flight and fight (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, Mullaly, 2010). Reflecting on these psychological effects we can see how fear and oppression nestle deeply into those who are oppressed.

Privilege

No individual is free from implication in the systems of collective oppression (Mullaly, 2010). Privilege is a system of unearned advantages that benefits individuals but they are encouraged to remain impervious to (Crisp, 2014). Johnson (2018) identifies two types of privilege, unearned advantages – an unearned entitlement restricted to certain group- and, conferred dominance- which, gives one group power over another. Privileged individuals believe that their favorable position is an inalienable right that is justly earned by working hard, being vigilant, being courageous to take risks and having superior intelligence and abilities (Mullaly, 2010). Supporting these beliefs are the same myths that support oppression – myth of scarcity, objective information, might is right or the belief in majority rule even if it tyrannizes the minority, supremacy, class, equal opportunity or meritocracy, stereotyping, blaming the victim and competition and hierarchy, belief that things have always been that way and will not change and no effect- based on the belief that nothing we can do will change the system because it's too big and powerful (Mullaly, 2010).

Privilege is ignored due to its implication of those with power, and that it is easier to tackle the problems of oppressed groups than to take on our own roles in perpetuating inequity (Mullaly, 2010). By focusing solely on oppression, the structured invisibility of privilege is fortified (Mullaly, 2010). This invisibility creates problematic consequences: difficult to create or develop a politics of inclusion from invisibility; privileged persons become defensive and irritated when confronted with the reality and consequences suffered by subordinate groups (p. 292). Avoidance mechanisms of privileged groups allow them to avoid facing feelings of guilt, shame, or responsibility for the deleterious effects of oppression (Crisp, 2014; Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010). These mechanisms allow privileged individuals to live in denial and illusion, that cuts them off from reality (Mullaly, 2010). Such distancing allows privileged individuals to: deny and minimize; blame the victim; call privilege something else; and tell themselves its better this way, that they are one of the good ones, and that they are sick and tired of all this privilege chatter (Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010). Despite the pressure to avoid it, we must intentionally commit to understanding the privilege we have and the benefits we benefit from it (Crisp, 2014). The acceptance, reflection, and awareness that is needed to address one's privilege go directly against the inherent and hardwired functioning of fear and survival (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001; Crisp, 2014; Karcher, 2017).

Considering the discussion thus far, I deduce that fear, oppression, and privilege are responsible for creating subordinate and dominant groups based on arbitrary distinctions of difference (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, Johnson, 2018, Mullaly, 2010). Rationalized oppressive treatment of subordinate groups by the dominant group causes trauma and pain, thus, creating deeply rooted cycles, relationships, processes and structures based in anticipatory and reactionary fear

from both the oppressed and the oppressors (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001; Johnson, 2018; Morgan, 2012; Mullaly, 2010). This accepted, normalized and self-perpetuating fear-based structure of society inhibits the ability for individuals to feel safe within relationships with their self and others (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, Chen, 2017; Holmes et al., 2016; Morgan, 2002; Mullaly, 2010,). Such isolation creates barriers to the self-reflection and awareness that is needed to begin to acknowledge one's privilege, accept its existence and the oppression and inequity of others that is created and perpetuated because of it, however uncomfortable as it may be (Foss & Elliot, 2015; Mullaly, 2010; Sthal, 2017). Ben-Ze'ev's (2001) explanation of fear, highlights that awareness and focus on one's privilege can trigger intense fear responses merely thinking about it, let alone acting against it.

The innate instinct to protect oneself creates a cycle: assert domination - to gain safety, power, control and privilege - to attempt to pacify the, conscious or unconscious, existential and physical fear of being dominated and suffering death - actual or social, as we have already established that subordinate groups do face the threat of violence (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001; Morgan, 2002; Mullaly, 2010, Holmes et al., 2016). The act of privileging one's self and oppressing another then creates a reality of fear and trauma within those who are oppressed; potentially causing them to initiate the same cycle of oppression against another group(s), to prevent experiencing further harm. This process also creates a positive feedback loop for those in dominant groups, being that if they continue to oppress the other, their spot within the social hierarchy is secured and could potentially improve. Emotional rationalization and disassociation create justification in these actions, and deeply rooted systems leave no room for individuals to traverse this reality any differently. This process leaves individuals in a situation of fear, distrust,

distance, and isolation that creates further harm and trauma and without any viable tools to create change, no matter where their location in the social hierarchy. Stepping outside of this structure triggers a hardwired fear response (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001). The incitation of danger (physical or social) engages our body and mind in processes whose soul purpose is to protect us from meeting our demise. As identified earlier, these responses cannot and do not discern between real and imaginary nor, life threatening or concerned with social status. This perspective leaves one to wonder, are we ultimately battling our self?

Creating Change Through Interdisciplinary Collaborative

Interdisciplinary and collaborative work offers the ability to explore a phenomenon, problem, or system with a lens that is critical yet reflexive and discerning yet holistic (Repko, Newell & Szostak, 2012; Repko, Szostak, 2017; Rose, 2016). These inclusive approaches allow for dynamism to create change and chase out privilege, oppressive, and discriminatory stagnation (Repko et al., 2012; Repko, Szostak, 2017). By considering complex social issues with an interdisciplinary lens, we can remove the blinders created by our unconscious fear-based drive for physical and social survival and begin to de-center ourselves and center those who are marginalized (Repko et al., 2012; Repko, Szostak, 2017). This approach demands for us to consider oppressed individuals in the areas that we are privileged, how we are complicit in the perpetuation of its resulting oppression and where, and how we can intervene and dismantle it (Crisp, 2014; Johnson, 2018; Mullaly, 2010). This process of decentering and dismantling oneself requires us to consciously suspend hardwired and innate instincts, which, is easier said than done (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001).

By adopting an interdisciplinary collaborative approach we can move beyond theorizing about oppression and into action, together as a collective, and remove the strongly reinforced barriers to connection (Crisp, 2014, Mullaly, 2010, Johnson, 2018). Mullaly (2010) and Johnson (2018) offer anti-oppressive and anti-inequity acts that individuals can take on:

- acknowledge that oppression and privilege exist
- pay attention
- learn to listen, take on little risks (including:
 - make noise and be seen
 - find little ways of getting off the paths of least resistance, and
 - dare to make people feel uncomfortable- starting with yourself,
- openly choose and model alternative paths
- openly promote change in how systems are organized around privilege
- be clear in naming the problem
- work with other people
- pay attention to the power of fear, and
- do not let other people set the standard for you and never, never give up.

Parker (2015) urges the importance of collaborative and transformative conflict resolution practices (e.g., peacemaking circles, dialogue, meditation, and negotiation) and interdisciplinary programs to engage individuals in the collaborative and dialogic inquiry. Parker (2015) finds it imperative for all conflict resolution to move beyond the surface level and incorporate critical conflict dialogue. Arnold, Goshell, Benson, and Craig (2017) tie in action, interdisciplinarity and community, community engagement, and the importance of opening space for collaboration. Riger (1993) discusses the fact that within community psychology, the concept of empowerment can prove to be problematic due its underlying concepts of individualism and a preference for commonly allocated-to-masculine concepts of mastery, power, and control versus commonly-allocated-to-feminine concepts of communion and cooperation. Tummala-Nara (2016) supports centering issues of power and privilege through a lens informed by feminist and

multicultural psychologies and be conscious of the nuances of power across multiple levels (e.g., individual, interpersonal, societal). Yee, Hackbusch, and Wong (2015) suggest tools like anti-oppression framework that put theory into practice and applied at the individual, cultural, and systemic levels. Yee et al., (2015) advise that AO work requires critical self-reflective practice and frameworks can “identify, document and track the impact of practices that can shift from reproducing inequity to increasing equity” transparently and collaboratively (p. 490). Shlasko (2015) highlights The Five Faces activity that provides a groundwork from which individuals can begin to consider acting against systems of oppression from an issue-based, intersectional approach. Shlasko (2015) encourages collaborative and interactive activities for their effectiveness in community-based settings, and their ability to be used in with other activities that lead participants through the stages of planning issue-based collective action; such as, “identifying priorities and goals, reflecting on spheres of influence, identifying potential coalition partners, reflecting on their own positionalities, and establishing tools for individual and group accountability” (p. 359-360). Interdisciplinary and intersectionality work offers new types of collaborative approaches that need to be woven throughout every part of our work (Repko et al., 2012; Repko, Szostak, 2017; Shlasko, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Through conducting this research, I conclude that we must be reflexive in our individual and collective worlds and recognize the areas we may be committing fear-based, oppression perpetuating behaviours that cause great inequity. Interdisciplinary collaboration encourages an intersectional awareness and the fostering of connection of individuals who may not typically connect, and the building of new community (Repko et al., 2012; Repko, Szostak, 2017; Rubin

& Rubin, 2008). This dynamic removes the distancing, othering and fear-based aversion and avoidance societal structures have created (Crisp, 2014; Mullaly, 2010; Johnson, 2018; Tummala-Nara, 2016; Windsor et al., 2014; Winker & Degele, 2011). It is my conclusion that acceptance and safety present the opportunity for the oppressed to heal from oppression, and for the oppressors and privileged to reflect on their contribution to these structures. Finding the bravery to face our innate, hardwired fear and explore the potential of a life outside of socialized norms could not get anymore real or existential, but is what is needed if we want to dismantle oppression and inequity.

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