

# The pcs model in understanding internalised gender oppression



In order to find out how helpful the PCS Model is in relation to internalised gender oppression, I must first gain insight and try to understand the structure of Neil Thompson's theoretical model. The PCS Model refers to the need to recognise that discrimination operates at three separate but interrelated levels, the personal, cultural and structural which interact with one another. The PCS Model attempts to explain how and why discrimination occurs and therefore leads to internalised oppression. The links between discrimination and oppression can be seen throughout such things as the economy, the differential distribution of financial resources and the allocation of society's rewards is a key factor underpinning global poverty and social deprivation. Other social reasons include the extent to which an individual is integrated into society and receives the benefits of its opportunities; this usually depends on their social status in terms of social divisions such as class, ethnicity and gender. Political access to power is not evenly distributed throughout society and once again relates to social divisions, the variable component when it comes to social organisation. These existing inequalities are maintained through processes of discrimination that allocate an individual's life chances and power resources in such a way as to reinforce existing power relations.

The personal level of the PCS Model refers to the way that an individual's thought, emotion and the resulting actions can have a significant impact on inequality and oppression. Discrimination on a personal level is often referred to as prejudice. This involves an individual forming a judgement and refusing to consider or change their judgement, whilst ignoring any considerable evidence that would contradict and undermine it. Often such

judgments are based on a perceived stereotype of a particular individual's social status such as class, ethnicity and gender. However, explanations of internalised gender oppression on personal level need to be understood in its broader context as it ignores any other contributing factors such as culture and the surrounding environment. The personal level only considers the individual's significant role towards gender oppression, which can often be refused if they feel as though it was unintentional rather than understanding how their attitudes has helped it become internalised. The personal level also fails to recognise the affects of discrimination on the individual, as the differences of impact can fluctuate, whilst others may correspond.

However, the cultural level recognises that an individual's beliefs, values and actions are simply social patterns that are shared across particular groups. ' Culture refers to the ways of life of the members of a society, or of groups within a society. It includes how they dress, their marriage customs and family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits' (Giddens, 1993). Language can be seen as an integral part of cultural behaviour as it reflects the cultural norms, assumptions and patterns whilst contributing to its distribution through the generations. This combination of language and culture can show the way for individuals to take things for granted which Berger and Luckmann (1967) refer to as, the ' taken-for-grantedness' of every day life. Both lead to thoughts and actions that individuals feel they do not need any additional confirmation about other than its simple existence, therefore it becomes routine often without the individual's awareness. The individual is capable of engaging in doubt about their existence, but feels obliged to suspend such doubt as they routinely

exist in everyday life. This can lead to an individual's psychological integration in order to pursue their everyday activities without questioning their motivation, thus preventing an overload of information. On the other hand an individual may have the tendency to see their existence confined to one culture as they accept a set of social norms and values failing to recognise significant cultural differences based on an individual's perceived judgement that one culture is more superior than another. The cultural level of Neil Thompson's PCS Model is important in helping understand internalised gender oppression as 'culture is, in itself, a site of discrimination.'

(Thompson, 1998). For example, just as racism is the belief of one culture having superiority over another, sexism is the belief of one gender having superiority over another. The resulting oppression is simply therefore a socially constructed and supported mistreatment of a gender. The cultural level recognises the significance of difference and diversity rather than failing to go beyond an individual's own perspective. 'Thus, for men to appreciate the significance of sexism and to contribute to anti-sexism, they must begin to see what the world looks like through women's eyes.'

(Thompson, 1998). Therefore, living life from a masculine perspective and ignoring to understand another can lead to a narrow view and experience of internalised gender oppression. However, the individual actions on a cultural level have limitations as it is underpinned by the overall structure.

The structural level considers the influences of various social, political and economic factors as they are constantly interacting. The political factors include the unequal distribution of power between individuals and groups leading to economic differences such as wealth and poverty increasing social

divisions. In theory the cultural patterns of internalised gender oppression are a result of men maintaining social order and positions of power through structured inequalities involving ' a process in which individuals or groups with particular attributes are better able than those who lack or are denied these attributes to control or shape rights and opportunities for their own ends' (Thompson, 1995). This allows advantaged groups to profit from greater opportunities and resulting privileges that are available within society. Anthony Giddens (1991) recognised that there are four institutional dimensions of modernity including capitalism, for its control over the system of production and industrialism from the application of power through production. Thirdly, Giddens identifies coordinated administrative power focused through the monitoring of surveillance and fourthly, its military power each playing a pivotal role in modernity. The PCS Model also considers capitalism to be involved in the exploitation of an individual or group by another for economic control relating to other forms of exploitation and internalised gender oppression. The consequent administrative power is distributed to those groups who have a substantial role within society such as social work as they have the power to influence the more vulnerable members of society.

' Discrimination is simply a matter of identifying differences, and can be positive or negative' Thompson (1998), however negative discrimination involves not only identifying differences but also making a negative attribution consequently attaching a negative or detrimental label or connotation to the individual or group concerned. This means individuals or groups are being discriminated against following clear social patterns in

terms of class, race, gender, age, disability and sexual orientation etc. When such negative discrimination occurs, the resulting experience is often one of oppression which can be defined as ' Inhuman or degrading treatment of individuals or groups, hardship and injustice brought about by the dominance of one group over another, the negative and demeaning exercise of power. Oppression often involves disregarding the rights of an individual or group and is thus a denial of citizenship'. (Thompson, 1997).

Discrimination is a major contributory factor in relation to oppression. That is, a fundamental source of oppression is the set of processes by which certain social groups are discriminated against and thereby disadvantaged.

However the oppression associated with sexism is not simply a result of prejudice ' bigoted males' as discrimination far more intricate having its foundations within the social sciences amongst other contributing factors such as those economical and political. Oppression is sustained through ideology and the power of propaganda. If an individual is unaware of this subtle ideology they will find themselves reinforcing existing power relations whilst maintaining inherent inequalities. The ideas, beliefs and assumptions to support the dominant position of men have been developed through such patriarchal ideology, which is preserved as a dominant social force. A countervailing ideology would attempt to oppose and challenge this, such as feminism, as it is in direct opposition to the dominance of patriarchy. Sexism is evident in relation to biology, as assumptions are made towards the ' biological role' and nurturing characteristics of a woman. Grabb (1993) argues ' that inequality is maintained by among other things, a mechanism of ideological control. It entails the control of ideas, knowledge, information

and similar resources in the establishment of structured inequality between groups or individuals.' Equality is a political term much like democracy and freedom to promote a particular groups own values or interests. Therefore it is an ideological concept involving the power of ideas being used to reinforce and legitimise existing power relations. Ethically challenging discrimination is therefore a question of morality and thus values as Banton (1994) argues, 'The best protections against discrimination are those in the hearts of people who believe discrimination is wrong'.

Contemporary western societies are characterised by inequality. For social workers, this provides a fundamental challenge with regards to the decisions that are made and the actions that are taken. These can make a significant impact on the progression towards a greater degree of equality or the reinforcing of existing inequalities. Social work often involves the execution of power, frequently with somewhat powerless people. Therefore the employment of a social worker can play a significant role within in the service itself and can inevitably change the user's experience of the discrimination and oppression arising from inequalities. Social workers have a important role in promoting equality, rather than simply reinforcing the inequalities that already exist in society. Traditional approaches have a tendency to pay little attention to issues of inequality, discrimination or oppression consequently leaving service users feeling alienated.

Psychologically this can be subdivided into three aspects of behaviour - cognitive, affective and conative which simply refer to an individual's thoughts, feelings and consequent actions. Cognitive thought patterns can be seen to vary accordingly to social divisions. For example, there are <https://assignbuster.com/the-pcs-model-in-understanding-internalised-gender-oppression/>

significant differences in the use of language across genders and ethnic groups with the speech patterns of dominant groups being seen as superior or more prestigious. Affective and emotional responses are also rooted in social divisions. ' For example, responses to loss can be seen to vary between men and women' (Thompson, 1995). Conative and behavioural norms follow distinct patterns in terms of class, race gender, age etc. In each three types there tend to be clear social expectations as to how members of a particular group or social category should think, feel and act with strong sanctions against those who fail or refuse to comply with these expectations.

## Conclusion

Inequality is an inevitable part of society, therefore any attempt to overcome inequality can be argued to be destined for failure. While an element of inequality may well prove to be unavoidable, this does not mean that substantial progress can not be made in terms of reducing inequality and alleviating the feeling of oppression. However it is not only a matter of reducing inequality, it is about making sure that it does not increase.

The PCS Model takes into account the three main social sciences including psychology, sociology and philosophy. Psychology is represented by the personal level focusing on the individual mind. Sociology on a cultural level in terms of the affect a specific environment can have on the social patterns that exist. Finally Philosophy is represented in the structural level as it commands things to be seen and understood on a much broader scale. Neil Thompson's PCS Model helps to explain how and why discrimination occurs and thereby leads to oppression. It identifies many links between



discrimination and oppression and the key factors underpinning poverty and social deprivation. The personal level of the PCS Model refers to the way that an individual's thought, emotion and the resulting actions can have a significant impact on inequality and oppression and whilst recognising the different forms discrimination can take, such as prejudice. However, this involves an individual forming a judgement and ignoring any considerable evidence that would contradict or undermine it whilst the cultural level understands the role of language with regards to cultural behaviour as it reflects the cultural norms. Neil Thompson recognised that the levels of the PCS Model are in constant interaction between each other with the structural level considering the influences of various social, political and economic factors. In theory the overall structure underpins cultural patterns of internalised gender oppression as they are a direct result of men maintaining social order and positions of power through structured inequalities. This is derived from capitalism and industrialism, for its control over the system of production and the application of power through production. The PCS Model also considers capitalism to be involved in the exploitation of an individual or group by another for economic control relating to other forms of exploitation and internalised gender oppression. Neil Thompson's PCS Model recognises the significance of difference and diversity whilst going beyond an individual's own perspective. Therefore, living life from a masculine perspective and ignoring to understand another can lead to a narrow view and experience of internalised gender oppression. However, the individual actions on a cultural level have limitations as it is underpinned by the overall structure.

In theory, everyone has a tendency to be narrow minded with their views as they can only judge situations based on their own individual perception. An individual's emotional characteristics with regards to their feeling of internalised gender oppression can rarely be understood but can never be truly relative unless they themselves feel the pressure of internalised oppression. For example, a man can never truly understand what it would be like for a female growing up in a developing urban area.