Defining the Oppressor: An Authoritative Scholarly Academic Definition of Wokeism with Critical Inquiry and Empirical Method of Definition for an Oppressor, (or not)

By Major Jeffrey Camlin, USA, retired
M.A. Philosophy, Holy Apostles College and Seminary
B.S. Military Science, University of Wisconsin Madison

Abstract

This paper defines Wokeism with an empirical method for the academic definition of an oppressor, as currently there is no authoritative definition of either in academia. This is a novel definition as academic social science defines an oppressor subjectively induced from theory. This paper proposes an empirical framework to define and identify "oppressors" using measurable criteria grounded in the four instruments of power: physical force, political power, economic power, and informational power. Unlike prevailing approaches within academia, which often apply the label of "oppressor" based on subjective perceptions, this framework emphasizes objective, verifiable criteria. It seeks to clarify complex power dynamics and offers a standardized method for evaluating oppressive behavior, aiming to promote accountability and reduce the misuse of labels. This framework holds particular relevance in public discourse and policy-making, enhancing the credibility and rigor of social science research on social justice, power, and what entities are oppressors, which are not, and which previously accused oppressors from academia can now be vindicated.

Introduction

1. **Background and Context**: Current academic discourse frequently engages with concepts of oppression and power dynamics, but it often lacks an empirically grounded framework for defining and identifying "oppressors." This gap leaves room for ideological bias and subjective interpretation, undermining the credibility of social science research. Drawing on user expertise in the instruments of power, this paper seeks to introduce an empirically defined, methodologically rigorous standard for labeling oppressors.

2. **Research Purpose and Questions**: This study's primary objective is to define "oppressor" in a way that withstands rigorous academic scrutiny, emphasizing observable power dynamics across four established instruments of power. This approach aims to address the limitations of current academic practices, which may

induce the "oppressor" label from perceived indicators without an empirical foundation.

3. **Significance**: Establishing an empirical framework for identifying oppressors is a vital step toward fostering a balanced and credible discourse on oppression within academia and broader society. This work not only addresses the blind spots in academic narratives around power but also contributes to more precise and actionable understandings of oppression in real-world contexts.

Methodology

Empirical Framework

An oppressor is defined as an entity that (1) possesses one or more of the four instruments of power—physical force, political power, economic power, or informational power—(2) is actively projecting its power directed at another individual, group, institution, or system, (3) the target of that power contains significantly less power than the projector, (4) is not a false accusation of oppression as revealed by a relative power comparison, and (5) restricts an individual or group's autonomy, limits access to resources or opportunities, or diminishes their social or cultural value. This definition is intentionally narrow, focusing on observable actions and effects of power rather than subjective perceptions, to ensure it withstands empirical scrutiny and avoids ideological bias. Unlike the established status quo in academia, which currently lacks a definition of an oppressor and instead induces an oppressor label from observed oppression indicators, this framework provides concrete evidence that can be measured, documented, and independently verified. Theoretically, it can measure oppression in real time and even predict potential oppression. Moreover, it provides accountability when academics label an individual, group, institution, or system as an oppressor, as it also justifies when a false label is projected from academia to society. This distinction is critical, as it sets a rigorous standard for identifying an oppressor in a way that remains consistent across diverse contexts and resists subjective or ideological influences.

Quantitative Measures of Power

Measurement Tools: To establish a standardized approach, this framework employs specific tools and proxies to assess each instrument of power, ensuring objective measurement and consistent evaluation across cases. For *economic power*, metrics include income levels, assets, and access to economic resources beyond societal norms.

Political power is evaluated by examining an individual's or group's formal positions within government structures, influence on policy, and engagement in lobbying or advocacy that affects governance. For *informational power*, analysis centers on reach and control over media platforms, public visibility, and the ability to shape public discourse. Lastly, *physical force* encompasses access to organized means of coercion or control, ranging from a verified pattern of physical influence directed at any individual or group, such as arrest convictions, a pattern of participation in or leading physical demonstrations, riots, academic campus vandalism, coercion of university staff, administration, or faculty, or provocations of law enforcement at the local, state, or federal level. These metrics collectively provide a robust assessment of power distribution, allowing researchers to determine whether an entity's power position justifies the label of an oppressor.

Sources of Data for the Instruments of Power

To ensure that claims of an oppressor are substantiated and verifiable, this framework requires data from publicly available sources to confirm that actions align with the defined criteria for an oppressor. Any other data a social scientist feels they need may be obtained by any means, provided the source of the data identifies the funding source (so any pattern of political affiliation is verifiable), as well as the entity providing the data (to verify any political affiliation pattern of the data producer). It is recommended, though not required, that the researcher or their department disclose if they have endorsed or admonished any partisan political candidate.

Application of the Framework

This framework is scalable and can be applied to examine strategic equality goals at the societal level, as well as through narrowly focused case studies, to assess and classify entities as oppressors or non-oppressors based on verifiable power dynamics and the criteria outlined above. By systematically analyzing real-world examples, researchers can not only demonstrate the framework's utility and validity but also foster a sense of accomplishment and potentially gain allies from unlikely sources who may have been previously mislabeled as oppressors by academic narratives.

Objections and Responses

1. **The Conflation Objection**: Critics argue that the framework conflates the broader concept of oppression with the empirical identification of specific oppressors.

- o **Response**: This paper defines an empirical method to identify oppressors—whether an individual, group, institution, entity, or system—not oppression itself. By focusing on measurable power dynamics, it can verify when an entity lacks sufficient power to project as an oppressor or confirm that an entity is not an oppressor based on the nature of its power projection.

2. **Power-Influence Conflation Objection**: Some contend the framework conflates power with influence, neglecting subtler forms of influence that might not be easily measurable.

   - o **Response**: This framework distinguishes between power and influence by recognizing that influence is a product of informational projection, which can be amplified by other instruments of power. By focusing on empirical measurement, it identifies oppressors based on verifiable power, avoiding conflations with perceived influence.

3. **Historical Academic Brutality and Distrust**: Due to longstanding academic mislabeling of non-oppressors, many Americans distrust academia, including Veterans who may be crucial allies if academia demonstrates accountability.

   - o **Response**: The framework introduces an "oppressor index" with measurable criteria across power dimensions, allowing individuals to "check their oppressor index." By focusing on objective standards, it aims to rebuild trust and foster transparency in social research.

4. **Oppression Label Conflation Objection**: The framework's focus on four instruments of power may exclude other dynamics, such as familial, religious, or cultural influences, which critics argue are also significant in creating an oppression label.

   - o **Response**: This paper defines an empirical method to identify an oppressor, not oppression itself. While focused on the primary instruments of power, the framework is adaptable and allows additional context-specific factors to be considered without conflating systemic influences with direct oppression.

5. **Limited Applicability in Complex, Systemic Oppression**: Some argue the framework may not fully address systemic oppression, which involves historical and structural factors rather than direct actors.

   - o **Response**: The framework is grounded in the military's "Effects-Based Approach to Planning," demonstrating that complex systems can be

addressed through structured evaluation. A research plan incorporating public relations is advised to maintain transparency and trust.

6. **The Final Argument of Kings, Philosophers and Majors**: Critics may argue that informational power is difficult to assess objectively due to its subtle and varied influence.

   o **Response**: With the availability of internet searches and AI, informational power is the easiest of the four instruments to analyze. By focusing on "power words" and seeking verifiable evidence, this framework systematically refutes any misuse of the "oppressor" label as an unsubstantiated weapon, supporting a rigorously defined concept.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this paper is to provide a definition of an oppressor, empirically measured with the four instruments of power as developed and practiced for at least 30 years in U.S. military practice and science. It is important to note that these instruments of power are neutral tools; they can function either as a knife to cut or a scalpel to heal, depending on their use. Academia's primary tool, whether wielded as a weapon or a healing system, is information. This framework offers an empirical approach to identifying and assessing oppressors, filling a critical gap in both academic and public discourse by establishing a needed standard. By emphasizing measurable power and verifiable criteria, it grounds discussions of oppressors in evidence-based analysis rather than subjective or ideological interpretations. This approach not only clarifies who genuinely wields power in ways that may be harmful or oppressive but also guards against unfounded accusations, ensuring that labels of oppression are both justified and accountable—a crucial factor, given that academia represents roughly one-quarter of the national power in the United States. Furthermore, the framework encourages academic institutions to wield their informational power responsibly, fostering a more balanced and rigorous approach to the study of social justice and power. Ultimately, this model aims to foster greater accountability, reduce societal division, and promote a more constructive and objective dialogue around issues of power, privilege, and oppression, enhancing the relevance and credibility of social science research in public life.

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