

Intersectionality & Identity

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Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. Originally articulated on behalf of black women, the term brought to light the invisibility of many constituents within groups that claim them as members but often fail to represent them.”

—Kimberlé Crenshaw

DEFINE

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.

Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. It takes into account people's overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

THIS CAN BE DONE AS A GROUP OR INDIVIDUALLY

- Our identities shape who we are and how we see the world. By understanding this, it helps us not only understand ourselves better, but also others as well.
- There are two different kinds of identities: personal and social. Personal identities focus on how we see ourselves fitting into the world around us.

If done as a group, follow this section with the following reflection questions in groups of 2. (PRINT: Personal Identity Wheel at end of document)

- Please share with your partner things you placed on your wheel.
- Was this easy or hard? Why or why not?
- How do your identities influence your sense of belonging in groups you're a part of?

After the discussion, move on to the social identity wheel
(PRINT: Social Identity Wheel at end of document)

- Now let's take time to explore some of our social identities. Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). (Social Identity Theory, 1979).

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COMMITMENT

1. Educate yourself on your own hidden biases
2. Educate others in your organization
3. Collect relevant data that shows hidden biases
4. Evaluate the “subtle messages” within your organization
5. Hold each other accountable and have leaders do the same

- Henri Tajfel (1979) was the social psychologist who created and studied this theory. He proposed the groups (e.g., social class, family, gender etc.) people belonged to be an important source of pride and self esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world (Simply Psychology, 2008).
- They’re also called social identities because our society strongly influences how we categorize others and ourselves. Social identities are about how we are seen as members of different groups within our society. It’s not unique to one person.

If done as a group, follow this section with the following reflection questions in groups of 2.

Be sure everyone in the group is able to share her/his/their answers to each question. We want to emphasize you are not expected to share what you do not want to. **Share only to your own level of comfort!**

- Which identities do you think most often about? Why might this be the case?
- Which identities do you think least often about? Why might this be the case?
- How do your identities influence your sense of belonging in groups you’re a part of?
- What identities would you like to learn more about?

EDUCATE



WATCH VIDEO: *What Is Intersectionality? Kimberlé Crenshaw*
(RUN TIME: 1 MINUTE, 54 SECONDS)

We all deserve to have our voices heard; our faces and experiences reflected in culture and media; and our unique needs addressed through relevant policies. However, when we fail to incorporate intersectionality into our everyday practices and policies, we leave parts of our communities behind.

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, recognizes that certain individuals face multiple and intersecting forms of structural discrimination. In this political climate marked by division and anxiety, it’s important for us to work together to incorporate different communities’ experiences with culture, policies, and media.

TEN TIPS FOR PUTTING INTERSECTIONALITY INTO PRACTICE

1. **Multiple Struggles** – Recognize that there are multiple forms of systemic discrimination that block people from realizing equal opportunity.
2. **Intersecting Oppressions** – Appreciate that forms of systemic discrimination intersect with each other and present unique challenges for affected individuals and communities.
3. **Voice** – Respect the voice of those most affected by issues by centering their voices, respecting their goals for their communities, and stepping aside and allowing them to serve as spokespeople for their own causes.

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4. **Inclusivity** – Be inclusive and incorporate different perspectives when talking about your issues.
5. **Family** – Acknowledge that individuals with intersectional identities may face unique challenges in how their families are perceived and in building and sustaining their families.
6. **Disaggregated Data** – Ensure that data collection does not overlook the experiences of individuals with intersectional identities.
7. **Intersecting Issues and Cross-Issues** – Be open to thinking creatively about issues, assessing how issues connect with seemingly unrelated topics, and considering how they may have unintended consequences for other areas.
8. **Collaboration** – Strive to collaborate with people and/or provide resources for people from different communities, issue areas, and sectors to promote transformative change. Intersectionality should encourage cross-community, cross-sector and cross-issue collaborations, investing equally in each other’s issues, narrative goals and policy agendas.
9. **Health** – Consider how discrimination and systemic inequality contribute to differing health outcomes and block access to healthy food, clean water, and fresh air.
10. **Community** – While working in collaboration, highlight the importance of coming together as a community to achieve equal opportunity. Intersectionality should highlight the importance of community. Community is a salient value for many Americans. Intersectionality recognizes this connection to community and amplifies the importance of ensuring that all members of the community are respected and enjoy access to opportunity.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

LISTEN

[Intersectionality Matters! With Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)

READ

[What’s Intersectionality? Let These Scholars Explain the Theory and Its History](#)

WATCH

[Kimberlé Crenshaw: The urgency of intersectionality](#)

ACTION



What should we/ START DOING?

List ideas/items:

- Things that are not being done but should be done
- Things to begin doing to get better results
- Things worth trying or experimenting for better results



What should we/ STOP DOING?

List ideas/items:

- Things that are not working or helping
- Things that impede or are not practical
- Not delivering desired results
- We or others dislike



What should we/ CONTINUE DOING?

List ideas/items:

- Things that are working well
- Things that we want to keep
- Worth continuing to see if they’re worthwhile
- We like or need

PERSONAL IDENTITY WHEEL

A circular diagram divided into 12 equal segments by a horizontal line, a vertical line, and two diagonal lines. Each segment contains a question or topic related to personal identity. The segments are arranged as follows:

- Top: BIRTH ORDER
- Top-Right: FAVORITE MUSIC
- Right: ONE SKILL YOU'RE PROUD OF
- Bottom-Right: FAVORITE MOVIE
- Bottom-Right: FAVORITE BOOK
- Bottom: FAVORITE FOOD
- Bottom-Left: FAVORITE HOBBY
- Left: FAVORITE COLOR
- Top-Left: PERSONAL MOTTO
- Top-Left: NUMBER OF SIBLINGS

SOCIAL IDENTITY WHEEL

