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## INTERSECTIONALITY

Our experiences of the social world are shaped by our ethnicity, race, social class, gender identity, sexual orientation, and numerous other facets of social stratification. Some social locations afford privilege (e.g., being white) while others are oppressive (e.g., being poor). These various aspects of social inequality do not operate independently of each other; they interact to create interrelated systems of oppression and domination. The concept of intersectionality refers to how these various aspects of social location “intersect” to mutually constitute individuals’ lived experiences. The term itself was introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, although intersectional understandings of the social world precede her work.

Prior to being termed *intersectionality*, the *concept* of intersectional analysis emerged in a variety of contexts throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In the United States and Canada, intersectionality developed as a critique of the mainstream (second-wave) feminist movement. This phase of the feminist movement was predominately led and populated by white, middle-class women, with other women largely absent. Furthermore, the movement was preoccupied with the issues that influenced white, middle-class, heterosexual women; this feminist focus largely neglected to consider the material conditions of poor women, the effects of racism on racialized women, and the lived experiences of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer) women. While second-wave feminism *did* acknowledge the existence of multiple types of oppression, these oppressions were understood as inherently hierarchical; gender was constructed as fundamental in organizing women’s lives. Reflecting this, the feminist movement functioned under the assumption that all women have a shared experience of the world:

By and large within the women’s movement today, white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age. There is a pretense of homogeneity of experience covered by the word “*sisterhood*” that does not, in fact, exist. (Lorde, 1984, p. 117)

In addition to regarding gender as the primary oppression, the second-wave feminist movement also conceptualized various types of systemic inequality as operating alongside each other, separate and distinct. An intersectional analysis recognizes that various systems of oppression are interconnected, working to mutually shape and reinforce one another. This perspective maintains that, for example, the lived experiences of a black woman cannot be

understood simply by “adding” the experience of being black and the experience of being a woman.

In North America, early intersectional discussion and writing was predominately the domain of racialized feminists. One of these early texts was the Combahee River Collective’s 1978 statement, where the Boston-based black feminist organization described their politics as committed to considering the multidimensionality of oppression. Important contributions were also made by Angela Davis (1981), bell hooks (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), Elizabeth Spelman (1988), and Patricia Hill Collins (1990), among others. In 1989, Crenshaw conceptualized this understanding of the social world within the term *intersectionality*, in reference to “the multidimensionality of marginalized subjects’ lived experiences” (p. 139).

Intersectionality, with its roots in feminist theory, has significant theoretical and methodological insights to offer the social sciences. By highlighting the intricacy of human experience, intersectional analyses have the potential to generate knowledge about the social world that is more grounded in lived experiences and the multiplicity of factors producing situations of both privilege and disadvantage. Intersectional thinking lends itself to both qualitative and quantitative approaches, inviting researchers to experiment with new techniques and applications. However, intersectional analysis is not without its challenges. While its complexity and nuance make it amenable to theoretical endeavors, more methodological and analytical applications of intersectional approaches are difficult and vary significantly across scholars and disciplines. For instance, researchers take varying positions regarding the conceptualization and utilization of various social categories, with some emphasizing the ways in which group boundaries themselves are socially and historically produced, while others highlight the social relevance and durability of such categories (see Denis, 2008; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Hindman (2011) expressed concern that intersectional research operates within a liberal political framework, fractionalizing social groups into “smaller, internally-coherent empirical units” (p. 190) while overlooking the processes through which marginalization—and subject-formation more generally—takes place both within and between groups. It is also debatable whether the most commonly identified descriptive social markers (i.e., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability) are always the most salient, as opposed to other socially significant factors that may be overlooked. Furthermore, it is unclear which axes of inequality would benefit most from scholarly research, and whether positions of compounding privilege can be studied to uncover how both marginalization and privilege are systemically produced, rather than simply giving additional voice to those already in positions of power.

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## INTOLERANCE

Intolerance is defined as an unwillingness to understand or accept stimuli that are different from one's own. Intolerance can be manifested at the interpersonal or group level. Intolerance could be directed toward a person or group of people of a different religion, race, culture, opinion, ethics, values, and behavior, or things of an ambiguous nature.

While a tolerant individual is able to understand and respect different perspectives from one's own, an intolerant one is unwilling or unable to do so. Individuals can be tolerant of others' perspectives without necessarily being in agreement with those views. Intolerant individuals cannot get past their fixation on the believed correctness of their own view. Intolerance, ultimately, stems from a discrimination of "I versus you."

### *Similar Terms*

*Intolerance* and *discrimination* may sometimes be used in a similar context. Discrimination is defined as negative differential treatment of a group or individual based on categories such as race, sexual orientation, gender, and other characteristics. People who are intolerant of a group