A Beginner’s Guide to Intersectionality

Source: Miriam Dobson

http://thebodyisnotanapology.tumblr.com/post/55266150564/a-beginners-guide-to-intersectionality
**Definitions**
(Not an exhaustive list)

**Intersectionality** – The study of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. An example is black feminism, which argues that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in terms of being black, and of being a woman, considered independently, but must include the interactions, which frequently reinforce each other. (Term coined by Kimberle’ Crenshaw in 1989.)

**Oppression** - The exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner. Social Oppression is the socially supported mistreatment and exploitation of a group, category, or team of people or individuals. Institutional Oppression occurs when established laws, customs, and practices systematically reflect and produce inequities based on one’s membership in targeted social identity groups. If oppressive consequences accrue to institutional laws, customs, or practices, the institution is oppressive whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have oppressive intentions.

**Classism** – Differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Classism is the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. It’s the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class.

**Heterosexism/traditional family structure** – Institutional or interpersonal discrimination or prejudice against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) people based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal, natural and default identity and that LGBTQ identities are abnormal and wrong. “Traditional family” structure also indicates the cultural support and privileges associated with married, heterosexual couple-headed households with children, and the invalidation of family structures that fall outside of this norm. This could include single-parent, multi-generation, unmarried couple or child-free households.

**Ableism** – Institutional or interpersonal discrimination or prejudice against someone because of their differing physical, mental, or psychological status. This could include physical limitations, such as being in a wheelchair, mental limitations such as ‘autism,’ and psychological limitations such as any mental health concern, diagnosed or not. In an ableist system, able-bodied individuals have privilege and power. The ableist societal worldview is that the able-bodied are the norm in society and that a disability is inherently a bad thing that should be overcome.

**Sexism/patriarchy/gender oppression** – The system that gives power and privilege to men at the expense of women and some people with other gender identities. This may include discrimination, stereotyping and the construction of social roles based on sex and gender. Patriarchy is a social system in which males hold primary power, predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property.
The Power Flower
Key Resources and Deeper Dives


- Kimberle’ Crenshaw: *On Intersectionality* (keynote address from WOW Conference, 2016.) [https://youtu.be/-DW4HLgYPIA](https://youtu.be/-DW4HLgYPIA)
