

Respectful Practice and Care

Intersectionality



**WELLBEING
HEALTH &
YOUTH** NHMRC Centre of
Research Excellence
in Adolescent Health

YR **YOUNG &
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Why it matters

In essence, Intersectionality is “a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power.”

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, 2015

Definitions

The interconnected identities that someone experiences. It also refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person’s identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. This term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.

“ A theoretical approach that understands the interconnected nature of social categorisations – such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, class, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ability or age – which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage for either an individual or group.

(Family Safety Victoria, 2021).



Using an intersectional approach to inform your engagement with young people

Intersectionality shows us that social identities work on multiple levels, resulting in unique experiences, opportunities, and barriers for each person. Therefore, experience, expertise and forms of oppression cannot be reduced to only one part of an identity (eg. gender, (dis)ability, sexuality). Each form of oppression is dependent on and shapes the other.

It is important to be aware of intersectionality because of the way it reveals the multidimensionality and complexity of individual and group experience – which is often overlooked and sometimes not overtly visible.

Intersectionality in research

- Encourages acknowledgement of all lived experiences
- Promotes social justice and positive targeting to marginalised/multiple disadvantage groups
- Advances the ethics and value of research

Just as people live in the intersections of social structures and identities with different forms of discrimination and disadvantages, intersectionality helps us to make visible and understand the different and multiplying forms of privilege and advantage. Privilege is a spectrum that is closely aligned to power. It’s circumstantial and changing in most scenarios, however in general, systems of power and privilege are resilient and changes in who has power and privilege in a community or society are rarely dramatic or quick.

Prepare

What to consider before you engage*

- How do your biases, attitudes and beliefs influence your opinions/actions relating to your research, young people and their involvement?
- How does your privilege directly or indirectly disadvantage others? What can you do to address this?
- Thinking about your research project and who you plan to involve, who has more and who has less control over their own lives and why?
- What are the intersecting identities of the people you engage with in your project? Who is missing?
- Who holds power and in what circumstances? Who makes decisions? How are they accountable?

Connect

What to consider when you engage*

- Who shares perspectives and who doesn't? How do you know what you think we know? Who told you? Who has not been consulted?
- Have you asked young people (and any other people involved) what they need to participate? Have you removed physical, transportation, information and communication barriers or provided reasonable alternatives?
- Have you addressed attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to young people's engagement?
- What does privilege look like in this context? Are there differences across generations? What does discrimination look like in this context, and across generations?

Reflect

What to consider after you have engaged*

- Are you changing the way that resources are produced and/or distributed? Are you changing the way relationships are produced and/or distributed?

Key points of consideration

- How are we as researchers, community members, young people and human beings reinforcing this cycle of privilege? How can we challenge this?
- What does intersectionality look like in health, health services and health research?

Further reading & Resources

Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit, (2021), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139-167.

Larson, E., et. al, (2016, April). "10 Best resources on intersectionality with an emphasis on low- and middle-income countries", *Health Policy and Planning*, Oxford University Press, Issue 31.

Lopez, N., & Gadsden, V. J. (2016). Health inequities, social determinants, and intersectionality. *NAM Perspectives*. Discussion Paper, National Academy of Medicine, Washington, DC. doi: 10.31478/201612a

Noto, O., Leonard, W., & Mitchell, A. (2014). Nothing for them: understanding the support needs of LGBT young people from refugee and recently arrived backgrounds. Monograph series no. 94. Melbourne, Australia: The Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, La Trobe University.

J. Chen (2017) *Intersectionality Matters: A guide to engaging immigrant and refugee communities in Australia*. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. Melbourne

*Questions taken/adapted from the UN Women Intersectionality Resource Guide & Toolkit listed in Further Reading.