INTERSECTIONALITY 101

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RESEARCH AND POLICY

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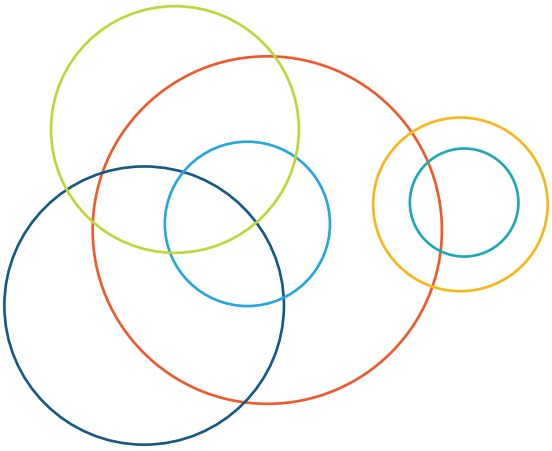
THE PURPOSE OF THIS PRIMER

Interest in and applications of intersectionality have grown exponentially in popularity over the last 15 years. Scholars across the globe from a variety of disciplines, including sociology, political science, health sciences, geography, philosophy and anthropology, as well as in feminist studies, ethnic studies, queer studies and legal studies, have drawn on intersectionality to challenge inequities and promote social justice. This practice has also extended to policy makers, human rights activists and community organizers searching for better approaches to tackling complex social issues. Yet most people don't know about intersectionality and why it is such an innovative framework for research, policy and practice.

The aim of this primer is to provide a clear-language guide to intersectionality; we explore its key elements and characteristics, how it is distinct from other approaches to equity, and how it can be applied in research, policy, practice and teaching. Most importantly, the primer aims to show how intersectionality can fundamentally alter how social problems are experienced, identified and grasped to include the breadth of lived experiences.



WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

The term "intersectionality" was coined in 1989 by American critical legal race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989). However, the central ideas of intersectionality have long historic roots within and beyond the United States. Black activists and feminists, as well as Latina, post-colonial, queer and Indigenous scholars have all produced work that reveals the complex factors and processes that shape human lives (Bunjun, 2010; Collins, 1990; Valdes, 1997; Van Herk, Smith, & Andrew, 2011).

As intersectionality has gained popularity, it has been interpreted and discussed in various ways – e.g., as a theory, methodology, paradigm, lens or framework. Moreover, many different definitions have been proposed. In general, however:

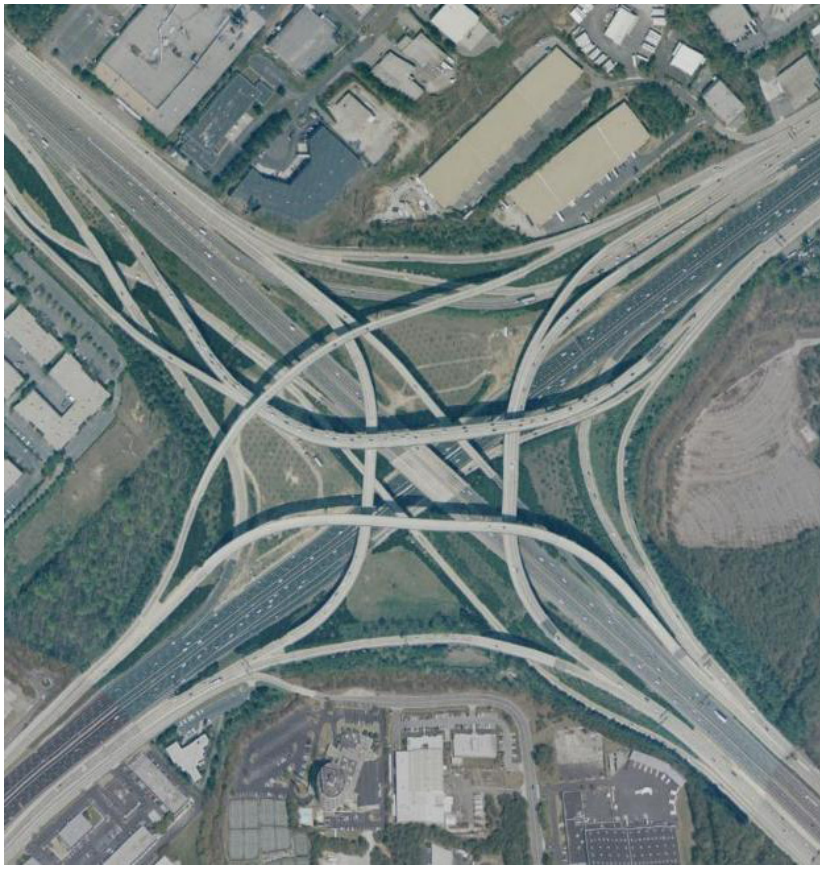
> *Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., 'race'/ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy are created.*

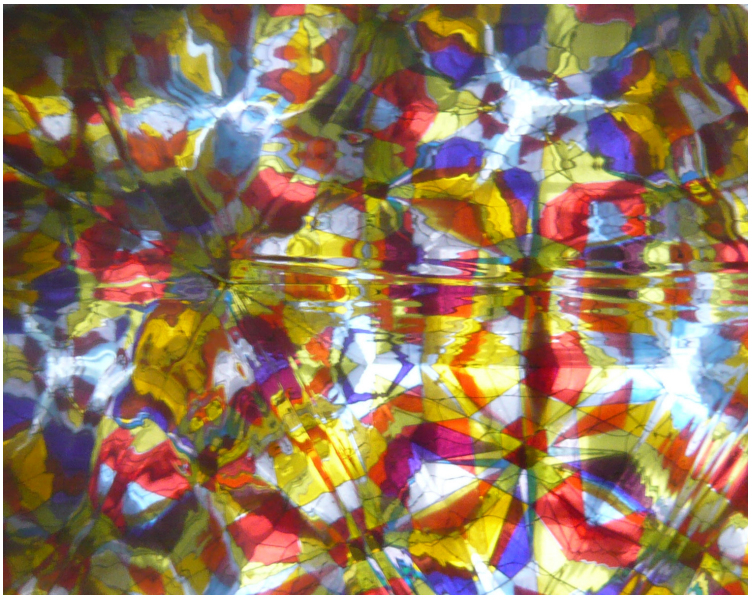
PUT SIMPLY: According to an intersectionality perspective, inequities are never the result of single, distinct factors. Rather, they are the outcome of intersections of different social locations, power relations and experiences.

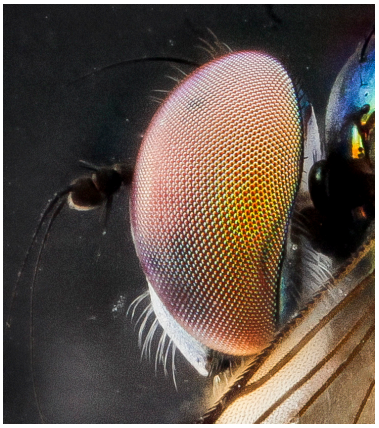
INTERSECTIONALITY IS BASED ON SEVERAL KEY TENETS:

- Human lives cannot be explained by taking into account single categories, such as gender, race, and socio-economic status. People's lives are multi-dimensional and complex. Lived realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics operating together.
- When analyzing social problems, the importance of any category or structure cannot be predetermined; the categories and their importance must be discovered in the process of investigation.
- Relationships and power dynamics between social locations and processes (e.g., racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, sexism) are linked. They can also change over time and be different depending on geographic settings.
- People can experience privilege and oppression simultaneously. This depends on what situation or specific context they are in.
- Multi-level analyses that link individual experiences to broader structures and systems are crucial for revealing how power relations are shaped and experienced.
- Scholars, researchers, policy makers, and activists must consider their own social position, role and power when taking an intersectional approach. This "reflexivity," should be in place before setting priorities and directions in research, policy work and activism.
- Intersectionality is explicitly oriented towards transformation, building coalitions among different groups, and working towards social justice.

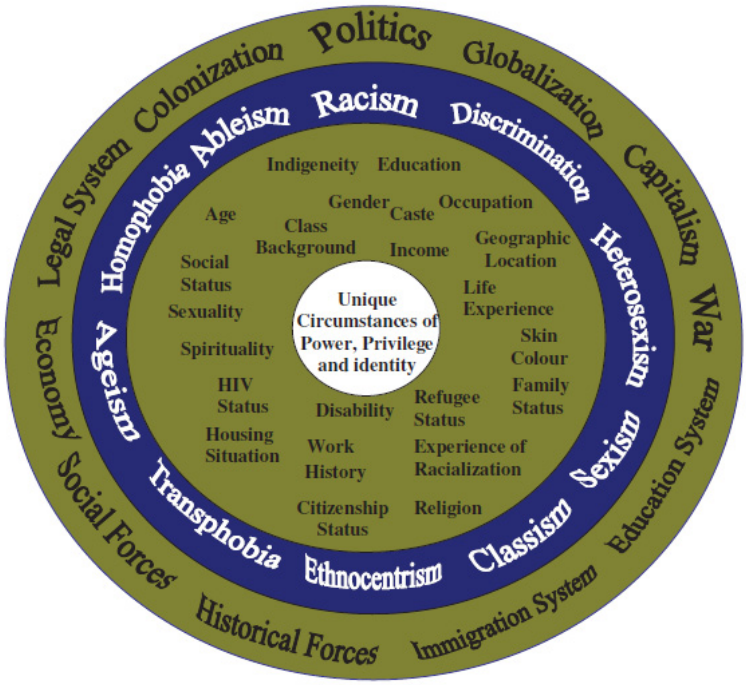
There have been numerous attempts to try to visually represent intersectionality. These include: a traffic intersection that depicts intersecting roads of oppression (Crenshaw, 2003), the final product resulting from blending baking ingredients that, like the factors going into lived experience, are blended together into batter (Bowleg, 2013); the rich, complex and historically shaped topography of the Grand Canyon (Crenshaw, 2010); the dynamic reflections in a kaleidoscope (Easteal, 2002); the interconnected swirls of a marble cake (Jordan-Zachery, 2007); and the unique, compound nature of a fly's eye, which is made up of thousands of individual lenses (Weber, 2007).





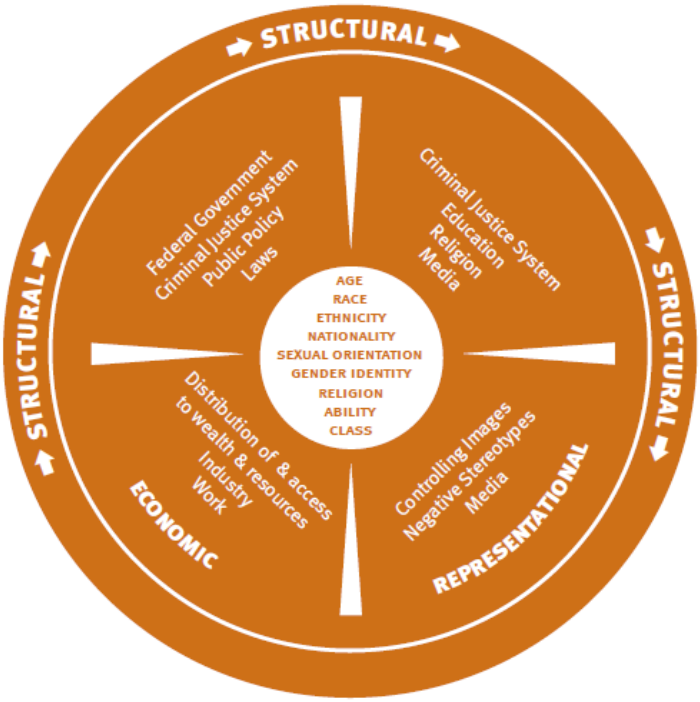


Similarly, several models have been developed to clarify the essence of intersectionality. For instance, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) depicts intersectionality in a wheel diagram that captures some of the multi-level dimensions of experience that shape social exclusion, from individual identity and circumstances, to macro-forces:



Intersectionality Displayed in a Wheel Diagram (CRIAW, 2009, p. 5)

Next, Mason (2010) presents an "Intersectional Approach Model for Policy and Social Change." This model depicts issues of social change and equality as shaped by intersecting dimensions. The model aims to promote policies that address the social and structural roots of policy issues:

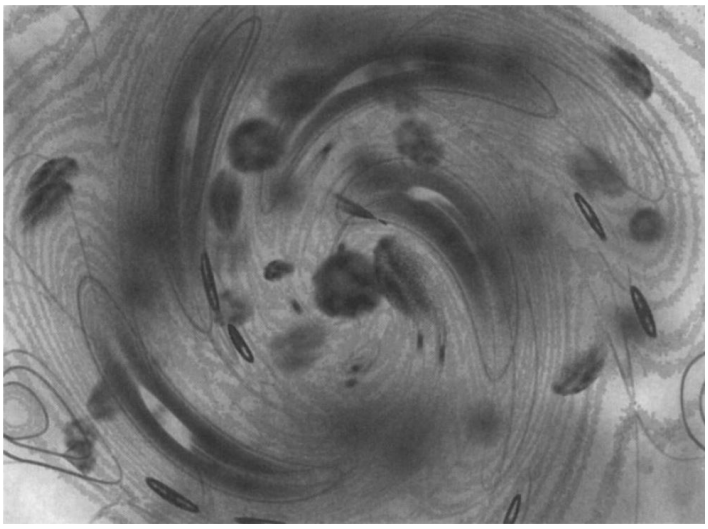


The Intersectional Approach Model for Policy & Social Change (Mason, 2010, p. 6)

Others yet, have developed illustrations that aim to make intersectionality accessible to broad audiences such as Intersectionality: A Fun Guide, featuring Bob the Triangle.

From Miriam Dobson's website:
http://miriamdobson.wordpress.com/2013/04/24/intersectionality-a-fun-guide/

Finally, Rita Dhamoon's model of the "matrix of meaning-making," (Dhamoon 2011) as depicted by the image below, is a powerful way to show movement among multiple processes and structures of power, across time, dimensions and levels. The image provides us with a "pictoral representation of the paradigmatic shift that an intersectionality-type lens invites" (Dhamoon 2011, p. 238).



From: Jang, G. (2010). A matrix of meaning-making. University of the Fraser Valley, cited in Dhamoon, R. (2011). Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality. Political Research Quarterly, 64(1), p. 238

WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF INTERSECTIONALITY?

Intersectionality encourages researchers, policy makers and social change leaders to:

- Move beyond single identities or group-specific concerns, which are ineffective in explaining the nuances of human lives; in this way, important information about the unfair impacts of politics and policies is less likely to 'fall through the cracks.'
- Explore new research and policy approaches to understand the connections between structures that shape diverse populations.
- For example, in Canada increased diversity is driven by immigration trends and intercultural unions. By 2031, 29-32% of Canadians could belong to a visible minority group, and 30% will have a mother tongue that is neither English nor French (Statistics Canada, 2010b, p. 1).
- According to the most recent Census data (Statistics Canada, 2011, p. 4), Canada is home to people of more than 200 different ethnic origins and *increasing numbers are identifying with multiple ethnicities.*
- Beyond Canada, there are similar trends of increasingly diverse populations (e.g., across religion, culture, ethnicity, race, language, etc.), creating new and complex challenges in all areas of public policy (In Diversity, 2010; Hedetoft, 2006; Thorud et al., 2014).
- Generate new and more complete information to better understand the origins, root causes and characteristics of social issues. This can be accomplished by studying existing data or by producing new data.
- Enable more effective and efficient responses than a 'one-size fits all' approach for solving persistent and growing social inequities.

Why is this important?

- "Seven out of ten people in the world today live in countries where inequality has increased over the past three decades," (Lagarde, 2014, n.p.).
- WEF's Global Outlook report warns that inequality is undermining social stability and "threatening security on a global scale" (World Economic Forum, 2013, p. 12a).

In Canada:

- The Conference Board of Canada (2011) reports that between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s Canada had the fourth largest increase in income inequality. Canada has slipped to "below the average" in measures of equality, and ranks 12th out of 17 peer countries (n.p.).

- One in seven Canadian children lives in poverty. Aboriginal people are the fastest growing group in Canada, but one in four First Nations children lives in poverty. Immigrants and newcomers face child poverty rates more than 2.5 times higher than the general population (Campaign 2000, 2012).
- Health inequalities in Canada are widespread and show up in numerous indicators of health, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, disease incidence, mortality, and injuries at every stage of the life course (Bryant et al., 2011).
- The life expectancy for First Nations people is five to seven years less than among non-Aboriginal Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2010a; Assembly of First Nations, 2011).

Intersectionality is
"*the best chance for an effective diagnosis and ultimately an effective prescription*" (Hancock, 2007, p. 73).

PRINCIPLES OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Researchers, policy makers, decision makers, and activists often seek direction on how to apply intersectionality to their work. A good starting point is to think about the key principles, presented below, that encompass the aims and objectives of intersectionality that have been previously published as constituting an intersectionality-based policy analysis framework (IBPA) (Hankivsky et al., 2012, pp. 35-38). Taken together, however, these principles provide a framework that can guide the 'doing' of intersectionality-informed work not only in policy but also research, activism and practice.[1]

1 For examples of the application of these principles within policy analysis, see the case studies presented in Hankivsky (2012a) and Hunting et al. (forthcoming). Also see Appendix B for a list of overarching questions (informed by these principles) that help guide intersectionality-based policy analysis.

Intersecting Categories

From an intersectionality perspective, human lives cannot be reduced to single categories, and policy analysis cannot assume that any one social category is most important for understanding people's needs and experiences. Nor does intersectionality promote an additive approach – e.g., examining the collective impact of gender, 'race,' sexuality, age and class – as the sum of their independent effects (e.g., gender+class+race) (Hancock, 2007). Instead, intersectionality conceptualizes social categories as interacting with and co-constituting one another to create unique social locations that vary according to time and place. These intersections and their effects are what matters in an intersectional analysis (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2009).

Multi-level Analysis

Intersectionality is concerned with understanding the effects between and across various levels in society, including macro (global and national-level institutions and policies), meso or intermediate (provincial and regional-level institutions and policies), and micro levels (community-level, grassroots institutions and policies as well as the individual or 'self'). Attending to this *multi-level* dimension of intersectionality also requires addressing processes of inequity and differentiation across levels of structure, identity and representation (Dhamoon & Hankivsky, 2011; Winker & Degele, 2011). The significance of and relationships between these various levels of structure and social location are not predetermined. Rather, they reveal themselves through the process of intersectional research and discovery.

Power

Attention to power highlights that: i) power operates at discursive and structural levels to exclude some types of knowledge and experience (Foucault, 1977); ii) power shapes subject positions and categories (e.g., 'race') (e.g. racialization and racism); and iii) these processes operate together to shape experiences of privilege and penalty between groups and within them (Collins, 2000). From an intersectional perspective, power is relational. A person can simultaneously experience both power and oppression in varying contexts, at varying times (Collins, 1990). These relations of power include experiences of *power over* others, but also that of *power with* others (power that involves people working together) (Guinier & Torres, 2003). In recognizing the shifting intersections in which power operates, intersectionality moves beyond what Martinez (1993) terms the "Oppression Olympics," which occur when groups compete for the title of 'most oppressed' in order to gain political support, economic resources, and recognition. Intersectionality rejects an additive model of oppression that leaves the systems that create power differentials unchanged (Hancock, 2007). Within an intersectionality-based policy analysis (or IBPA), the focus is not just on domination or marginalization, but on the intersecting processes by which power and inequity are produced, reproduced and actively resisted (Dhamoon, 2011).

Reflexivity

One way that intersectionality pays attention to power is through reflexivity. Reflexivity acknowledges the importance of power at the micro level of the self and our relationships with others, as well as at the macro levels of society. Reflexive practice recognizes multiple truths and a diversity of perspectives, while giving extra space to voices typically excluded from policy 'expert' roles (Bolzan, Heycox, & Hughes, 2001). Practicing reflexivity requires researchers, policy makers and stakeholders to commit to ongoing dialogue about "tacit, personal, professional or organizational knowledges" and their influences on policy (Parken, 2010, p. 85). Reflexivity can help transform policy when the people involved bring critical self-awareness, role-awareness, interrogation of power and privilege, and the questioning of assumptions and 'truths' to their work (Clark, 2012). For example, reflexive practices should help people consider their individual connections to colonization and facilitate questioning about policy and practices that accompanied the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Blackstock, 2005).

Time and Space

Intersectionality emphasizes the importance of time and space in any analysis. How we experience and understand time and space depends on when and where we live and interact (Warf, 2008). It is within these dimensions of time and space that different kinds of knowledge are situated, our understandings of the world are constructed, and the social orders of meaning are made (Saraga, 1998). Moreover, privileges and disadvantages, including intersecting identities and the processes that determine their value, change over time and place (Hulko, 2009). Thus, time and space are not static, fixed or objective dimensions and/or processes, but are fluid, changeable and experienced through our interpretations, senses and feelings, which are, in turn, heavily conditioned by our social position/location, among other factors (Tuan, 1977).

The Diversity of Knowledges

Intersectionality is concerned with epistemologies (theories of knowledge) and power, and in particular, with the relationship between power and knowledge production. Including the perspectives and worldviews of people who are typically marginalized or excluded in the production of knowledge can disrupt forces of power that are activated through the production of knowledge (Dhamoon, 2011). For example, the inclusion, in policy analysis, of traditional knowledges held by colonized peoples can shift dominant colonial or racialized discourses and can thus have decolonizing effects (Fredericks, Adams, & Edwards, 2011). Given the focus in intersectionality-based policy analysis on addressing inequities and power, knowledge generated through an IBPA can and should include the perspectives and knowledges of peoples who are typically excluded in policy analysis. IBPA expands understandings of what is typically constituted as "evidence" by recognizing a diversity of knowledge, paradigms and theoretical perspectives, such as knowledge generated from qualitative or quantitative research; empirical or interpretive data; and Indigenous knowledges. Users of the IBPA Framework must consider how

power favours certain knowledge traditions to the exclusion of others, and reflect on both the way that diverse knowledges traditions are taken up in policy analysis and the implications this uptake has for different groups of people.

Social Justice

Intersectionality strongly emphasizes social justice (Grace, 2011). Approaches to social justice differ based in whether they focus on the redistribution of goods (Rawls, 1971) or on social processes (Young, 1990); however, all approaches share a concern with achieving equity (Sen, 2006). Theories of social justice frequently challenge inequities at their source and require people to question social and power relations. For example, according to Potts and Brown (2005) social justice is about: "transforming the way resources and relationships are produced and distributed so that all can live dignified lives in a way that is ecologically sustainable. It is also about creating new ways of thinking and being and not only criticizing the status quo" (p. 284). A social justice approach to health equity has the potential to transform social structures, which is essential in addressing the root causes of inequities (Farmer, 2005).

Equity

Closely tied to the social justice principle of intersectionality, equity is concerned with fairness. As expressed by Braveman and Gruskin (2003), equity in public policy exists when social systems are designed to equalize outcomes between more and less advantaged groups. The term *equity* is not to be confused with *equality*. For example, where *inequality* may refer to any measurable difference in outcomes of interest, *inequities* exist where those differences are unfair or unjust. This principle should be familiar to many people who work on policy; sex and gender based analysis (SGBA), which asks analysts to consider policy through a gender equity lens, is commonly applied to many areas of Canadian policy (Hankivsky et al., 2012). The IBPA Framework extends this practice by prompting analysts to consider policy issues through an intersectional lens, looking not only at gender equity, but also at the impacts of the intersections of multiple positions of privilege and oppression.

Finally, resistance and resilience have recently been added as key principles of intersectionality-based analyses (see Hunting et al., forthcoming):

Resistance and Resilience

Though not principles within IBPA, consideration of resistance and resilience is integral to intersectionality because these can disrupt power and oppression. Even from so-called 'marginalized' spaces and locations, oppressive values, norms and practices can be challenged. One mechanism of resistance from subordinated groups has been to use collective actions to destabilize dominant ideologies. Conversely, policies and discourses

that label groups of people as inherently marginalized or vulnerable undermine the reality that there are no 'pure victims or oppressors' (Collins 1990; Dhamoon & Hankivsky 2011). Categorical policy approaches obscure similarities between groups and their shared relationships to power. It also prevents coalitional work by reinforcing conceptions of difference based upon specific categories.

HOW DOES INTERSECTIONALITY DIFFER FROM OTHER APPROACHES?

Unlike other approaches, intersectionality is uniquely positioned to interrogate and understand human differences (in addition to understanding similarities across groups that can be overlooked).

In the following table, Ange-Marie Hancock (2013, p. 268) summarizes three approaches – unitary, multiple and intersectional - in order to show how intersectionality provides a more advanced way of analyzing difference.

- The unitary approach focuses on one primary marker of difference as sufficient for explaining a social problem.
- The multiple approach considers more than one explanatory factor, but does so in an additive way, paying little attention to relationships and interactions between such factors.
- The intersectionality approach explicitly focuses on the relationships between factors and mutually constructed processes that create difference. As the examples at the end of this primer demonstrate, this allows for the generation of new and arguably more accurate information about any kind of problem or issue.

	Unitary Approach	**Multiple Approach**	**Intersectional Approach**
Number of Relevant Categories/Processes	One	More than one	More than one
Posited Relationship Between Categories/Processes	None	Predetermined and conceptually distinguishable relationships	Relationships are open empirical questions to be determined
Conceptualization of Each Category	Static at individual or institutional level	Static at individual or institutional level	Dynamic interaction between individual and institutional factors
Case Makeup of Category/Class	Uniform	Uniform	Diverse; members often differ in politically significant ways
Approach to Intersectionality	Lip service or dismissal	Intersectionality as testable explanation	Intersectionality as paradigm/ research design

Three Empirical Approaches to Conceptualizing Categories of Difference

As illustrated in the table below, intersectionality also extends existing frameworks that attempt to identify and respond to differences in research, policy and practice.

SGBA	GBA+	HIAs	IBPA
Sex & Gender Based Analysis	Gender Based Analysis+	Health Impact Assessments	Intersectionality Based Policy Analysis
Prioritizes sex and gender; does not question primacy of sex and/or gender differences	Emphasizes factors beyond gender in an interactive way; does not challenge primacy of gender	Grounded in social determinants of health; lack of attention to: values, experiences and expertise of policy actors, interrelated nature of social determinants, resistance and resilience, voice and participation of those who are affected by policy process	Emphasizes that people belong to more than one social category at the same time, focuses on interactions of different social locations, systems and processes, investigates rather than assumes the significance of any specific combination of factors

WHAT IS THE VALUE ADDED OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN POLICY?

Just as important as understanding what intersectionality *is*, and the principles that can inform an 'intersectionality-informed stance,' (Bowleg 2012, p. 1270) is to demonstrate what intersectionality *does*. In the appendices of this primer, there are resources for those seeking to begin the process of understanding how to think about and apply intersectionality in research (Appendix A), policy (Appendix B), activism (Appendix C) and education (Appendix D). The examples below briefly describe the potential of intersectionality to transform three important issues of policy.

MEN'S HEALTH

In comparison to women's health, the men's health field is in nascent stages of development but has made considerable progress in the last decade. Men's health is now of great interest and concern to health policy makers and practitioners. Reflecting this, and in response to the need for increased attention and research capacity in the area of boys' and men's health, a recent major funding initiative was launched by the Institute for Gender and Health (within the Canadian Institutes of Health Research). Outside of Canada, Ireland (2009) and Australia (2010) have developed national men's health policies to highlight the need for a specific focus on men as service users with particular needs, and for improving the health of all males. In addition, organizations such as the European Men's Health Forum (emhf.org) and the Men's Health Caucus in the US (menshealthcau-

cus.net) are calling for better attention to men's health within research and policy.

The growth of men's health challenges firmly entrenched notions that gender disadvantage in health affects only or primarily women. To date, however, research into boys' and men's health has been critiqued for being largely focused on comparisons with women and how women fare better in terms of many health outcomes, including life expectancy (European Commission, 2011; Courtney, 2011). Meanwhile, not surprisingly, an important gap still exists in explaining differences *among* men (Watkins & Griffith, 2013; Hankivsky, 2012b).

There is growing recognition that gender, race, class, sexuality, life stage and cultural expectations provide an important context for understanding men's daily lives and health (Griffith et al., 2013; Griffith, 2012; also see Grace, 2014, Hunting, 2014, and Rouhani, 2014 for detailed case studies examining the intersectionality of boys' and men's health).

Intersectionality-informed men's research can:

- advance the understanding of how gender expressions and meanings are *co-constituted* by other social locations (e.g., age, sexuality, ethnicity, geography, historical and policy contexts, etc.) and can differ across men. As Hearn (2006) explains, "Different men can have complex, even contradictory, relations to gender equality and other (in)equalities..." Researchers looking at men's health in Canada are increasingly advocating for more nuanced conceptions of gender, arguing that it is shaped by other factors, such as country of origin, ethnicity, and lifecourse (e.g., Evans et al., 2011; Zanchetta et al., 2010).

'Maleness,' or being of the male gender, does not necessarily confer the same privileges and disadvantages in the same ways across men. For instance, African American men experience forms of oppression that differ from what non-racialized White men experience due to gendered racism. Gender and race are inextricable when considering particular forms of discrimination – such as racial profiling – experience disproportionately by racialized black men. Binary notions of privilege and disadvantage experienced by groups cannot capture this complexity (Mutua, 2013).

- debunk false assumptions of gender-based difference by showing how women sometimes share *similar* experiences of advantage and disadvantage with men across social categories.

Cole (2009) argues that attending to commonalities across groups reveals false ideas of between-group differences and allows complexities of social phenomena to surface. She cites Dworkin's (2005) study, which notes that much discourse surrounding the heterosexual transmission of HIV depicts women as vulnerable and at risk from men. This is shaped by gendered assumptions that women are sexually oppressed and passive, whereas men are sexually invulnerable and dominating. This 'women-

at-risk framing' overlooks variations in power and patriarchal privilege among men (e.g., heterosexual men can experience sexual violence, engage in sex work, or experience inequities associated with social locations, such as race and class). The study underscores the fact intersecting locations and experiences put individuals at risk of HIV infection, rather than individual identity categories (such as gender). With this expanded idea of risk, similarities between groups (e.g., heterosexual women, and men who have sex with men) can come into the discussion. Cole argues that highlighting such similarities can create "fertile sites of intervention or mobilizing to lobby for prevention and treatment resources" (p. 176).

- *reveal within-group differences* among men and boys, and how these can be more significant than those between men and women.

Hyde's (2014) discussion of gender differences and similarities highlights intersectionality as the way forward to better understand how gender influences behaviour and experience. She argues that broad-based statements of gender differences – such as males purported being better at math – often ignore how ethnicity and other social locations intersect with these differences. A meta-analysis of research on gender differences in mathematics performance found that this advantage was not present for Blacks, Hispanics, or Asian Americans. To truly conceptualize advantage and disadvantage thus requires an intersectional understanding of gender.

- *demonstrate the existence of diverse expressions of masculinities* that are shaped by culture and subcultures (and shift over the lifecourse). Intersectionality can also show how these diverse expressions affect how differentially situated men in a variety of jurisdictions respond differently to health and health care issues and problems (Watkins & Griffith, 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

Evans et al. (2011) discuss how masculinity intersects with other social determinants of health differently during youth, middle age and the older years. Specifically, they demonstrate how masculinity is defined and experienced differently across the lifecourse, as experiences related to socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, geography, community, education, and employment change. This makes men vulnerable and resilient to poor health in different ways as they age. In overlooking the shifting and intersectional nature of masculinity, important conditions that shape inequity can be overlooked and remain unaddressed.

HEALTHY WEIGHTS

Internationally, there is growing concern with healthy weight and the problem of obesity. Nearly 1.5 billion adults were overweight in 2008, and, of these, half a billion were clinically obese – almost double the rates of 1980 (Swinburn et al., 2011). In Canada, obesity rates have tripled since 1985, and expectations are that about 21 percent of Canadian adults will be obese by 2019 (Twells et al. 2014). The annual cost of obesity to the health care system is estimated as between $4.6-$7.1 billion dollars. In the U.S., studies have estimated that 42 percent of the adult population will be obese by 2030 (Finkelstein et al., 2012). Similar numbers are predicted for the UK, where researchers predict that up to 48% of men and 43% of women could be obese by that year (Wang et al., 2011).

Obesity threatens to have a great impact on public health worldwide, but the mechanisms of its increase in prevalence and its consequences are far less well understood in policy terms (King, 2011). The complexity of obesity has led researchers to pay attention to social context (Frisco et al., 2012) when studying the problem, to using broad ecological research approaches (Rutter, 2011), and undertaking multi-sectoral policy interventions (Dietz, 2011). This is especially interesting given the tendency for public health policies to emphasize individual lifestyle choices, which can obscure the broader contexts shaping weight.

Some studies have examined important factors in terms of obesity and weight gain over time. These have included regional considerations and environmental factors, as well as the impact of sex, gender, race, age, culture, and socio-economic status (Burke et al., 1996; Twells et al., 2014; He et al., 2014; Du et al., 2013; Basterra-Gortari et al., 2011; Baltrus et al., 2005; Clarke et al., 2009; Mujahid et al., 2005; Swinburn et al., 2011). A shortcoming of such studies is that they either focus on one important factor (e.g., regional differences), or they use an additive approach to examine differential experiences of obesity (e.g., regional differences + gender + age), missing the opportunity to consider, for example, how different categories interact to shape inequities in weight change and or obesity.

Emerging research demonstrates the importance of capturing these interactions:

- *Martin and Lippert (2012) have demonstrated that mothers experiencing food insecurity are more likely than child-free men and women and food insecure fathers to be overweight or obese and to gain more weight. The risks are greater for single mothers relative to mothers in married or cohabiting relationships. The researchers argue that obesity offers a physical expression of the vulnerabilities that arise from the intersection of gendered childcare expectations and poverty.*

- *In a 2011 U.S. study, results revealed complex interactive effects of gender, race, socioeconomic position and age. Researchers showed that among individuals aged 25–39 and 45–54, low-educated and low-income black women experienced the greatest increase in BMI, while high-educated and high-income white men experienced the least BMI increase (Ailshire & House, 2011).*

- *Correll (2010) has critiqued obesity scholarship for obscuring connections between gender, poverty, and obesity. He argues that this shortcoming leads to important policy failures (in the current Food Stamps program and Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) program in the US). Instead of improving the status quo, such programs contribute to obesity-inducing food insecurity, temporal poverty, and unhealthy food selection.*

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change has become a central policy problem in both developed and developing countries. At the same time, it is typically understood that global warming is largely caused by the consumption patterns and lifestyle choices of the world's most affluent nations and populations (IEA, 2011). The greatest brunt of climate change is thus experienced by the world's most vulnerable and poor (Parks & Roberts, 2006).

To date, most studies and political initiatives that are concerned with capturing the differential effects of climate change on populations tend to focus on one single variable (e.g., gender, place, ethnicity, socio-economic status) (e.g., Lambrou & Paina, 2006; Hulme, 2008; Nielson & Reenberg, 2010; Stern, 2007; WHO, 2011). Critiquing one such approach – gender analysis – Carr and Thompson (2014) observe that it is predicated on a construction of gender as binary (men vs. women). This not only leads to simplistic comparisons and homogenization of 'men' and 'women,' but also overlooks "significant differences with regard to knowledge, resources, and power within gender groups that shape development and adaptation outcomes"in relation to climate change (Carr & Thompson, 2014, p. 186). Such a focus obscures the fact that gender takes meaning from its intersection with other identities, roles and responsibilities

In reality, the situation is far more complex. From an intersectionality perspective, what makes people vulnerable to climate change, or, alternatively how they experience adaptation and mitigation strategies is the result of multiple factors and processes that are linked together within systems of power (Osborne, 2013; Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Especially important are political and societal institutions that shape and regulate transportation, energy and consumption (Kaijser & Kornsell, 2013).

For example:

- *Devastation of New Orleans caused by Katrina involved various intersecting forms of marginality (Tuana, 2008): marginalized people were less likely to be able to evacuate and to afford to live somewhere else, and had poorer prospects if they were displaced. From an intersectionality lens, Katrina made visible how climate change impacts can interact with social structures (Tuana, 2008).*

- *Weber and Hilfinger-Messias (2012) demonstrated how macro- and micro-level power relations of gender, race, and class affected the lives, work, and well-being of post-Katrina frontline recovery workers along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. According to the researchers, using an intersectionality framework to conduct their study broadened their understanding of 1) risks to recovery-worker health and well-being, including*

work stress and burnout, and 2) the role of macro-level social inequalities in producing and maintaining health disparities and inequities.

- *Dzah's examination of climate change in Ghana (2011) revealed that simplistic comparisons of men vs. women are not adequate for understanding who is impacted and how. Instead, gender, age, ethnicity, marital status and life stage affect levels of vulnerability and adaptive capacity.*
- *In her analysis of flooding in Bangladesh, Sultana (2010) showed that women are not a homogenous group with regards to their experience of floods. Intersectional relations to class, caste, religion and age all affect women's resources, rights and responsibilities. For instance, she found that poorer agrarian women are particularly vulnerable to floods and natural disasters, as they often experience intersecting factors that limit their access to resources and recovery. Nor were men homogenous; their experiences were also influenced by class, religion, and educational status.*

Not only does intersectionality leads to multi-level analysis of intersecting factors, processes and structures impacting climate change experiences, but its principles lead to questions regarding how climate change problems are framed and understood. Specifically, intersectionality provides critical insights into how institutional practices and norms (and the power dynamics within these) shape knowledge and norms used by researchers. By asking questions such as, "*What type of knowledge is privileged in dealing with climate change? [and] How is the understanding of what is legitimate knowledge related to social categories and to power relations*?" intersectionality-informed analysis can bring to the fore alternative knowledge on climate change and, in turn, improved climate change strategies (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2013, p. 6).

Within policy settings, this type of inquiry may allow decision makers to better determine how dominant norms and lifestyles may be contributing to the problem of climate change. For instance, a policy maker's own social position can make them reluctant to challenge high-consumption lifestyle norms that permeate richer Northern societies because they themselves may be complicit with this kind of lifestyle (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2013). Thus, in interrogating broader structures of power and privilege intersectionality allows for social justice concerns to be addressed. Transformative questions arise, such as: *What should be the norm in the context of climate issues and the power structures that shape them*?

An intersectionality-informed analysis allows for a different understanding of the true challenges of climate change, including the fact that effective intervention will require a fundamental restructuring of power structures that currently contribute to environmental destruction.

CONCLUSION

As this primer shows, intersectionality offers a unique framework for analyzing problems within diversity and inequity. While the Intersectionality 101 primer has used brief examples to demonstrate the value added of intersectionality, it was written, and should be read in conjunction with the other primers in this series (see Hunting, 2014, Rouhani, 2014, and Grace, 2014). These provide further guidance and demonstrate the potential for intersectionality-informed qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Taken together, the primers in this series contribute to the ongoing exploration of how interectionality can be used to better understand and address the complexity of inequities and strive for social justice.

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APPENDIX A – FOR RESEARCHERS

Hankivsky (2012, pp. 1715-1716) has developed a broad set of questions intended to guide intersectional researchers throughout the research process. The questions take into account the fact that each line of inquiry will have different relevance to qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research designs:

- Who is being studied? Who is being compared to whom? Why? (Lorber, 2006)
- Who is the research for and does it advance the needs of those under study? (Hankivsky et al., 2010)
- Is the research framed within the current cultural, political, economic, societal, and/or situational context, and where possible, does it reflect self-identified needs of affected communities? (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2009)
- Which categories are relevant or not directly relevant? Why? (Winker and Degele, 2011)
- What is the presumed makeup of each category? (Hancock, 2007)
- Is the sample representative of the experiences of diverse groups of people for whom the issue under study is relevant? (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2009)
- Is the tool of inquiry suited to collecting micro or macro data, or a combination of both? (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2009)
- How will interactions between salient categories be captured by the proposed data coding strategy?
- How will interactions at individual levels of experience be linked to social institutions and broader structures and processes of power?
- What issues of domination/exploitation and resistance/agency are addressed by the research? (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2009)
- How will human commonalities and differences be recognized without resorting to essentialism, false universalism, or obliviousness to historical and contemporary patterns of inequality? (Cole, 2008)

From: Hankivsky, O. (2012). Women's health, men's health and gender and health: Implications of intersectionality. *Social Science and Medicine, 74*(11), 1712-1720.

APPENDIX B – FOR POLICY MAKERS

From: Hankivsky, O., Grace, D., Hunting, G., Ferlatte, O., Clark, N., Fridkin, A., ... & Laviolette, T. (2012a). Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis. In O. Hankivsky (Ed.), *An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework* (pp. 33-45). Vancouver, BC: Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, Simon Fraser University.

APPENDIX C – FOR ACTIVISTS
How to evaluate your services/programs/projects

Any sort of planning process around services, programs and projects should involve an evaluation. If an organization is applying an intersectional approach, there has to be a way to figure out how the approach is working in order to determine whether anything needs to be changed. Evaluations do not need to be very complicated. In fact, "[...] evaluation is simply a tool that helps you understand if you are on track and achieving results that will move you towards your vision" (Frank & Smith, 1999, p. 97).

There are four basic questions that organizations can explore with respect to an evaluation:

1. *What worked and why?*
You may want to ask program participants what they thought worked and why so that your initiative can be informed from the bottom up.

2. *What did not work and why?*
Having program participants provide feedback can help ensure that the next initiative is more accessible.

3. *What could have been done differently?*
You may want to reflect on whether your approach increased inclusiveness. Does your approach need re-thinking at all?

4. *What adjustments and changes are required now?*
You may want to consider how any needed changes could further an intersectional approach.

If evaluations have been well thought out and incorporate feedback from program participants, they may provide a means to continue programs or develop new ones. Often funding agencies want to know organizations' past achievements in order to determine whether or not to support new projects.

Here are some things you may want to consider with respect to evaluating your programs/services/projects:

- You may want to keep track of who is and who is not accessing your services. If you haven't been able to reach certain populations or communities, try to reflect on why that may be the case.
- In order to value the contributions of the community(ies) you are serving, you may want to have participants fill out program evaluations.
- Participants could have a role in creating the evaluation process.
- Remember that evaluations are not just about numbers and quotas.

From: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW). (2009). *Everyone Belongs: A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality* (pp. 21-22). Author: Joanne Simpson. May 2009. Available from: http://criaw-icref.ca/everyone-belongs-toolkit-applying-intersectionality.

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FOR EDUCATORS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING ACROSS RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

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Concept Areas

Power dynamics in the classroom; Relationships of personal identity/background to structural systems of inequality; Critical reflection on social hierarchies in the classroom and in the society; Promoting respectful dialogue

Type of Exercise

Class Discussion; Pedagogical Pondering

Brief Description

To promote an environment that challenges race, class, gender, sexuality and other social inequalities and that facilitates learning about them, I introduce classroom discussion guidelines on the first day of all of my classes. By asking students to consider the ways these hierarchies may play out in their own lives - and thus in the class - I explicitly call on students to begin thinking about these hierarchies not as abstract notions or deficits that shape others' lives, but rather as social relations of power and control that variously shape all of our interactions in every setting.

Explanation

- In my classes, I try to foster an environment where we experience social justice: All students are shown respect.
- Race, class, gender and other power dynamics do not inhibit learning.
- All students participate in the class and think critically by learning to appreciate multiple realities and perspectives and the ways that they are shaped by differences of power and privilege.

In the early 1980's, to help achieve this climate, I developed a set of what I then called "Ground Rules" to guide classroom discussion. And I have used them in all of my classes since: sociology of gender; social statistics; seminar in race, class, gender and sexuality; seminar in women's studies; and sociology of race and ethnic relations. To be discussed on the first day of class, the guidelines ask students to make several assumptions and commitments *for the purposes of the class*:

- Acknowledge that racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other institutionalized forms of oppression exist and that we all have misinformation about groups as a consequence.
- Approach this class — and the misinformation we all have — not by blaming others but by taking responsibility for learning about other groups and combating misinformation, and for treating each other with respect.
- Acknowledge that people in the class and the groups we study are always doing the best they can.

To begin from this set of assumptions is a challenge because we all have multiple experiences with inequality and beliefs about groups that might contradict these assumptions. Nonetheless, it is in attempting to make these assumptions for purposes of the class that we may become aware of some of our own preconceptions about inequalities and thus be in a better position to discuss them. In short, our reactions to the guidelines and the discussion that they generate may provide us with the best opportunity to uncover, to understand, and perhaps to challenge the ways that social inequalities play out in our own lives and in the society around us. The classroom environment I attempt to create using these guidelines is consistent with the content I seek to convey — about the nature of powerful, pervasive, and persistent systems of race, class, gender, and sexuality hierarchies (for a detailed discussion of the conceptual framework I use, see Weber, 1998, 2001; Weber and Dillaway, 2002).

Although I had begun using them in my classes, I first distributed these guidelines, as I now refer to them, to faculty colleagues in a handout at a 1984 session on "Promoting Positive Race, Class, and Gender Dynamics in the Classroom" at the annual curriculum transformation workshop sponsored by the Center for Research on Women (CROW) at the University of Memphis. Each year as the CROW's national curriculum workshops grew in size and visibility, I continued to conduct sessions on classroom dynamics and to distribute the guidelines. Faculty and students from across the country and a wide spectrum of schools – from community colleges to research universities – began to use these guidelines and their own adaptations of them (cf. McKinney and Gershick 1999). The guidelines were also used in research working groups, were adapted for use with first through third grades, and were used as a model for empowering Social Work students (Raske, 1999). In short, they took on a life of their own, becoming a kind of underground document that swept across the country — sometimes with my name attached, other times not.

As the neoconservative backlash against multiculturalism and attempts to address race, class, and gender in university curricula reached full bloom in the late 1980's, people were both increasingly interested in how to deal in respectful and effective ways with these issues in the classroom and increasingly coming under attack for doing so. In 1990, because the guidelines had become so widespread that people wanted a reference to legitimate their use of them and to learn about how I had been using them, I published these guidelines in a *Women's Studies Quarterly* article (Weber Cannon, 1990). The guidelines presented below are slightly modified from the ones published in 1990.

Quite the opposite of the argument leveled by conservative critics of classroom guidelines (e.g., Bartlett, 2002; Sommers, 1995) — that such rules stifle discussion, dialogue, and academic freedom, I have found that we all benefit from working with these assumptions in our classes. Over twenty years of using them, only a handful of students have dropped my classes because they felt uncomfortable with the guidelines, primarily because the students were unable to commit to working under the assumption that "people are always doing the best that they can." Students have learned to judge themselves harshly (e.g., "I could have worked harder on that paper, done better in that course."), to judge others similarly, and to see those judgments as the end point of critical social analysis. By this logic, once you find individuals or groups to *blame* for their social location (e.g., place in the hierarchies of income, education, wealth, occupation, health), there is no need to think about the social ranking process any further. You have your explanation: they brought it on themselves. This logic denies both the presence of different starting points for individuals and social groups and the nature of social structures that systematically and powerfully operate to advantage some individuals and groups while harming others. It is the dominant ideological stance that is employed to "justify" — that is, to normalize and to sanction — hierarchical systems of race, class, gender, sexuality and other forms of oppression. When we allow this kind of logic to hold sway in our classes, we can never reach the point of even beginning to see or to understand the systemic, pervasive, persistent and powerful nature of race, class, gender, and sexuality systems.

So instead of shutting down discussion, I have found that using these guidelines for classroom discussion enables the conversation to open up for all students, but especially for students from oppressed groups — students of color, women, working class, and gay and lesbian students. I believe this change occurs primarily because the guidelines acknowledge the historical fact and current reality that society at large as well as our classrooms have been sites of oppression where people have been silenced, denied, and mistreated because of their location in race, class, gender, and sexuality hierarchies. Students from more privileged backgrounds are also sometimes relieved that the framework not only does not hold them personally responsible for broad systems of oppression that have persisted for decades but also encourages them to take personal responsibility for their current speech and actions.

Still, some students may have difficulty making these commitments. I remind them that they are merely asked to commit to these guidelines *for this class* and that they may learn much about themselves by paying close attention to what is happening — in the class, in the readings — when they feel they cannot make or continue with a particular assumption. In such a case, I encourage them to speak about their concerns.

I use these guidelines in conjunction with a set of other teaching techniques designed to elicit maximal participation in multiple venues from all of the students in a class:

- Classroom introductions — where students get to know each other beyond stereotypical images by introducing themselves in many ways to their classmates telling: their racial/ethnic background, their scholarly areas of interest, their skills and knowledge that would be especially useful to their classmates when working together, their work/family histories
- Journals — where they are asked to reflect on the dynamics as well as the substance of the class (ungraded)
- Group projects — where they work together to produce a group project and receive group as well as individual evaluations
- Peer evaluations — where they work on each other's writing based on peer editing techniques which are taught in class
- Small group discussions — where they analyze the material and where the group composition is changed frequently

When these techniques are used in conjunction with the guidelines, my classrooms have often been places where there is a high level of participation, where my students get to know each other well, and where multiple realities are revealed in respectful and enlightening ways. The guidelines are not, however, a panacea but only a framework that facilitates communication across difference. I still must be vigilant and use my power to structure the class and to intervene in ways that help us to achieve these goals.

One final note on politics and guidelines. The current political climate is one in which some conservative, dominant culture, political forces on college campuses and beyond actively work to discourage open and honest discussion and scholarly engagement about race, ethnicity, class, gender, nation and other systemic structures of inequality. They do so by shifting attention from these structures and the groups that have historically suffered unfair treatment within them and to "conservative" students who are portrayed as "victims" of liberal faculty who are a "grave threat to freedom and conscience" because they demand "ideological orthodoxy...on pain of lowered grade" (correspondence from Alan Kors, President, Foundation for Independent Rights in Education (FIRE) to President Andrew Sorensen, University of South Carolina, regarding my use of these guidelines). In 2002, I, and the guidelines I developed, became a target of FIRE for allegedly doing just that. I knew that the furor they created was not about what was going on in my classes because I was never contacted by anyone from the organization.

The student who sent my guidelines to the FIRE organization (a fact I did not learn until after grades were submitted) never voiced a single complaint about these issues during the semester and received an A in the class - a grade which is not typically seen as either "lower" or "painful." I was not even the sole teacher in the class - it was team taught by three professors.

Yet, as the letter from Alan Kors went on to say, "We will be raising these questions as publicly as possible." And they did - in conservative media organizations such as the *Washington Times* and The O'Reilly Factor, and anywhere else that would give them attention including *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. While the misrepresentation of these guidelines and my work was difficult to endure, the outcome was a solid affirmation of the validity of this work and of a faculty's right - even encouragement - to do it. The ASA Council unanimously passed the following resolution:

> The ASA Council wishes to affirm the academic freedom of all faculty to develop strategies or guidelines to encourage open and civil classroom debate. We support the discussion and dialogue of controversial issues that are inherent to the study of inequality and other core subjects.

Myra Marx Ferree, writing for Sociologists for Women and Society (SWS)'s Committee on Academic Freedom, in a letter to USC administrators and to FIRE stated:

> These sorts of guidelines for discussion seem to accord very well with the ideals of a liberal arts education and to prevent intimidation by others in the course of discussion... We urge you to affirm the positive value of the cooperative and unthreatening climate that Prof. Weber seeks to create in her classroom, and to support the variety of ways, including the guidelines she has developed, that individual faculty use to realize this important goal.

President Andrew Sorensen, University of South Carolina, wrote to FIRE,

> As designed and utilized, the Guidelines do not violate University policy, AAUP policies on the rights of students, or the United States Constitution.

The FIRE organization has ceased its efforts to have me change these guidelines or to stop using them.

Assigned Readings and Necessary Materials

No assigned readings or materials. I include the citations to publications about the guidelines (including this article) on the guidelines handout, put them on reserve, and ask students if they would be interested in reading and discussing these as a group. I also discuss the political controversy that has periodically arisen over the guidelines. If they express an interest in discussing it further, I have them read the *Chronicle* article, the ASA resolution (and *Footnotes* article), letters from the conservative organization (FIRE) that initiated the most recent controversy, and letters of support from SWS, the President of the University of South Carolina, some students, and others. For copies of these letters, email me at weberL@sc.edu.

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Instructions for Students

GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

To be discussed on the first day of class, the guidelines ask all students to make several assumptions for purposes of the class.

1. Acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other institutionalized forms of oppression exist.[1]
2. Acknowledge that one mechanism of institutionalized racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, etc., is that we are all systematically taught misinformation about our own group and about members of other groups. This is true for everyone, regardless of our group(s).
3. Agree not to blame ourselves or others for the misinformation we have learned but to accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
4. Assume that people both the people we study — and the members of the class, always do the best they can.
5. Actively pursue information about our own groups and those of others.
6. Share information about our groups with other members of the class and never demean, devalue, or in any way "put down" people for their experiences.
7. Agree to combat actively the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls that prohibit group cooperation and group gain.
8. Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. If you wish to make comments that you do not want repeated outside the classroom, you can preface your remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat the remarks.

[1]Many other institutionalized forms of oppression could be listed here. A more complete list might include age, ethnicity, disability, gender, race, class, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, and physical appearance. The major focus is on the four oppressions listed; however, analogies can fairly easily be made to other forms.

NOTE: These guidelines were developed by Lynn Weber, and published in *Women's Studies Quarterly* 18 (Spring/Summer 1990):126-134. A discussion and revised version was published in "Empowering Students Through Classroom Discussion Guidelines," in Marybeth C. Stalp and Julie Childers, eds., Teaching Sociological Concepts and the Sociology of Gender, Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association Teaching Resources Center, 2000, and 2005 (2nd Edition).