

INTERSECTIONALITY

Credit: CFJ, CAAV

Agenda

1. Welcome & Icebreaker
10 min
2. Reflecting on Identity
45 min
3. Identities and Stereotypes
30 min
4. Applying our Analysis
30 min
5. Closing and Evaluation
10 min

Goals

- Share personal reflections on identity and intersectionality
- Understand the importance of intersectionality in our campaigns and movements
- Think about ways to build inclusive and expansive communities.

Key concepts: identity, intersectionality

Time

2 hours

Materials needed

- Identity signs printed and posted around the room
- Chart Circles
- Markers, tape
- Chart Paper
- Case studies - handout
- How Strong Beats My Heart - handout
- Laptop/projector for videos

1. WELCOME & ICEBREAKER – 10 MIN

Welcome and icebreaker.

Review the goals and agenda.

2. IDENTITY QUESTIONS - 45 MIN

Instructions - 5 min

- Print and post the signs attached at the end of the workshop curriculum (add or delete based on your groups' demographics).
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Class
 - Immigration Status
- SAY: The purpose of this activity is for us to discuss the complexity of our identities. For this activity I need everyone to stand up in the middle of the room. I am going to read a statement and everyone should stand next to the sign that they best identify with based on the statement (Read the signs aloud and see if anyone needs clarification).
- Throughout the activity you should follow instructions WITHOUT TALKING, and it's ok to be undecided, but just choose an identity to discuss. After you choose a sign, you will have 3 minutes to talk to others in the group about the reasons for your choice. Are there any questions?

Statements - 30 min

- 1. I feel most drawn/connected to this part of my identity. (Allow people to move, then ask Q below)
 - If you feel accepted by others within this identity, please raise your hand.
 - Please talk with the people who chose the same sign about the reasons for your choice. If you're the only one who chose that sign, join others for the discussion. (3 mins)
 - [Invite 2-3 share-outs]
- 2. I have experienced the most personal struggles/changes around this part of my identity. (Allow people to move, then ask Q below)
 - If you feel that you are now at a good place around this part of your identity, please raise your hand.
 - Please talk with the others who chose the same sign about the struggles/changes. If you're the only one who chose that sign, join others for the discussion (3 min).
 - [Invite 2-3 share-outs]

- 3. It is easiest for me to talk about this part of my identity. (Allow people to move, then ask Q below)
 - If you talk about this part of your identity easily with those who don't share the identity, please raise your hand.
 - Please talk with the others who chose the same sign about the reasons for your choice. If you're the only one who chose that sign, join others for the discussion (3 min).
 - [Invite 2-3 share-outs]
- 4. I feel least comfortable with this part of my identity. (Allow people to move, then ask Q below)
 - If you receive support from others in this group when they know that you are feeling uncomfortable, please raise your hand.
 - Please talk with the others who chose the same sign about your discomfort. If you're the only one who chose that sign, join others for the discussion (3 min).
 - [Invite 2-3 share-outs]
- 5. This part of my identity has the greatest effect on how people treat me. (Allow people to move, then ask Q below)
 - If you think this is the most important part of your identity, please raise your hand.
 - Please talk with the others who chose the same sign about how you are treated based on this part of your identity. If you're the only one who chose that sign, join others for the discussion (3 min).
 - [Invite 2-3 share-outs]
- 6. This part of my identity most affects the role that I play in this group's dynamics. (Allow people to move, then ask Q below)
 - If you feel that this identity gives you power in the group dynamics, please raise your hand.
 - Please talk with the others who chose the same sign about how this part of your identity affects your role in the group. If you're the only one who chose that sign, join others for the discussion (3 min).
 - [Invite 2-3 share-outs]
- 7. This part of my identity gives me the most personal happiness. (Allow people to move, then ask Q below)
 - If you feel comfortable openly sharing that with people outside of this room, please raise your hand.
 - Please talk with the others who chose the same sign about the reasons for your choice. If you're the only one who chose that sign, join others for the discussion (3 min).
 - [Invite 2-3 share-outs]

Talking Circle Debrief (10 min)

- SAY: Now we are going to get into a circle and discuss what just happened, to clarify any questions people might have and better understand the way that our identity affects our interactions in society.

- The way we are going to do it is by sharing our experiences and listening to the experiences of other folks. Only one person can talk at the time, we will be passing “(X object)” around. The person that has (X object) in his/her hands is the one that has the right to speak or pass the object.

Questions for discussion:

- What did you notice about yourself or others as we did this activity?
- How did it feel to have to choose just one sign?
- Which question was the easiest to answer? Which was the hardest? WHY?
- How did identities complicate each other or work together?
- Identities have certain characteristics: Visible vs. invisible; “born with it” vs. not; How did this affect your choices?

Key Points:

The idea behind this activity was to have people reflect on their identities, to talk about exclusion, feelings of “authenticity.” In doing social justice work, we need to keep in mind that we are not trying to create a hierarchy of oppression – saying that someone’s experience is worse off than another’s but that we are trying to understand the personal aspects of how intersecting oppression and “isms” affect people so that we can understand our motivations for creating change.

3. IDENTITIES CIRCLES - 30 MIN

Say: We just talked about identity - which is how you see yourself. We also need to talk about how others see you. For some people, their understanding of your identity may be a stereotype - a widely held, oversimplified generalization about a group of people.

Exercise - 15 min:

- Have each participant write down one way that they identify (woman, queer Asian, etc.) on a piece of paper. Write it large enough for others to see it. Find other people who are holding the same sign (if needed, have people choose a different identity so everyone is in a group).
- In each groups have participants write down their identity on chart paper (with a circle drawn on it) and fill the circle with ways that they are oppressed based on this identity AND ways that they resist or fight that oppression (facilitators: help groups think about oppression in these categories - internalized, interpersonal, institutional).

Discussion - 15 min:

- Have each group share their circle, and post them up on the wall so they are touching/overlapping.
- Choosing one circle, ask: If we undid all of the things in this circle, would there be more justice for (insert group)? Example: If choosing “race”, ask if ending oppression in that circle would create justice for women of color?

- Can anyone here relate to more than one of these circles? How?
- What are some of the ways that an understanding of our identities as connected or intersecting can help us in our work of promoting justice?

Key Points:

Intersectionality holds that the systems of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and others, do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, can work together creating a system of oppression that reflects the “intersection” of multiple forms of discrimination.

“There’s no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we don’t live single-issue lives”- Audre Lorde. An understanding of Intersectionality allows us to understand movement solidarity from a very personal perspective. Just as we cannot slice you apart to see only your race or just your gender, in our movement for social justice we recognize the importance of fighting on multiple issues fronts - and supporting each other across identities.

3. APPLYING OUR ANALYSIS - 30 MIN

What often happens is that if we do not think about intersectionality, we fail to think about the situation of those who are multiply marginalized. While those who suffer oppression most are not recognized, those who have greater privilege have their issues addressed.

Video - 5 min

Let’s watch a few video clips on how organizations are doing their work from a point of intersectionality that honors our full selves:

- PrYSM¹: (up to 1:25)
- Freedom Inc²: (up to 1:35, then 2:30-3:37)

Case Study – 15 min

Split participants into three groups. Each group will be given a story about oppression as experienced by a group.

- Case Study:
 - What particular group/s are fighting for justice in your example?
 - What problems does this group/s run into systematically (in the courts, legislators, the media)?
 - How can an understanding of intersectionality help us think about what real justice would like in each of these cases?

1 <https://youtu.be/yRFsan5M6Rk>

2 https://youtu.be/FAJihrhX_eQ

Our Work:

- What particular group/s are we fighting for in our organization?
- What problems are we trying to address?
- How can an understanding of intersectionality make our campaign work stronger? More inclusive?

- Discuss the answers to Q3 from the “Our Work” questions their group discussed (10 min).
 - How can an understanding of intersectionality make our campaign work stronger? More inclusive?
 - ▶ Identify themes
 - ▶ Look for areas of agreement
 - ▶ Flag possible next steps or conversations to bring an intersectional

Key Points:

- Oppression or exclusion can be based on the interaction of multiple factors rather than just one. Yet conventional approaches to social problems are often organized as though these risk factors are mutually exclusive and separable. As a consequence, many interventions and policies fail to capture the interactive effects of race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. and marginalize the needs of those who are multiply affected by them.
- But we all have multiple identities – we are more complicated than our ethnicities or nationalities. Intersectionality is important because it gives space for our complexity, for our full humanity.

5. CLOSE OUT – 10 MIN

- Pass out “How Strong Beats My Heart” and allow people 5 minutes to answer the prompts. Have them pair share their commitments.
- Evaluate the workshop

*What is one commitment you can make to yourself
- to share and honor your full self?*

*What is one commitment you can make to our organization - to
help us honor each other's and our community's full selves?*

CASE #1 INSTRUCTIONS:

- Read your case study aloud, then answer the questions below (15 min)

In 1976, a group of black women sued the General Motors (GM) car company for discriminating against black women when it came to employment. The women argued that as a group they were the last to be hired and the first to be fired, and were discriminated against on the basis of race and gender. At the GM Company, women were permitted to work front office jobs, but they were white women. Blacks were permitted to work industrial jobs, but they were Black men. In *Degraffenreid v. General Motors*, the trial court was not convinced that the Black female plaintiffs could prove that GM had engaged in gender discrimination since obviously not all women were excluded, nor could they prove race discrimination because not all African Americans were excluded. Clearly something had happened to these plaintiffs, but the existing categories of discrimination did not recognize the particular discrimination Black women faced. There was race discrimination and gender discrimination, but no category of discrimination based on race and gender simultaneously. The case was then dismissed.

Case Study:

- What particular group/s are fighting for justice in your example?
 - What problems does this group/s run into systematically (in the courts, legislators, the media)?
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Our Work:

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CASE #2 INSTRUCTIONS

- Read your case study aloud, then answer the questions below (15 mins)

In January 2013, the U.S. House of Representatives failed to reauthorize (put into law) again the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which first passed in 1994 and has been reauthorized twice since then, increases federal penalties for domestic violence and provides funding for groups and services that aid victims of domestic abuse. VAWA was unable to pass because certain male Republican members of the House opposed specific aspects of the legislation that provided protection for Native Americans, immigrants, and LGBT victims.

- About 40% of Native women will face domestic abuse. While local tribal authorities might sometimes be able to take action against domestic abuse, if the abuser is a non-Native American (and more than 50% of Native women are married to non-Native American men), tribal authorities are able to do very little since they do not have jurisdiction over non-tribe members. VAWA would have allowed tribal authorities to prosecute non-Natives for domestic abuse cases on Native reservations.
- Undocumented immigrants face challenges reporting or escaping from domestic abuse because undocumented immigrants are afraid of being deported. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which first passed in 1994 and has been reauthorized twice since then, increased federal penalties for domestic violence and provided funding for groups and services that aid victims of domestic abuse. VAWA would allow undocumented abuse victims to apply for visas to give them permanent residency status.
- VAWA would have mandated that providers of grants aiding domestic abuse victims not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.
- While claiming to support women's rights, some male Republican House members opposed these parts of the VAWA act and prevented the House from voting to pass it.

Case Study

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Our Work:

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CASE #3 INSTRUCTIONS

- Read your case study aloud, then answer the questions below (15 min)

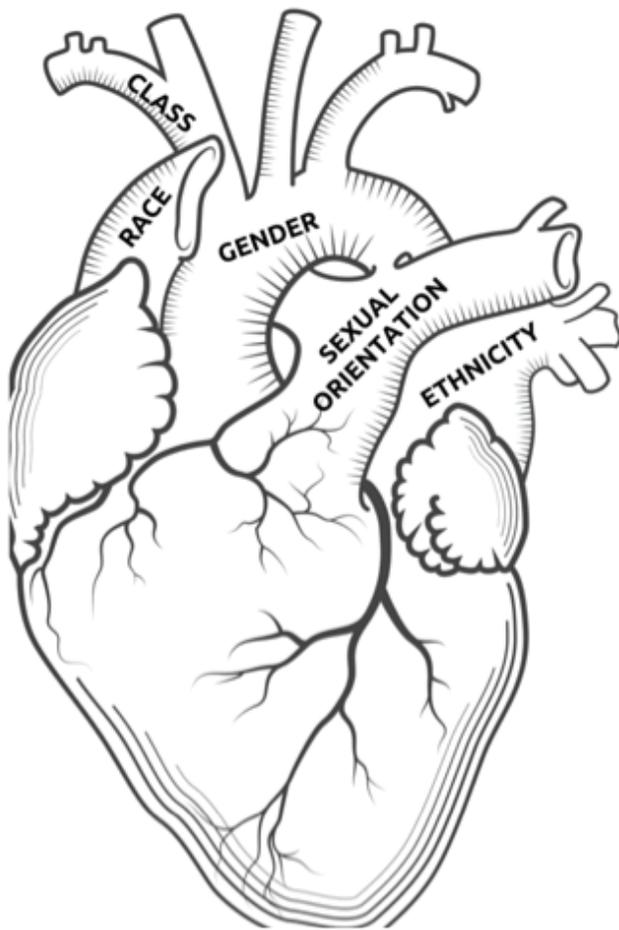
During the Elections in 2008, the majority of voters in California voted to pass Proposition 8, which would have amended the state constitution to declare that “only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in the state of California.” Many in the gay community were understandably outraged at the passage of Prop 8, but decided to channel their anger by voicing their anger against Black people, who according to some reports had voted 70 percent in favor of the Proposition. Despite the fact that many other demographics of people had also voted highly in favor of Proposition 8 (i.e. the elderly, Republicans, conservatives, Protestants, Catholics, gun owners, etc.), much of the TV and internet media speaking out against Prop 8 specifically blamed Black people. At marriage equality rally in Los Angeles, black attendees were subject to racial slurs such as the N-word and lumped together as all being homophobic. All of this happened without recognition of the fact that the LGBT community is comprised of Black people as well. However, the Black LGBT community does not often get the same visibility in the mainstream as white LGBT individuals.

Case Study

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HOW STRONG BEATS MY HEART?

Sharing our full humanity

Many cultures see the heart as the center of our the body, where our feelings, spirits, emotions, and compassion live. Let's use the image of our hearts to think about different parts of who we are. How do all of these parts of us allow us to connect with others?