

Practising Purposefully

SYSTEMIC PRACTICE

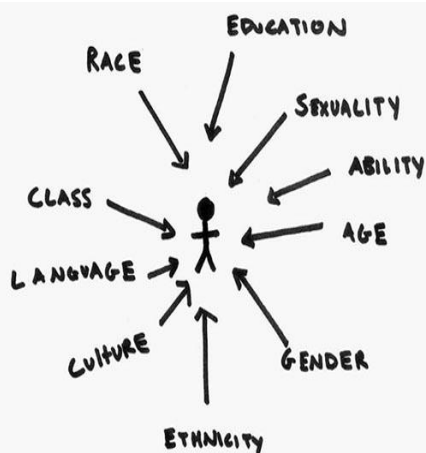
Intersectionality

What is it?

'Intersectionality' is a term first described by Kimberle Crenshaw, a US law professor and civil rights activist in the 1980's.

It refers to how different types of discrimination/oppression intersect and cannot be solved or understood on their own. For example, observing an older person in an ageist society is not enough to understand their oppressions, you must also understand their gender, class, and sexuality (etc) to actually begin to understand their unique experiences of oppression.

Crenshaw first used the term when examining the oppressions of black women. She stated that legislation in the US about race was framed to protect black men (as more black men were arrested/shot by police than white men) and sexism laws were framed to protect white women. Combining the two together does not protect black women.



In Systemic Practice we are aware of the **Social GRACES** which make up a person's identity. We know that each of the GRACES can be examined on its own but cannot be understood in isolation from other 'parts' of a person's identity.

These different parts of a person each contain different contexts of **power, privilege and oppression**. We must try not to privilege one part of a person's identity over another. We must think in terms of 'both/and' e.g. Age and gender will combine to create a unique experience. It's not enough to think about ageism, racism or sexism – ask yourself where the other GRACES intersect for that person and what impact they have on power, privilege and oppression.

It might be that one of the social GRACES affords a person privilege (such as the colour of their skin) but one of the other GRACES may be seen as an 'oppression' such as a disability. These don't 'cancel' each other out – they intersect to create a unique experience.

How is this useful to me in practice?

You must firstly be aware of your own social GRACES and how each one affords you either a privilege or an oppression. What position do they make you take in relation to the individuals/family's you see every day in your work? Which ones are visible or silent and hidden?

In relation to the people we work with, what are their GRACES? Where do they perceive themselves to have power and influence or feel oppressed? How do these intersect with our own beliefs? Do they help or hinder a relationship being built?

Don't forget to check yourself for any assumptions you may have made about the other person, particularly if you feel 'they are similar to me' – check it out with them, chances are they experience the world a little different to you.

INTERSECTIONALITY

a fun guide



Bob is a stripey blue triangle.
AND SHOULD BE PROUD.



SADLY SOME PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE Bob. Bob
FACES OPPRESSION FOR BEING A TRIANGLE, &
FOR HAVING STRIPES.



LUCKILY, THERE ARE LIBERATION GROUPS!
BUT THEY AREN'T INTERSECTIONAL.

SO THEY
LOOK LIKE
THIS



THEY DON'T TALK TO EACH OTHER.
IN FACT, THEY COMPETE.

BOB CAN'T WORK
OUT WHERE TO
GO.



BOB WISHES THAT THE
TRIANGLES AND STRIPES
COULD WORK TOGETHER.



**INTERSECTIONALITY IS
THE BELIEF THAT
OPPRESSIONS ARE
INTERLINKED AND
CANNOT BE SOLVED
ALONE.**

OPPRESSIONS ARE NOT ISOLATED.
INTERSECTIONALITY NOW!