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## Wheel of Privilege and Power


6 minute read

November 21, 2021 / [Advocacy](#), [Anti-Racism](#)

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I believe intersectionality to be the most important aspect of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) but it seems to be the least talked about. Efforts in my own town have decided to prioritize different areas but completely ignore others. I saw several variations that depicted a wheel of privilege and none of them seemed exhaustive enough or they felt misguided when their wedges overlapped as members from those marginalized communities provided input into what their slices should look like.





The biggest difference between my wheel of privilege and the previous adaptations is that each demographic category, or wedge of the wheel, has three (3) rings: power, erased, and marginalized. Some acknowledged this spectrum of power, but I've specifically put a label on these simplified levels. I wanted to acknowledge the identities of those that experience erasure.

## The Ring of Power

One ring to rule them all: the innermost ring is the most privileged/powerful. The people who take up space in this ring, especially if they exist in multiple wedges of the innermost ring, will have the most power in any room. That means their opinions will be listened to and considered more often than others.

This is where allyship is important. **If you're a privileged and/or powerful person and you're in the room with someone that isn't, your job as an ally is to make space for them, amplify their voice, and listen.** If they aren't in the conversation, that is the only time when it is appropriate for you to speak on their behalf. Also, ask yourself *why* they're not part of the discussion and look for ways to invite them to it.

## Erasure

The middle ring is often the forgotten ring (think "middle child syndrome" but on a societal scale). People in this area often have their identities erased and are marginalized in unique ways. The people that exist on either extreme see those in the middle as "passable" for the other extreme. Essentially, it is believed that they can "choose" to be marginalized or privileged when it benefits them.

This is an incredibly hurtful myth because your place within these rings is rarely by choice. This is where most of the covert discrimination exists through dismissal and minimization, often from both sides. People in this area are valid; their opinions and experiences are just as valuable as those who "have it worse."

pass, marginalized people cannot and are often affected the most by systemic discrimination.

It is also no surprise that in America, these identities are underrepresented everywhere unless for a specific, usually negative, purpose such as:

1. the subject of jokes in comedy
2. villains in media
3. targets of eugenics
4. targets of Nazis, neo-Nazis, mass-shooters, and white supremacists
5. children are taught to avoid them or not talk about them
6. behavior or appearance is criminalized
7. children dress up as them for costumes
8. used as school mascots

and so much more...

## Honorable Mentions

Here are some demographic categories that I considered but didn't quite make the cut for my already extensive infographic:

### 1. Incarceration:

- Power: no dealings with the justice system or had dealings but never convicted
- Erased: had dealings but never convicted, convicted and awaiting sentencing, previously served a sentence in jail or prison, and/or had records expunged
- Marginalized: convicted and currently serving a sentence in jail or prison

### 2. Number of Kids:

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### 3. Type of Kids:

1. Power: biological (seen as most desirable)
2. Erased: adopted (they're "not really yours" but the placement is considered permanent)
3. Marginalized: fostered (also "not really your" kids and the placement is temporary)

### 4. Dominant Hand:

- Power: right-handed
- Erased: ambidextrous
- Marginalized: left-handed

### 5. HIV Status:

- Power: does not have it, never been tested for it, nor worried
  - Erased: been tested and/or currently worried/awaiting results
  - Marginalized: tested positive
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Featured photo by [GR Stocks](#) on [Unsplash](#).

## Sources

Sylvia Duckworth, "[Wheel of Power/Privilege](#)" (August 19, 2020) *Instagram*.

["Anti-oppression"](#) (August 19, 2020) *Canadian Council for Refugees*.

Olena Hankivsky, PhD, "[Intersectionality 101](#)" (PDF) (April 1, 2024) *The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, SFU*.



Intersectionality: Wheel of Privilege Sticker

\$4.40 – \$5.20

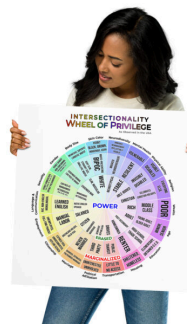
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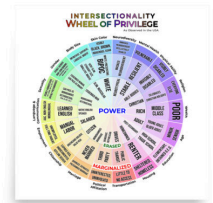
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*Editor's Note: This article was originally published on November 21, 2021, and was last reviewed on June 4, 2024. This article was updated to include incarceration in the honorable mentions and added the erased identities for dominant hand and HIV status. Also updated the link to Hankivsky's document because it seems that the domain expired and was purchased by some casino blog, so now it goes to the actual document in the Web Archive. This article was edited to replace "childless" with "child-free" on January 13, 2023, because the term "childless" has a negative connotation and further marginalizes people who choose not to have children. The wheel of privilege infographic had the "skin color" wedge updated on June 29, 2022. It previously listed "Black" as the only marginalized identity and "Different Shades" in the erasure ring. After listening to some discussions between BIPOC content creators, I've decided to revise my wheel to display visibly Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian (BBIA) people as the most marginalized and white-presenting BIPOC in the erasure ring.*



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## 15 thoughts on “*Wheel of Privilege and Power*”



**Tom Rothschild**

June 19, 2023 at 9:56 pm

[REPLY](#)

Thank you for creating this powerful version of the power/privilege wheel. I will be leading a small conflict resolution workshop in July as part of a (non-profit) Quaker gathering and would like to include the Wheel image with the materials, of course including a credit/link to this website. Please let me know if you have any objection. (There is no materials charge for the workshop.)



**Tessa (they/them)**

June 20, 2023 at 1:41 pm

[REPLY](#)

Sure thing! Hope it goes well!

^ Power/Privilege to create your Intersectionality Wheel of Privilege graphic! I wonder if I may:

1. include it in with my definition of “intersectionality” in the Glossary of Terms for a course I am taking (Thompson River University SOCI 3991)?
2. cite it as follows: “Watkins, T. Intersectionality: Wheel of Privilege (as observed in the USA). (2023, January 13). Adapted from Sylvia Duckworth, Canadian Council for Refugees, and Olena Hankivsky, PhD. Retrieved from: <https://just1voice.com/advocacy/wheel-of-privilege/>” ?
3. Share it with my colleagues at work (I am a Kindergarten teacher)?

Thank you for your time, as well as for sharing your very thoughtful and detailed Intersectionality Wheel of Privilege!

Chera 😊



**Tessa (they/them)**

July 31, 2023 at 7:01 pm

REPLY

Absolutely! Thank you so much for your kind words and definitely for the effort you're putting into educating yourself and others! This is the kind of stuff I love to see 🥰



**Chera**

August 3, 2023 at 2:03 pm

REPLY

Thank you so much, Tessa 😊

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**Emma Love Arbogast**

August 25, 2023 at 11:05 pm

REPLY



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**Tessa (they/them)**

August 26, 2023 at 8:05 am

[REPLY](#)

Valid point! Those currently in jail are definitely marginalized. I have some friends who are deeply passionate about prison reform and I'm shocked I didn't think of it either! Thank you for the reminder.

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**Evans**

May 10, 2024 at 7:59 am

[REPLY](#)

Hi Tessa,

I absolutely love this and feel you have captured some previously overlooked aspects of identity that are vital in our understanding of power and privilege. Would you be happy for me to reference your work in a doctoral assignment?

Many thanks!

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**Tessa (they/them)**

May 10, 2024 at 8:54 am

[REPLY](#)

Yes, absolutely! I'd love to see the finished assignment too if possible, sounds awesome!

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**Tessa (they/them)**

June 4, 2024 at 8:01 am

REPLY

Yes! I have posters for sale in my online shop here:

<https://just1voice.com/shop/tags/wheel-of-privilege/>

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**Bess**

June 15, 2024 at 12:47 pm

REPLY

Hi Tessa,

I'm an Equality, Diversity and Inculsion Lead for my NHS organisation in the UK.

I absolutely love this illustration of intersectionality. I would you consent to me putting it in our education resources for our staff?

Full reference and credit will be provided. We'll make sure a link to this page is included.

I also wonder you would be happy for me to amend some of the text as we use different terminologies in the UK/have different systems in place? I'm happy to send you an email of what it would look like if you would be comfortable with that?

Thank you,

Bess

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**Tessa (they/them)**

June 22, 2024 at 8:25 am

REPLY



Similar to Bess, I am working on some inclusion education at my company and want to ask permission to use this wheel as a resource with full reference and credit being provided. Are you comfortable with that?

Thank you for creating such a rich visual that is comprehensive and visually appealing all in one. I am grateful for all the amazing work that is being done in the diversity, equity and inclusion space to make the world a better place for all.

Thank you,  
Kristi

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**Tessa (they/them)**

June 28, 2024 at 11:33 am

[REPLY](#)

Yep! I'm totally comfortable with that! Thank you for educating your company!

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—Ahmad Butt, *INKspire*

This article contains spoilers for all seasons of Sex Education.

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record in understanding American politics is certainly better than most people's (and surely better than mine). An excerpt, though you should read the whole thing: A New York Times headline, for instance, expressed surprise that "many on the left" were sympathetic to Stefanik. But...

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