



Intersectionality: Examples from USA & India

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DEI

Diversity: Everyone is individual & different

Equality: People have equal opportunities

Inclusion: It is a sense of belonging:
feeling respected; valued for who you are;
feeling a level of supportive energy &
commitments from others so that you can
do best at your work



Power

People who have power:

1. Control over allocating resources
2. Determine what people should or should not do

Power operates at multiple levels:
institutional, interpersonal & individual levels



Minority

(Canadian Sociologist Gustave Goldmann, 2001)

- If a group of people has:
 - both size & power, it is the “majority”
 - if it has size but does not have power, it is the “mass”
 - if it has power, but does not have size, then it is “elite”
 - if it has neither size nor power, it is a “minority”



Minority

- A group whose members have significantly less control or power over their lives than members of a dominant or majority group
- A group that experiences fewer opportunities (education, work, etc) compared to their numbers in the society



Power & Minority

- Power is central to understand minority groups.
 - Until 1992 the Black people of South Africa who are in a majority were treated as a minority because they were subject to the laws of a White minority & deprived of most of their civil rights.
 - Women are in a numerical majority but referred to as a minority group in the male dominated society.



US Census

1790 Census

- Free White Male
- Free White Female
- All Other Free Persons
- Slaves

2020 Census

- White
- Black or African American
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Chinese
- Japanese.....



Minority in US

- Race/ethnicity based

- Everyone other than white (60.1%) is considered a minority, i.e.
- Hispanics (18.5%),
- African Americans (12.2%),
- Asians (5.6%),
- American Indians & Alaska Natives (0.7%),
- Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islanders (0.2%)
- Multiple Races (2.8%)



Minority in India

- Religion based
 - Muslims (14.2%), Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.7%), Buddhists (0.7%), Jain (0.3%) & Zorastrians (Parsis) have been notified as minority communities under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.
 - As per the Census 2011, the percentage of minorities in the country is about 19.3% of the total population of the country.



Addressing Identities

- Identity refers to *our sense of who we are as individuals & as members of social groups.*
- It refers to *our sense of how others may perceive & label us.*
- Some parts of our identities may stay the same as long as we live. Other parts are more fluid & change as we move from childhood into adulthood.



Exercise

- Who am I ? And why?
- List as many identities that are important to you as possible.
- Do some identities differ between the US & India?
 - Nationality & Caste



Wherever Hindus Go They Take Caste with Them

- In the US, many low caste migrants are finding that caste has replicated itself in Indian community, religious & business institutions.
- Caste discrimination in the US includes physical assault, verbal slurs & discrimination in schools, businesses & work places.



Examples

In 2020, California regulators sued Tech Giant Cisco Systems accusing it of discriminating against an Indian-American employee & allowing him to be harassed by 2 managers because he was from a lower Indian caste than them.

In April 2022, Google cancelled a planned talk by Thenmozhi Soundararajan under pressure from employees within the company, who claimed that any talk on caste discrimination was offensive to them as Hindus & made them feel unsafe.



Examples

In May 2021, the FBI raided construction of a Hindu temple in NJ. Temple builders had brought low caste Indian workers on religious visas & made them work on low wages & under poor conditions. The FBI removed about 90 workers from the site.



Intersectionality

(US Legal Scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989)

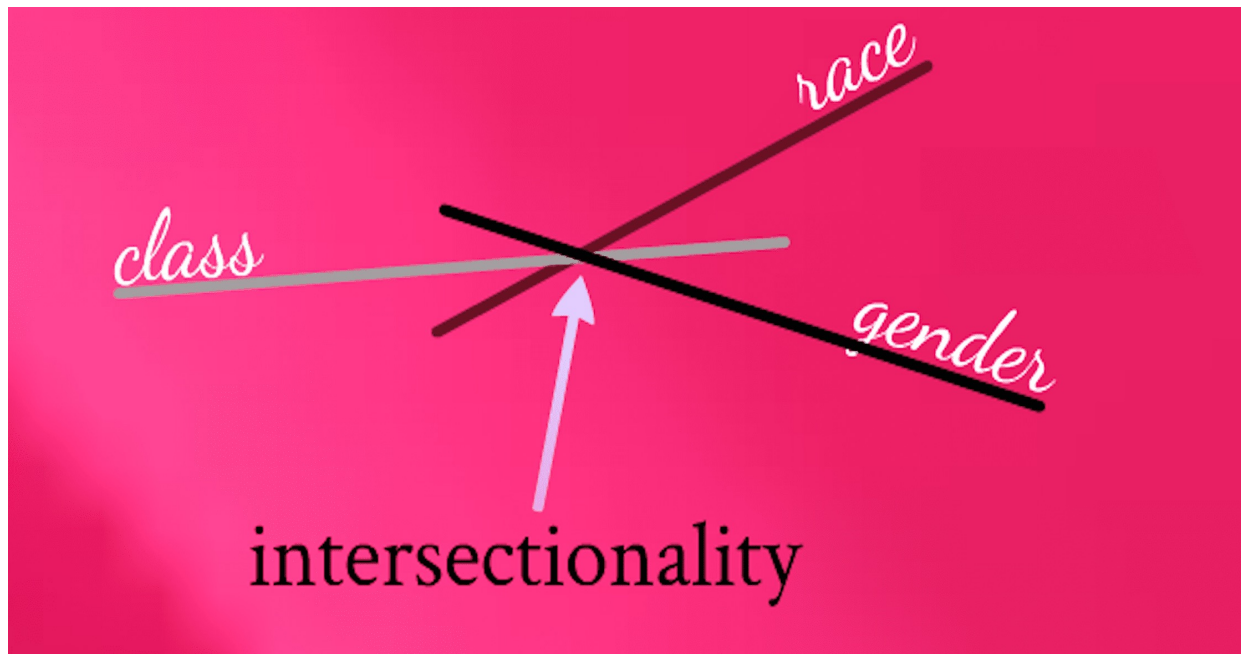
Intersectionality is distinct from the idea of additive discrimination

Women of color do not simply experience gender discrimination + racial discrimination + class discrimination as distinct systems of oppression

Intersectionality

Crenshaw questions the perspective that “...**all women are White and all Blacks are men..**”

She argues that race, gender & class intersect to create complex situations of oppression for women of color





Intersectionality

(Crenshaw, 2001)

- Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group ... tries to navigate the main crossing in the city... . The main highway is 'racism road'. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. ... She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression



US Constitutional Changes

- In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act which **prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.**
- Caste is proposed to be added as a new category.



India Constitutional Changes

Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on caste and Article 17 declares the practice of untouchability to be illegal.

With the 42nd Amendment (1976), India became a “secular” nation. So, it does not prioritize any one religion for the country and its people.



Bias

A father and his son are in a car accident. The father dies at the scene & the son, badly injured, is rushed to the hospital. In the operating room, the surgeon refuses to operate, saying, "I can't operate on this boy. He is my son."

Who is the surgeon?

Studies have shown that as many as 75% of people could not solve it, and those who do figure it out took several minutes to grasp that the boy's mother could be the surgeon.



Explicit vs Implicit Bias

- In the case of explicit or conscious, the person is very clear about his or her feelings & attitudes, & related behaviors are conducted with intent.
- In its extreme, it is characterized by overt negative behavior that can be expressed through physical & verbal harassment or through more subtle means such as exclusion.



Explicit vs Implicit Bias

- Implicit or unconscious bias operates outside of the person's awareness & can be in direct contradiction to a person's espoused beliefs & values.
- What is so dangerous about implicit bias is that it automatically seeps into a person's affect or behavior & is outside of the full awareness of that person.



Hidden Biases of Good People

- We all carry unconscious biases. That is, we hold assumptions about social groups that—our awareness or conscious control—shape our likes and dislikes and our judgments about people's abilities, potential, and character.



Harvard Study

- 75% have an implicit preference for white people over black people
- 76% more readily associate “males” with “career” and “females” with “family”
- 70% more readily associate “male” with “science” and “female” “with the arts”

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>



Positive & Negative biases affect

- Recruitment, hiring, and offer terms
- Employee interactions and employee satisfaction
- Team and project assignments
- Performance evaluations, compensation, and promotions
- Client or customer service
- Openness to new ideas and innovative solutions
- Corrective action



Micro-aggressions

Are defined as "the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults."



Exercise

- Give an example of someone that assumed something about you based on a characteristic
- How did it make you feel?
- Did you challenge the assumption? Why or why not?



- The BLM movement is an international human rights movement, set up by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors & Opal Tometi in 2013
- It was created as an online community to help combat anti-Black racism
- It began after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of African-American teen Trayvon Martin in February 2012.





- On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46 yr old black man was killed in Minneapolis during an arrest for allegedly using fake money
- A white police officer knelt on George Floyd's neck for 8 mins & 46 secs while he was handcuffed & lying face down repeatedly saying "I can't breathe"





- Since the murder of George Floyd, BLM has grown
- It has been actively protesting about the killings of Black people by police and calling for policy changes.
- It works "for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise."





All Lives Matter?

- When Nancy Pelosi was asked by student Shelly Ward if she supported the Black Lives Matter movement, Pelosi's response was an all too familiar "*Well, I believe that all lives matter*".
- The phrase 'All Lives Matter' seems well intentioned, implying that all lives should be viewed equally but they currently aren't.
- A poster held up by a young protester in the US read: "We said Black Lives Matter. We never said only black lives matter, we know all lives matter, we just need your help with #blacklivesmatter because black lives are in danger."



Your thoughts

- The Reservation System: Entitles a percentage of government jobs, elected offices, and positions in college to go to the lower caste people.
- Some high caste students feel cheated because of the special privileges OBC have been given. They say that this is not the sort of system one should have in a democratic country like India.