

Is There Room for Intersectional Feminism in Statistics and Data Science?

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What is feminism?

According to Merriam-Webster, **feminism is “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.”**

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But if feminism is about equality, why does it spark such strong feelings, both positive and negative, among us?

What is intersectional feminism?

*“Originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), **intersectionality** was intended to address the fact that the experiences and struggles of women of colour fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Crenshaw argued that theorists need to take both gender and race on board and show how they interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences.”*

(Davis, 2008)

Intersectionality: Crenshaw's Analogy (1989)

“Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked-feet standing on shoulders-with **those on the bottom being disadvantaged by the full array of factors**, up to the very top, where **the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling**. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are *not* disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that ‘but for’ the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally available only to those who-due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below-are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into the groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch.”

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Do other statisticians and data scientist perceive our social identity? Does this perception acknowledge our intersectionality? Do others' perceptions of our social identity inform their perceptions of our professional identity?

Is there a need for intersectional feminism?

Is there room for intersectional feminism at WSDS? If so, what might that look like? Is there room for intersectional feminism in the field of statistics & data science?

What are examples of your experiences as an intersectional female? Particularly involving your intersectional identities while performing your duties as a statistician/data scientist. Include examples of cases in which you wish you had the support of male colleagues, or advocates from other intersectional feminist groups, i.e., how others may have helped? How others could have improve the conditions not only for you but also for other intersectional groups?

What about times in which you did have support from other advocates? How could you describe its effect on you, your situation? How did it make a difference?

What are the ways in which you have reached out to your colleagues (male and female) or other intersectional individuals for cooperation in gender/diversity issues?

What do we need to do to inspire more cooperation among the many intersections? To move things forward for the new generations of women joining our profession?

References

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