



EXPLORING PRIVILEGE IN OPEN SOURCE COMMUNITIES

@taylor_atx



TAYLOR BARNETT

Community at Keen IO
taylor@keen.io
[@taylor_atx](https://twitter.com/taylor_atx)

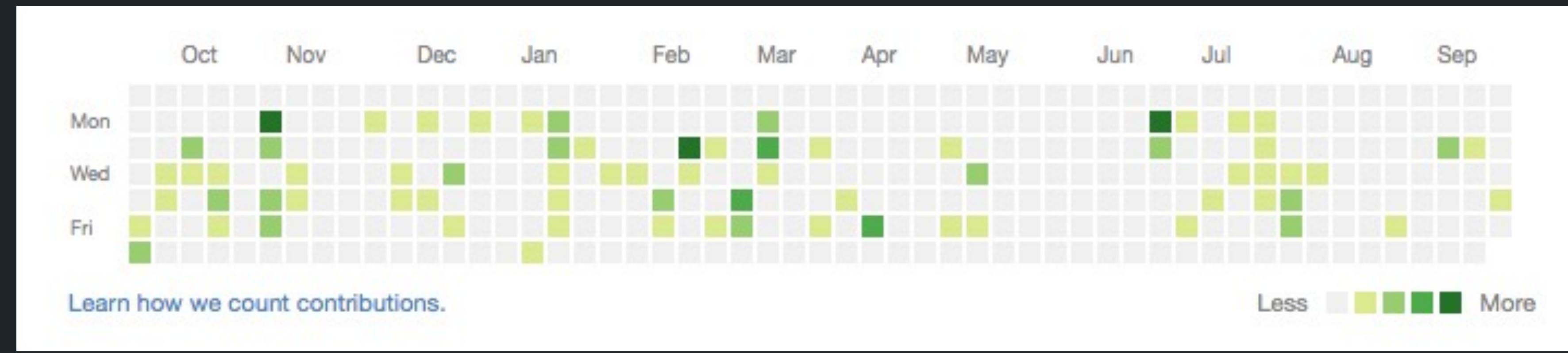


@taylor_atx



Keen IO

@taylor_atx



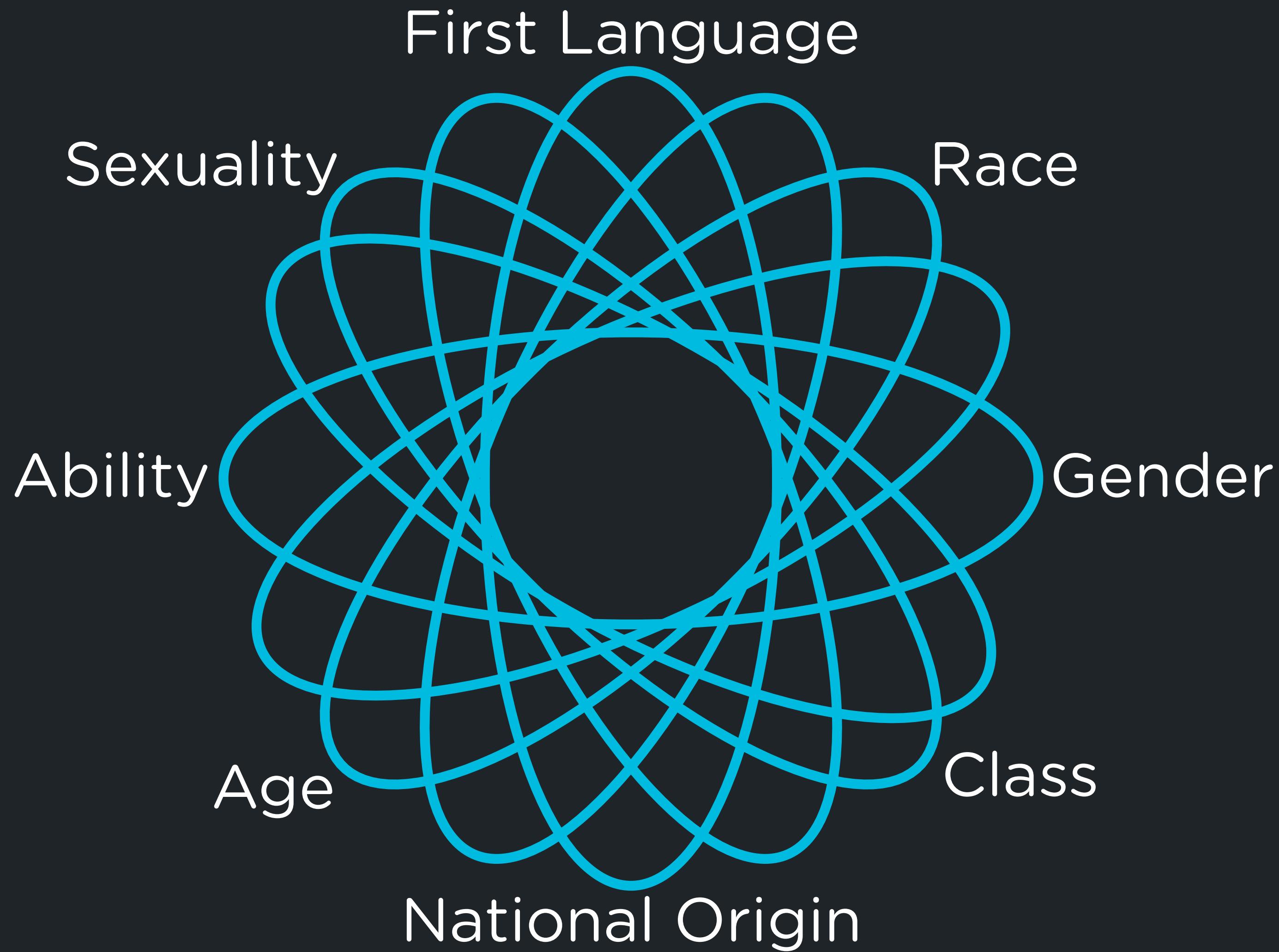
P.S. This makes me extremely anxious to share

@taylor_atx

Humans have distinct
identities and experiences

SOME VOCABULARY

AXES OF IDENTITY



INTERSECTIONALITY

Study of how overlapping or intersecting social identities, particularly minority identities, relate to systems and structures of oppression, domination, or discrimination

PRIVILEGE

A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people

“...Until you try to unpack and understand the privileges you have it's difficult to empathize and understand the struggles of those who do not have the same privilege and empathy is really just the first step to enacting real change.”

- LINDSEY BIEDA IN “ON ACCEPTING PRIVILEGE”

Privilege is vague and abstract

WHY SHOULD WE CARE

“Community issues are not off-topic; they are central to any project that is bound together by voluntary ties rather than (as in projects that are part of traditional companies) economic coercion.”

- TIM CHEVALIER IN “GENDERED LANGUAGE: FEATURE OR BUG IN SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION”

CFO: “What if we invest in our people and they leave?”

CEO: “What if we don’t and they stay?”

Missed opportunities

@taylor_atx

“It’s hard to break into tech without privilege or community, even harder into open source.”

- JESSICA LORD IN “PRIVILEGE, COMMUNITY, AND OPEN SOURCE”

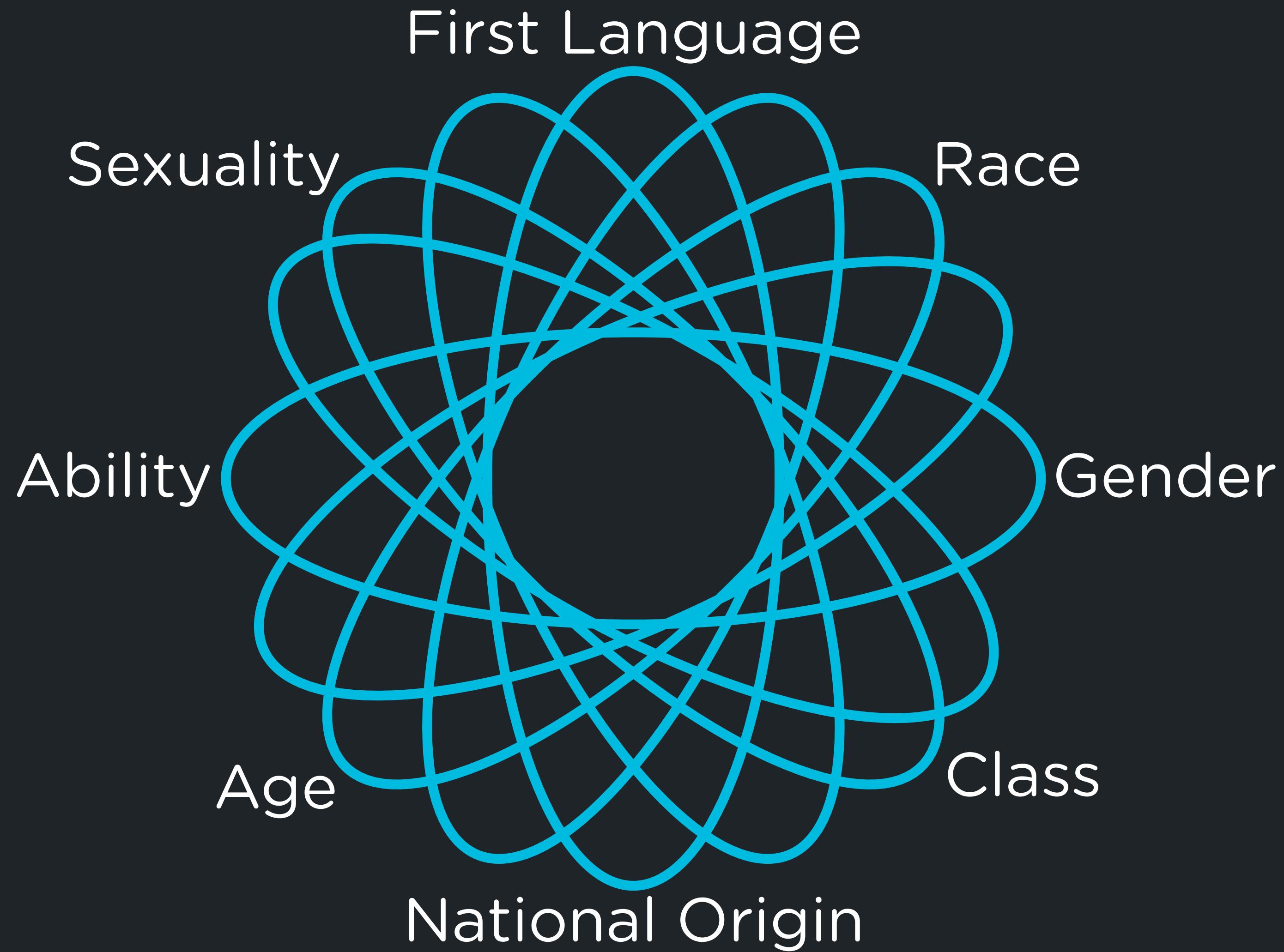
I'm quitting saying, "I'm lucky."

I got here because I'm privileged.

I am not going to...

WHERE CAN PRIVILEGE COME FROM

AXES OF IDENTITY PRIVILEGE



FINANCIAL

- Financial
 - Conferences
 - Travel
 - Salary
 - Cost of Living



LIFE SITUATIONS



- Family responsibilities
 - Single with no one to care for
 - Children, significant others, aging relatives, etc.

COMMUNITY

- Having a community
 - People know you
 - Personal intros
 - People to support you while dealing with harassment
 - Spaces that you feel comfortable in



Thx to #WOCinTech Chat @taylor_atx

OTHER PRIVILEGES



- Time
- Job situation
- Able to take on a long term commitment
- Timezones

Thx to #WOCinTech Chat

@taylor_atx

OTHER PRIVILEGES



- Existing knowledge of the code base and other background knowledge
- Having existing open source work
- Being on stage, well known, etc.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Recognize that open source is closely tied to privilege, and decide to make changes

Use a Code of Conduct and make sure procedures are in place
to **enforce** it

See everyone as a first class open source citizen

@taylor_atx

What is an Open Source Contributor?

Someone who contributes to open source.

See everyone as a **first class open source citizen**

- Be thankful for even the **smallest** of contributions
- Acknowledge **non-coding contributions** the same as coding
 - A copy edit, documentation, a logo, bug reports, code reviews, community management, project management, mockups, marketing material, etc.
- Change the idea that # of commits is the metric that worthiness is based on

“Gendered language performs some of the work of exclusion by reinforcing the message that female programmers are exceptions.”

- TIM CHEVALIER IN “GENDERED LANGUAGE: FEATURE OR BUG IN SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION”

Don't gender certain tasks or follow stereotypes

Expect and insist on gender neutral language

- Folks, team, people, humans, friends, everyone, they, them
- Don't call any group of people, "guys," even if they are all-male
- Easy way for men to lend their privilege

#NORMALIZEYALL

@taylor_atx

Two questions people ask when deciding whether to join a community

- Are they like me?
- Will they like me?

Highlight people in your community to help change what “Open Source” looks like

- Short blog posts, podcasts, photos, graphics, etc.

Lending privilege

- Credibility lending
- Access lending
- Expertise lending

“Whether free-time activities are called “work” or “play,” the existence of free time to do them in is a privilege.”

- @BETSYTHEMUFFIN ON TWITTER

We all know Open Source takes time

- Recognize some won't be able to spend a lot of time working on Open Source projects
- “Drive by” contributions
- Meet people where they are

Review power structures and make sure the people in power represent everyone's interests

- Are non-founders getting praise and a voice?
- How do you become a core team member?
- Who gets paid when a project gets money?
- Who's nominating people things?
- Who decides if an issue is an issue?
- Who decides if a PR gets merged?

Distribute more authority

- Bigger projects can be broken into smaller components
- Open up and document processes
- “Common” knowledge isn’t always so common, share!

Money....?

- You are going to have to decide what is **best** for your project

What can companies do?

- In-kind donations – meeting space, free plans, hardware, etc.
- Sponsor projects and foundations
- Make OSS part of your company culture by giving employees paid time to contribute upstream

Mentorship is key

- Put people 1st, contributions 2nd
- What works for existing contributors might not work for everyone

On how to become a 10x programmer:
“I can spend 10 hours to fix 10 bugs or...”

- JAN LEHNARDT FROM HOODIE ON REQUEST FOR COMMITS

Asking can be hard.
Helping can be hard.

- SASHA LAUNDY IN “YOUR BRAIN’S API” AT PYCON 2015

From Sasha's talk

- The little voice in your head: “**What are they all going to think of me?**”
- **Different for everyone**, shaped through life experience and cultural forces
- When you get stumped, **model not knowing**

Sasha's 6 tips for question askers:

1. Welcome questions
2. People will always remember how you made them feel
3. Share the how and the why, not just the what
4. Don't grab the steering wheel
5. Watch your language
6. Advanced move: Don't coddle, push and support

Think about beginners more

- Tags, docs, guides, etc. — “the basics”
- Show growth of beginners with shout outs and blog posts
- Show empathy

Recognize **everything**

- Short thank you notes, openly saying thanks, recognition bot, recommendations, etc.
- Be careful

“We want to be seen and have our work acknowledged. We’re humans after all.”

- @FOX IN “THE DARK SIDE OF OPEN SOURCE”

@taylor_atx



THANK YOU!



TAYLOR BARNETT

Community at Keen IO

taylor@keen.io

[@taylor_atx](https://twitter.com/taylor_atx)