



# 15 Examples Of Intersectionality

By Chris Drew (PhD) / December 22, 2022

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the overlap, or intersection, of various identity factors such as race, ethnicity, social class, nationality, gender, sexuality, and ability.

### EXPLANATION

The term intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw in 1989.

It critiques the one-dimensionality of:

- **Marxism** (whose main focus was historically on class issues)
- **Critical race studies** (whose main focus was on racial issues)
- **Feminism** (whose main focus was on gender).

### CASE STUDIES

- 1 Missing indigenous women
- 2 Missing white woman syndrome
- 3 Asian women stereotypes
- 4 Disabled LGBT people
- 5 Girls with ADHD
- 6 White Anglo-Saxon protestants

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**Intersectionality refers to the overlap, or intersection, of various identity factors such as race, ethnicity, social class, nationality, gender, sexuality, and ability.**

When identity factors overlap, there is a compounding effect that can cause compounded disadvantage or advantage.

For example, black women face disadvantage based on both race and gender.

Similarly, working-class gay men [might face discrimination](#) due to both their social class and sexual identity.



The intersectionality framework therefore allows us to envisage how power operates along multiple lines of identity. It encourages a well-rounded inquiry into disadvantage that does not box itself into just one line of inquiry.

## Origins Of Intersectionality

The term intersectionality was coined by **Kimberle Crenshaw** in 1989. It opened up new lines of inquiry that critiqued feminism's overemphasis on the experiences of white middle-class women.

Later, the concept spread to break down the one dimensionality of:

- [Marxism](#) (whose main focus was historically on class issues),
- **Critical race studies** (whose main focus was on racial issues), and
- [Feminism](#) (whose main focus was on gender).

Instead, intersectionality aims to explore the intersection of a range of identity factors to explore the compounding effects of identity-based discrimination. As black feminist scholar bell hooks argues, intersectionality “challenged the notion that ‘gender’ was the primary factor determining a woman’s fate”

## Examples Of Intersectionality

### 1. Missing And Indigenous Women



**In Canada, indigenous people have been raising the alarm about the apparent lack of police or government interest in the high rates of [missing indigenous women](#).**

Families highlight that, for decades, there have been insufficient police investigations.

The families of the women often reject the findings of the police and complain about the over-representation of indigenous women in unresolved missing person cases.

Here, being indigenous (ethnicity) and a woman (gender) intersect as historical markers of discrimination and, once again, people from these two identity categories find themselves statistically disadvantaged.

## **2. Missing White Woman Syndrome**

**This is a coin termed to describe the media's hyperfocus on white women who go missing.**

Within this term is an implicit accusation that media doesn't pay the same amount of attention when people with other identity markers go missing.

For example, this syndrome sits in stark contrast to the missing and murdered indigenous women problems highlighted above.

The missing white woman syndrome was on full display during the 2021 [Gabby](#) [Petito](#) case. Petito went missing during a road trip with her fiance, leading to worldwide media attention while the police hunted down her fiance.



### 3. Stereotypes About Asian Women

**[Stereotypes](#) about Asian women often sit at the intersection of racism against Asians and sexism against women.**

But the confluence of these two identity markers raises some [unique stereotypes](#) around being exotic, submissive, and a service worker.

This can lead Asian women to being bullied from people expecting them to know their place at the bottom of the social order, and even harassment from men desiring the 'exotic other'.

### 4. Disabled And LGBT

**Visibly disabled people often find it difficult for society to see them as anything other than their disability.**

This can render other aspects of their identity invisible.

To address this, [one TikTok star](#) named Stephen has been educating people on what it's like to be both disabled and gay.

He speaks about how people didn't acknowledge that he was LGBT because his disability was such an overpowering aspect of his identity:

“In high school I was just seen as the disabled kid.”



Stephen, who has cerebral palsy, also highlights how people assume he doesn't have sexual desires due to his disability. He also speaks out against ableism in the LGBT community, such as troubles he's had getting into bars.

## 5. Black And Gay

**People who are black have historically faced discrimination due to the color of their skin. People who are gay have similarly faced discrimination due to their sexuality.**

So, people who are black and gay face discrimination on two fronts, putting them at extra disadvantage.

In fact, studies have found that black people also face the problem that they are underrepresented in the research on LGBT experiences. Couzens et al (2017) highlight that:

“Most research on LGBT people uses white western samples.”

As a result, black gay people's experiences can be marginalized and not truly understood by health and social care professionals.

## 6. Girls With ADHD

**Historically, boys have been over-diagnosed with ADHD and girls have been under-diagnosed.**

This has been a result of over-emphasis from psychologists and scientists on how boys present with ADHD, to the detriment to girls.



A [greater proportion of girls](#) than boys with ADHD and ADD exhibit behaviors like chattiness, daydreaming, and shyness.

These behaviors are overlooked compared to the supposedly typical ADHD behaviors that boys tend to exhibit more commonly, like disruptiveness and interrupting others in class.

Here, we see an intersection between gender and disability where there is a compounding effect of disadvantage. Girls with this disability are at a double disadvantage because of their gender compared to boys with this disability (who, themselves, are disadvantaged compared to neurotypical students in schools).

## 7. Working Class White Boys In England

**While white and male tend to be positions of power in society, there is an interesting issue of disadvantage among working-class, white, and male in the North-East of England.**

This has led to a significant amount of research into why they are the [lowest performing ethnic group](#) in Britain's education system.

This research has revealed that there is now intergenerational disadvantage in areas like the North-East of England (where I used to teach!) where white

working-class botst are coming up with low social capital, dilapidated infrastructure, and few family members with a postsecondary level of education.



## 8. Stereotypes About Gay Men

Gay men are often [unfairly stereotyped](#) as being predators.

This stereotype is unsupported by any data, and yet it is a trope rolled out during times of [moral panic](#) stirred up by media or ideologues.

For example, it was used as an argument against gay hate crime laws.

Interestingly, the stereotype is not rolled-out against lesbians, showing how it is the unique intersection of being male and homosexuality where this stereotype is weaponized.

## 9. WASPs

The term WASP stands for 'white Anglo-Saxon protestant'. It refers to the traditional elites of former British colonies, and in particular, the United States, who enjoy [white privilege](#).

WASPs formed the elites of society following white settlement and, to this day, there is a large range of WASPs in the political, media, social, financial, and philanthropic elite classes.

The vast majority of US presidents, for example, fit into this elite group.

Similarly, middle-class WASPs [can enjoy significant privilege](#) when interacting

with police and in job interviews due to the lack of negative stereotypes facing them.



## 10. Lower-Class White Anglo-Saxon Protestants

**Interestingly, were we to change just one identity marker of the WASP, a new stereotype emerges.**

Lower-class people who are white, Anglo-Saxon, and protestant, are stereotyped as hillbillies. In Britain, they may also be labeled as Chavs (standing for community housed and violent).

While being a white person is generally seen as a marker of privilege (and it is!), in Britain, there is also growing concern about working-class white boys' performance at schools, which is [among the worst performance](#) of all social groups.

## Examples Of Intersectional Activism

Well before the term 'intersectionality' was coined, we could still see examples of intersectional activism in the real world. Below are five examples.

### 11. Rosa Parks

**Rosa Parks was a black woman who took a stand against segregation in the United States. In an era when women *and* people of color were excluded from public discourse, Parks took a stance and insisted on her fundamental rights.**





In 1955 in Alabama, Parks refused to change seats on a segregated bus in Alabama. This stance sparked a nation-wide debate about segregation and inequality in the United States.

But what was so remarkable was that Parks wasn't just a black person – she was a woman. In a time when women were relegated to the domestic sphere, and black people were silenced, she broke through to influence public sentiment across the nation.

## 12. Helen Keller

**Helen Keller was not only a woman, she was also a deafblind person who changed the world in the early 20th Century.**

Remarkably, despite living in a time when women were excluded from universities and deafblind people had no special accommodations, she remarkably earned a bachelor's degree.

Keller spent her life writing, speaking, and campaigning for disability rights. She was an extremely prolific activist for social justice for people across different identity factors, not just the disabled.

## 13. Mel Baggs

**Mel Baggs was a non-binary blogger who wrote about autism and disability. They were considered an “unusual voice” who used social**

media, blogs, and YouTube to get around mainstream media's [gatekeeping](#).



In the early 21st Century, trans people became more visible thanks to widespread LGBT activism. However, they were also faced with greater discrimination than ever before due to their increased visibility.

Baggs used social media at a time when people of her gender *and* people of her disability found it hard to get their voice out there. She developed a large enough following that she eventually got into mainstream publications.

#### 14. Madam C.J. Walker

**Madam C.J Walker was a black woman who was a successful entrepreneur at a time when women and people of color were widely and overtly oppressed by American laws and society.**

Madam Walker produced a range of cosmetics that were specifically made for black women. She highlighted how most cosmetics were made for white skin. So, her products subverted the norm and was designed directly for women of color.

While she was unable to vote and found it almost impossible to get funding for her business ventures, she persisted, and became the first recorded female self-made millionaire in American history.



After reaching the height of her success, she turned her eye to employing women in her factories (she employed over 20,000 women) and teaching black women about entrepreneurship and financial independence.

## 15. Charlotte Edith Anderson Monture

**Charlotte Edith Anderson Monture was a Canadian Indigenous woman. She has a long list of achievements by her name, including being the first Indigenous woman to vote in a Canadian federal election.**

Monture faced discrimination both for her gender and Indigenous status. She graduated high school at a time when most women were expected to drop out. She then tried to attend nursing school in Canada, but Indigenous women were not accepted into nursing schools.

Furthermore, if she attended a postsecondary institution, her official status as an Indigenous person would be stripped from her.

So, she went to the United States where she got her nursing degree. She then served in WWI.

Monture managed to get around the intersectional discrimination that banned women *and* Indigenous people from voting in federal elections. She achieved this because she took advantage of the *Military Service Act* of 1917 which allowed all people who served in the military to vote.

Women weren't fully given the vote at a federal level until 1918, and Indigenous people until 1960.

# Conclusion



Intersectional theory allows us to explore how discrimination has a compounding effect.

When it was introduced into academia, it was seen as a well-needed critique of the failure of race, gender, and class theorists to explore how disadvantage crosses identity factors and compounds upon itself. It also very successfully critiqued how feminism tended to focus on the experiences of white middle-class women in the 1980s.

Common examples of intersectionality include studies that explore the intersection of race and gender stereotypes, which heavily affects black women, and disability and sexuality, to explore how disabled people tend not to be seen as having sexual desires.

## Further Reading

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 38(4), 785-810. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>

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Dr. Chris Drew is the founder of the Helpful Professor. He holds a PhD in education and has published over 20 articles in scholarly journals. He is the former editor of the Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education.

1 Thought On “15 Examples Of Intersectionality”

**JOSEPH OLADOSU**

DECEMBER 20, 2022 AT 11:01 AM



This I think could be an expansion in the field of human behavioural science in that it's in relating to each other that the biases of intersectionality can be seen to manifest.

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