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## **Foundations**

Intersectionality, Privileges and Social movements

It is clear from today's culture that privilege and oppression are not based on a person's social identity alone. Instead, the convergence of several social categories shapes our experiences. The notion of intersectionality, which has become a potent analytical framework for analyzing the intricacies of social inequality, is based on this knowledge. Intersectionality provides a more thorough understanding of how oppressive institutions function by acknowledging the interconnectedness of many social identities, including race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. This essay will examine the idea of intersectionality, looking at its theoretical foundations, historical development, and potential applications to the advancement of inclusivity and social justice.

According to Golpadas in his definition of intersectionality, he acknowledges that everyone has their own unique experience of discrimination and oppression; everything and anything that can marginalize people: physical abilities, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, body type, education, weight, etc. "should be subject to scrutiny. "The term "intersectionality" describes how social categories including race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability are interrelated and interact to produce distinct experiences of privilege and discrimination. Intersectionality, a term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, acknowledges that people can concurrently encounter various forms of privilege or oppression because of their intersecting identities. Intersectionality

emphasizes how various social categories interact and intersect to shape a person's experiences and opportunities, as opposed to viewing discriminatory practices as distinct and isolated entities. It recognizes that marginalized groups are not homogeneous and that the intersections of their identities influence their experiences.

For instance, a black woman may encounter difficulties and experiences because of both sexism and racism. She might encounter prejudice based on both gender and race, which can combine and cross over to produce a unique combination of obstacles and disadvantages. Understanding racism in the context of other social identities is made possible by intersectionality, which emphasizes the necessity of addressing numerous types of prejudice at once. By exploring the nuances and complexities of how different forms of oppression intersect and shape experiences of racism, this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of intersectionality on black women. It can also inform efforts to address racism by advocating for more inclusive and comprehensive approaches that recognize the interconnected nature of different forms of discrimination.

The concept of intersectionality acknowledges that understanding and addressing these experiences in their whole requires an examination of the ways in which race and gender overlap and influence one another, rather than taking a distinct approach to each. According to Gopaldas (2013, p. 90), intersectionality refers to the way in which social identity categories like gender, race, and class interact to shape life experiences, particularly those that involve privilege and oppression. The concept of intersectionality underscores the significance of prioritizing the

perspectives and experiences of the most marginalized groups in social justice movements and policy formulation. It demands an intersectional and inclusive strategy that acknowledges the richness and diversity of people's experiences and works to solve systematic injustices in a thorough and all-encompassing way. Black women are at disadvantage because of intersectionality. They do not have the privilege like their white counterparts. According to Sanchez (2023), the privileged exercise their power through environmental control, female dominance, systematic racial disparities, and resource access. Due to this oppression, several social and identity groups are distressed and are calling for equity (Sanchez, 2023).

As part of the social movements the black feminists started, The Combahee River Collective declaration, it was written by a group of black feminists and released in 1977, it was a seminal document in black feminism. It highlighted intersectionality and the interdependence of many forms of oppression. The declaration focused on the specific experiences and problems of black women, emphasizing how they would confront both racism and sexism at the same time. It advocated for the liberation of all oppressed groups and emphasized the importance of collective action in confronting oppressive regimes. The Combahee River Collective statement and CRT both add to our knowledge of how black women are treated by recognizing the complicated ways in which race and gender intersect and impact their experiences.

The Combahee River Collective Statement was drafted to examine the social and political circumstances from which it evolved and to chart a course for the movement. The concept of identity politics in the statement was, above all, inclusive. Identity politics is the right of everyone

to choose their own political agenda, including people who did not have such a freedom in the 1970s. One of the statement's most important triumphs was to serve as the foundation for the political organizing of persecuted minorities both then and now.

The Combahee River Collective grew out of the Boston chapter of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO). Barbara Smith, the Boston NBFO's founder, and another member, Demita Frazier, felt their group should do more, they wanted to address the concerns of black lesbians. They also had a strong socialist core belief, they believed in reconstructing society to benefit all people equally, and in overcoming Capitalism, Imperialism, and Patriarchy as the root causes of oppression. It is this that inspired the creation of the Combahee River Collective. Because it commemorates a significant moment in the history of black women's independence, their name is integral to their purpose. Using a non-hierarchical structure, the Combahee River Collective started operations in 1974. In 1980, they broke up over internal conflicts.

"If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression."

The above quote embodies one of the Combahee River Collective's key values. It is founded on the premise that black women are one of society's most oppressed groups. Thus, black women's freedom can occur only once all systems of enslavement are abolished. As a result, all other oppressed individuals would be free of oppression. Because of this conviction, their mission and scope were far greater than those of any other radical movement.

While white feminists battled for abortion rights, black feminists fought for Reproductive Rights as a whole, including the fight against compulsory sterilization, which lasted into the 1970s. Their philosophical thinking was very novel. They coined the term "identity politics" in their writings regarding black women's struggles.

Members of the Collective additionally transformed the concept of marginalization and privilege because of their lived, personal experiences. They had intimate knowledge of prejudice based on gender as well as ethnic discrimination. This confluence of prejudices demonstrated the concept of intersectionality as the result of the cumulative influence of several sources of inequality and injustice. Intersectionality emphasizes how a black man, a white woman, and a gay white man will all face less prejudice and discrimination than a black lesbian. Intersectionality, a concept that came out of the social movement for black women's voices who were neither heard by the black movement or the women's rights movements in the US (Gopaldas, 2013 p.90). Intersectionality is key to the inclusion of all those who are oppressed and suffer unconscious prejudice.

From the perspective of body-centered psychology, Menakem (2017) investigates the harm inflicted by racism in America. Until Americans discover a way to end the pain that white supremacy has caused for generations and is ingrained in every cell of our body, he contends, this carnage will simply not stop. Not simply African Americans suffer from our collective anguish. A separate secondary trauma also affects White Americans. And so do our cops, the blue Americans.

In the same way there was another theory that also contributed immensely to the debate about

race in North America and that has left the Liberals and conservatives polarized. The argument is "critical race theory" is it a method of examining how racism in the United States has affected public policy, or a divisive rhetoric that sets people of color against white people? Critical race theory is an academic subject that has been around for over 40 years. The fundamental idea is that race is a social construct, and that racism is not only the result of human bias or prejudice but is also ingrained in legal systems and legislation.

It emphasizes how, because of the intersection of race and gender, black women confront distinct types of discrimination and marginalization. CRT sheds light on the systemic and structural issues that contribute to black women's mistreatment, such as institutional racism, sexism, and the legacy of slavery and colonialism. Critical race theory, or CRT, arose from a framework for legal analysis developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberle' Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, among others. A notable example is when, in the 1930s, government authorities literally drew lines around places thought to be poor financial risks, often expressly because of the racial makeup of the population. Following that, banks refused to lend to Black individuals in particular areas.

Currently, similar instances of discrimination continue to persist through regulations that appear to be race-blind, such as single-family zoning, which inhibits the construction of inexpensive housing in advantaged, majority-white districts, hampering racial segregation attempts. Those who rejected this notion stated that schools were overemphasizing race, making white students feel guilty, and overemphasizing the dark, terrible chapters of American history at the expense of

promoting patriotism. These kinds of initiatives were dubbed "critical race theory."

Critical race theory is a framework that investigates how race intersects with other social categories such as gender, class, and sexuality to construct oppression and privilege experiences. It emphasizes how, because of the intersection of race and gender, black women confront distinct types of discrimination and marginalization. CRT sheds light on the systemic and structural issues that contribute to black women's mistreatment, such as institutional racism, sexism, and the legacy of slavery and colonialism.

Menakem (2017) offers an alternate vision of how we might get past our deeply ingrained race division and serves as a call to action for all of us to acknowledge that racism is about the body, not the mind. He lays the groundwork in his book for a fresh, bodily-centric view of white supremacy, showing how it is ingrained in our nervous system and blood. It combines sharp societal commentary along with a methodical remedy, or a healing procedure. It is interesting to consider his analysis on the racism problem. He says that racism cannot be eliminated unless we address a frustrating underlying issue, namely healing from the body's stored trauma. This contrasts with viewing the absence of racial harmony because of moral weakness or a lack of desire.

To show how racist policies and attitudes are not only fostered in the United States but also internalized by people of all races, Kendi (2019) examines racial relations from both historical and personal perspectives. Racial disparities between people are caused and maintained by racist policies, sometimes referred to as "systemic racism," "institutional racism," etc. This results in both written and unwritten laws that regulate racial groups (p. 18). Policies that promote racism uphold

the notions that some ethnic groupings are better or worse than others (p. 20). In his powerful argument, Kendi contends that to eliminate racist ideologies and laws, they must first be recognized, precisely defined, and ultimately disproved (p. 9) by means of antiracist viewpoints.

In exploring racist power, Kendi (2019) defines race as a construct intended to yield distinct results for various racial groupings (p. 37). He also says that the people who create the racial system will put themselves in a position of power. A deeper comprehension of American racial history will show how some racial groups have traditionally benefited from greater social and economic advantages than others, which has increased their privilege and power.

In graduate school, Kendi talked candidly about his own experience learning about the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. Although individuals in communities of color still face prejudice, BIPOC women and LGBTQ+ folks are frequently the most vulnerable. He acknowledges that his own journey is ongoing and ever developing (as it should be for all of us). He does, however, make it very evident that addressing all racial injustices is necessary for being a serious antiracist, and that Black women's and Black LGBTQ+ people's health and safety are of the utmost importance. Even if some white people disagree with racism, they nonetheless gain from the way their group controls the distribution of wealth. Someone such as this may encounter distinct obstacles and disadvantages that are not shared by someone who is just marginalized solely due to their gender or race.

Discrimination, bias, and unfair treatment based on race or ethnicity are collectively referred to as racism. It is an oppressive system that maintains social and economic disparities by acting on an individual, institutional, and structural level. Since racial discrimination overlaps with other types of oppression, it is recognized that intersectionality contributes to our understanding of racism.



DiAngelo (2018), said “Because race is constructed as residing in people of color, whites don’t bear the social burden of race. We move easily through our society without a sense of ourselves as racialized. Race is for people of color to think about—it is what happens to “them”—they can bring it up if it is an issue for them (although if they do, we can dismiss it as a personal problem, the race card, or the reason for their problems).

This allows whites much more psychological energy to devote to other issues and prevents us from developing the stamina to sustain attention on an issue as charged and uncomfortable as race”. In society, systematic racism and privileges are both perpetuated and challenged by intersectionality. Intersectionality, on the one hand, emphasizes how various social categories like ability, gender, sexual orientation, class, and race intersect and work together to mold people's identities and experiences. This realization highlights the connections between and mutual reinforcement of oppressive institutions.

Intersectionality illustrates how various forms of discrimination and privilege interact to create particular and compounding disadvantages for marginalized people, which is relevant to the perpetuation of systemic racism and privilege. For instance, compared to someone who is simply experiencing one type of marginalization, a person who is both economically and racially disadvantaged may have greater obstacles when trying to access healthcare, work opportunities, and education. Intersectionality highlights the intricate ways that systematic racism and advantages are maintained and reproduced in society by identifying these intersecting kinds of oppression.

Interdependent systems of discrimination relate to the way multiple forms of discrimination and

oppression interact and support one another. It recognizes that distinct social identities, including as race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and others, do not exist in isolation but rather interact and shape one another. Individuals who belong to numerous marginalized groups may have distinct experiences and issues because of these discriminatory systems.

However, intersectionality may also be an effective weapon in the fight against privilege and systematic racism. Intersectionality assists in dismantling the hierarchies that uphold inequality by recognizing the connections between various oppressions. It promotes a more comprehensive view of social justice and emphasizes the necessity of addressing discrimination in all its forms. Through emphasizing the experiences and voices of those who are most oppressed and acknowledging that people may experience multiple forms of privilege and discrimination concurrently, intersectional approaches advance inclusivity and equity.

In conclusion, understanding and addressing interdependent systems of discrimination is crucial for promoting social justice and equality. It requires recognizing and challenging the ways in which different forms of discrimination intersect and compound and working towards dismantling all forms of oppression. Therefore, intersectionality serves to illuminate the intricate ways in which racism interacts with other types of oppression, underscoring the necessity of confronting and eliminating all interlocking systems of discrimination to attain genuine equality and justice. In the end, intersectionality provides a lens through which to examine and contest systemic racism and privileges by shedding light on the nuanced ways in which power functions and highlighting the significance of tackling a variety of overlapping kinds of oppression in the sake of social justice.

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