TUTOR

Teachers' upskilling aiming at a holistic inclusivity in learning

Introduction to Inclusive Education Course

Strand Five:

Intersectionality and multiple identities

Introduction:

In this text, we will examine what intersectionality is; where it came from; the concept of 'double discrimination;' intersectionality's relationship to power and oppression; and context and time as a consideration for intersectional identities.

What is intersectionality?

> *"Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking."*
> *(Crenshaw, 1989, p.149)*

Kimberlé Crenshaw is a Black critical race and intersectional feminist scholar from the United States. When explaining the oppression of Black African American women, in a 1989 paper, Crenshaw developed the concept of intersectionality. She has since developed this work further to explain how the intersecting parts of someone's identity can work together to increase their relationship to oppression or marginalization. Crenshaw states that, "intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects" (2017: np).

Intersectionality acknowledges that everyone has their own individual experiences of privilege and/or discrimination that allows for the acknowledgment of individuals who experience *double discrimination* (Crenshaw, 1989), that is multiple forms of discrimination based on multiple facets of their identity.

What is 'double discrimination'?

'Double Discrimination' is a term which is used to describe the way two or more intersecting parts of a person's identity can unfavourably position them in a situation where they are increasingly oppressed and marginalized. When a person finds themselves in this position, they are experiencing biases and/or discrimination because of these intersecting identity facets. Some examples include when Black women are seen as 'angry' or 'hostile' in secondary school classrooms when standing up for themselves; when a disabled, queer person is not

asked about their sexual history or assumed to not need a pregnancy test when receiving medical care; when a young man of ethnic identity and brown skin is not considered to be a citizen of a predominantly white country at first meeting; finally when a young person with an intellectual disability is thought too young and too innocent / naïve to know what they mean when they state that they are non-binary.

What are power, privilege, discrimination, and oppression?

Power is a person's capacity to influence the values, beliefs, actions, and behaviours of others in society. Eddo-Lodge describes privilege as the absence of the negative consequences of social or systemic discrimination (2018). Discrimination is when an individual, or group of individuals, are treated differently and unfairly because of who they are. Oppression is when an individual, or group of individuals, from a marginalized group receive unfair treatment from a powerful group or system, and as a result, have little power.

Why should we consider time and context as well as facets of an individual's identity when it comes to intersectionality, power, privilege, and oppression or marginalization?

The passing of time can change the position an individual holds in relation to the centre of power. For instance, the introduction, or repealing of human rights relating solely to a part of someone's identity can bring them closer to power or it can bring them closer to the margins making them less powerful. An example which moved LGBTQI+ people to the margins in 2024 was when the Georgian parliament passed a legislative package which led to an effective ban of all forms of LGBTQI+ representation in the country (IGLYO, 2024). This human rights violation means that the LGBTQI+ population were suddenly moved even farther into the margins and being exposed to even more oppression than was previously being experienced prior to September 2024. Similarly, in August 2024, Bulgaria's government passed legislation which prohibits schools from positively representing LGBTQI+ people or talking about these communities and identities. This again moves an already oppressed and marginalized group of people to further oppression, with little or no access to the centre of power (IGLYO, 2024).

An example in recent history of removing a barrier and some forms of oppression which moves a person slightly closer (but not much) to the centre of power, is the repealing of the 8th amendment of Ireland's constitution in 2018, which allowed all people the right to access abortion as part of their reproductive medical care. This change in legislation gave them more

power and agency over their medical care. Another positive example in Ireland, is the 2015 Child and Family Relationships Act, which gave children the right to be heard in matters that affect them, meaning that they had the legal right to voice their opinion in any matters in relation to guardianship, custody, upbringing, or access to a court or judge. Before this date, children under the age of eighteen did not have any legal rights to express their views on these topics in a court of law. Having the right to have a say in matters that affect them brought them closer to the centre of power and made them slightly less oppressed.

Context also changes how close an individual is to power and privilege and how far away or marginalized and oppressed they may be. This can include a change in global attitudes and beliefs, wars, national governments, geography, and so on. For example, in a predominantly Christian country an individual who is Muslim may find themselves further away from power and privilege. That same person could relocate to an Islamic country, and their religion can bring more power and privilege than they held in the former country. Similarly, a person who identifies as LGBTQI+ move from a country where it is illegal to be LGBTQI+, to have a same sex relationship etc., to a country where LGBTQI+ rights are enshrined in law, and it is legal to have a same sex relationship. This does not mean that they will not experience homophobia and all other forms of oppression, it just means that their legal rights are protected for that point in time. In this example, we can also see the move from oppression towards power and privilege. It is important to note that these changes, in the amount of power and privilege a person has, are always context driven, and more often than not can be small shifts forwards and backwards from the centre to the margins and vice versa and not large shifts. It highlights the fluidity of identity and context, and how it is ever moving and shifting in the wheel of power and privilege.

Allowing for the big picture and not a reduction to the sum of your parts.

A common classroom comment when an individual who could be considered privileged who is beginning their process of interrogating their own identity in relation to power and privilege might be, "but I grew up poor", "but I worked hard to get to where I am", "but I survived a difficult childhood" and so on. These are legitimate reactions to unpacking your identity and unrecognized privileges or biases. The reason they are legitimate is that they are reacting against being reduced to merely privileged (and therefore powerful) or marginalized (and therefore oppressed) which may not reflect the lived realities of their full lives, in their understanding or interpretation. This is why time and context, and the fluidity of identity and

its relationship to power and oppression matters in our updated graphic. It allows the learner to colour in where they sit on the wheel and adapt it to time and context. It will highlight that such things only shift their position away from the centre of power and privilege in one or two facets while the remaining facets may sit closer to the centre of power and privilege, and that while painful and hard, it is the interconnectedness of most of the facets of their identities which ultimately grant them more or less privileges or cause them more or less oppression.

The Wheel of Power and Privilege:

The TUTOR project adapted the Wheel of Power and Privilege building on the work of Slyvia Duckworth (2021) to illustrate (as a pedagogical teaching tool) the intricate difficulties involved in the concept of intersectionality and its interlocking and interdependent nature on power, privilege, and multiple different facets of an individual's identity; i.e.; the messiness and fluidity of human experience and identity. Sylvia Duckworth, in her graphic, was attempting to illustrate intersectionality and its relationship to power and privilege.

Duckworth was of course building on the work of Kimberle Crenshaw and her concept of intersectionality. There are some serious factual mistakes with Duckworth's portrayal of power and privilege in this wheel. For instance, intersex is placed under the category of Gender when it related to sex characteristics and has absolutely nothing to do with gender. No formal education is a means of oppression lends itself to marginalization, and does not feature on Duckworth's wheel, where elementary education is portrayed as marginalized and the furthest place along a spectrum of power and privilege. Language does not consider many other powerful languages in the world – portraying only English and does not consider sign language or any nonverbal language. There are also categories missing such as age, ethnicity, religion and so on.

The updated wheel of power and privilege has more facets of an individual's identity and how it would relate to power and marginalization/oppression. It also considers the changing nature

and influence of time and context. In adapting Duckworth's work, we hope to fix some incorrect flaws, and to update it to have more in depth considerations about identity, language of identity, and identity markers. It is important to note that while this wheel may be considered updated in 2025 (and some will contest that it is still not enough), intersectionality, the wheel, language, identity, and indeed our understandings of same are constantly in a state of progress and change. Changes to terminology and understanding are constantly in flux and evolving to explain the complex and confusing human reality. Considering this, we acknowledge that the idea of a wheel of privilege and power will always constantly be changing and adapting; and that our wheel will be considered outdated as time passes.

The Wheel of Privilege is a conceptual and pedagogical tool designed to inform and educate on the complexity of socially constructed human identities and their relationship to power dynamics. It illustrates the general idea that certain identities—such as white, heterosexual, cisgender men from upper-class backgrounds—are closer to societal power, while others— like Black, queer, or intersex individuals—are often positioned further from power. Ideally, this wheel would be more expansive, incorporating additional tiers of identities and levels of proximity to power to capture more nuance. However, this version remains a simplified model and does not reflect the full spectrum of intersections and complexities that exist between identities. Power and privilege are shaped by numerous factors, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, and cultural background.

It is important to understand that this wheel offers a generalized concept and cannot account for all the subtleties present in different social, cultural, or geopolitical contexts. While it draws on post-colonial theory and broader global trends, its application may differ significantly depending on location. For instance, knowing English might not grant someone immediate power in an isolated region like Ifugao in the Philippines, where local languages and traditions dominate. Yet, globally, the English language is a significant marker of privilege and could eventually provide the speaker with influence as external forces, like foreign interests, grow in those areas.

Similarly, a white European may not be the numerical majority in a city like Jakarta, Indonesia, which could give them the appearance of a minority status. However, post-colonial legacies, along with globalized perceptions of Western features, ideologies, and languages, often confer a higher status compared to local norms. In this case, the individual's perceived lack of privilege or distance from power stems from being a numerical minority. However, symbolic

power associated with Western culture still puts this person closer to power despite their numerical minority status. This wheel is intended to spark reflection and dialogue on power dynamics and privilege. It should be approached with an understanding of its limitations, as power is context-dependent and constantly shifting.

The TUTOR Project Wheel of Power and Privilege
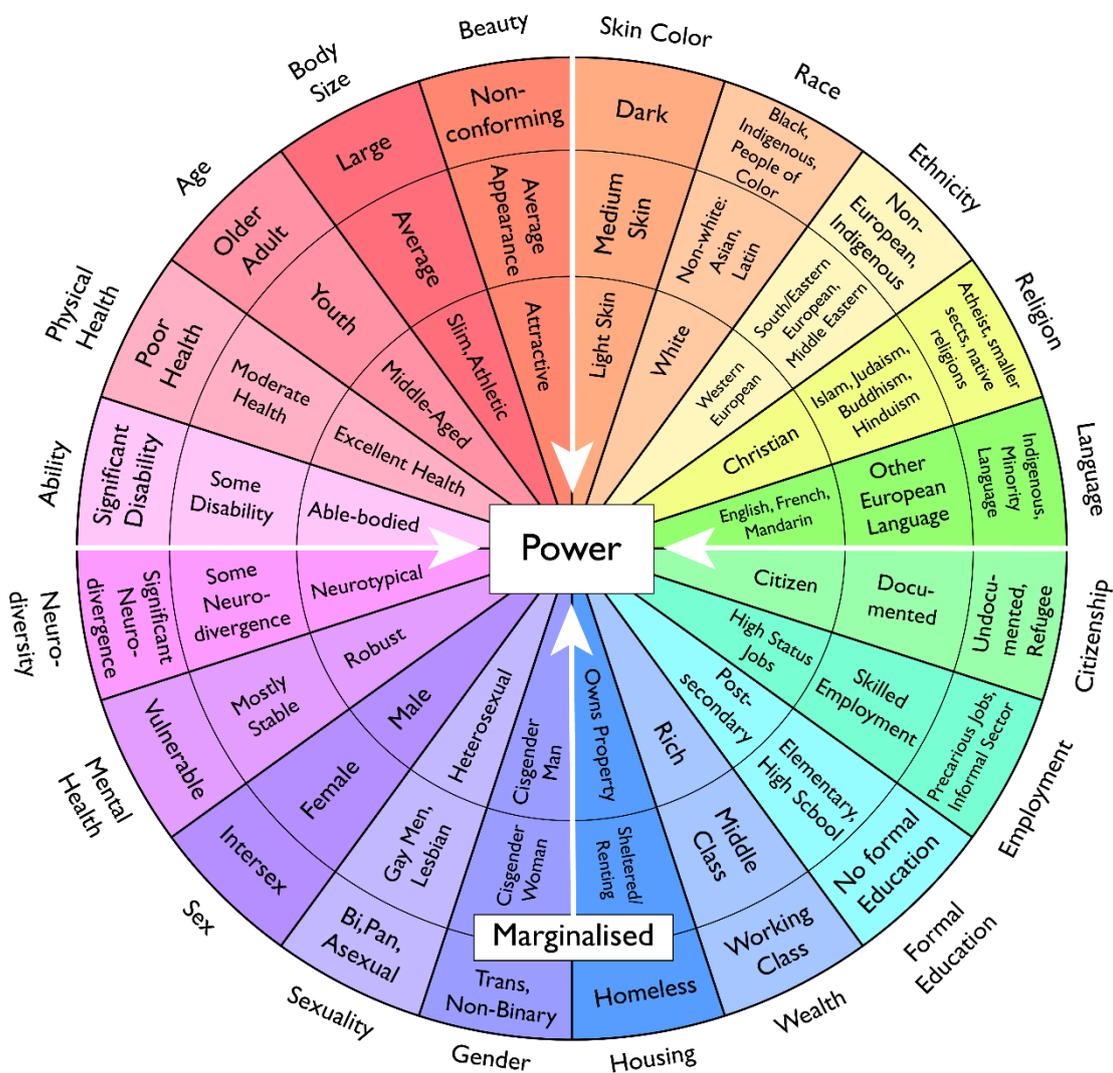
References:

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IGLYO Statement on Georgia's New Anti-LGBTQI Ruling. www.IGLYO.org. 20th September 2024. Accessed at: https://www.iglyo.org/news/statement-georgia-09-2024

Suggested Readings:

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum.* p139–67. Available at:
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Crenshaw, K. in conversation with Columbia Law School. (2017). Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later. *www.law.columbia.edu*. Available at:
https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later#:~:text=Crenshaw%3A%20Intersectionality%20is%20a%20lens,class%20or%20LBGTQ%20problem%20there.

Unit Two: Identities as fluid

Introduction

This course focuses on how our identity—essentially, our beliefs and perceptions about ourselves—shapes how we perform different roles in life, such as being a family member, a worker, or a friend. It highlights that identity is not fixed; it changes and adapts based on our social surroundings, like cultural norms and relationships. Positive environments can strengthen our identity and improve how we perform our roles, while negative environments can cause conflicts within our identity, making it harder to fulfil our roles effectively.

The objective of this course is to deepen teachers' understanding of identity as a fluid and evolving concept, enabling them to better support their students' individual journeys of self-discovery and expression. By the end of this course, educators will be equipped with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to foster a classroom environment where every student's identity is acknowledged, respected, and nurtured.

Identity, fluidity, and performance

In ancient times, identity was seen as a solid foundation upon which personal and social roles were built. In this traditional perspective, identity was understood as a central factor in guiding behaviour and role fulfilment. Contemporary views, however, emphasise that identity is not static, but a constantly evolving construct that is affected by both internal and external influences (Carlile, 2010). In this sense, understanding the fluidity of identity is fundamental to understanding how individuals cope with their roles and responsibilities in society. Identity, which encompasses the beliefs and self-perceptions that an individual holds about themselves, has a significant impact on the performance of their roles, whether in the family, at work, as a friend, or in the classroom.

Identity is not static; it is constantly influenced and modified by social contexts, including cultural norms, social expectations, and interpersonal relationships. Positive social environments can reinforce positive aspects of identity and enhance role performance, while negative environments can create identity conflicts and impede effective role performance (Ogbu, 1999). The impact of fluid identities on role performance is considerable. Individuals continually negotiate and adjust their identities in response to changing circumstances and roles. This ongoing process influences how they approach their roles, often emphasising various aspects of their identity in different contexts. Such adaptability can lead to variations in role performance, allowing individuals to better meet the demands of different roles and environments (Bellmore & Tomonaga, 2009).

Furthermore, the concept of fluid identities intersects with contemporary theories of identity performance, which suggest that identities are actively constructed and reconstructed through social interactions and practices (Carlile, 2010). This perspective is particularly relevant in the digital age, where virtual communities play a crucial role in the formation of individual and collective identities. Before continuing with the development of fluid identities over time, it is necessary to clarify various concepts that we will see throughout the unit, such as identity, fluidity, and performance.

Identity, Fluidity, Performance
• **Identity:** Erikson states that identity is a complex concept that encompasses multiple dimensions of an individual's sense of self (1950). His theory of identity development is grounded in his broader theory of psychosocial development, which posits that identity formation is a central task during adolescence but continues to evolve throughout a person's life. • **Fluidity:** According to Nijsten, fluid identity can be described as an identity that is constantly changing or is constantly evolving (2016). Both cultural identity and cultural experiences effect how individuals perceive their world, their beliefs, and values. Identity fluidity is the concept that identities are not fixed or static but can change and evolve over time and in different contexts. This contrasts with the idea of a stable, unchanging self. • **Performance:** Identity–as–performance is seen as part of the flow of social interaction as individuals construct identity performances fitting their milieu (Goffman, 1959).

Historical Perspective on Identity

The concept of identity has evolved over time from a static and essentialist view to a more dynamic and fluid understanding in contemporary theories. Classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle contributed to earlier views, suggesting that identity was linked to immutable and inherent characteristics such as race, gender, and ethnicity.

During the Enlightenment, thinkers such as John Locke and René Descartes introduced the idea that identity is based on consciousness and personal experience. This view was reinforced during the Romantic period, which emphasised the role of emotion and personal intuition. Goethe and Wordsworth advocated an identity shaped by individual experience and creative expression.

Postmodern thinkers, such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, challenged the idea of stable identities. Foucault (1976) examined how identities are shaped by power structures and social norms and Derrida (1967) argued for a fragmented view of identity. Butler's theory of performative gender argued that gender is a series of acts rather than an inherent trait (1990), and queer theorists extended these ideas by promoting the recognition of non-binary and diverse identities. Today, the concept of fluid identity is widely accepted, with digital technology and social networks facilitating the exploration and expression of multiple facets of identity. This modern view recognises that identities are multifaceted, intersecting and constantly evolving.

Identity as a performance across lifespan, context, and culture

The concept of identity as a fluid and performative construct is fundamental to understanding the behaviour and roles of individuals within society and across their lives, contexts, and cultures. This perspective is elaborated by Rudolph & Zacher, who emphasises that generational identity is a dynamic and evolving performance shaped by historical periods, social contexts, and individual experiences (2017)

Generations are often seen as influencing and driving social change. When we speak of generations, we refer to groups of people born at the same time who share similar life experiences; however, the life-cycle development perspective has challenged this notion by

highlighting that change is not generational, but that individuals experience continuous development throughout their lives. Thus, identity would not be predetermined by generational labels but is continually shaped by interactions with changing environments (Rudolph & Zacher, 2017).

One of Rudolph and Zacher's key insights is the significant influence of historical and contextual factors on identity formation. Generations cannot be fully understood without considering the socio-historical contexts that shape their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours. This contextualised life-cycle framework allows for a more nuanced understanding of how individuals within a generational cohort may experience and respond to their environment differently.

Identity also plays out differently in diverse cultural and social contexts. Rigid categorisations of generations based solely on age groups have been criticised for oversimplifying the complex and varied experiences within each generational group. Mannheim's idea of "historical units" suggests that even though people from the same generation experience similar historical events, they do not all respond in the same way. This means that within any generation, individuals can have different reactions and experiences.

Riley's and Elder's theories help us see how our roles and positions in society change as we grow older. They show that our identities keep changing and adapting as we go through different stages in life.

The theory of identity as performance, developed by Goffman and Butler, offers valuable insights into how identities are constructed and manifested through social interactions. According to Goffman, performance is a metaphor that captures the complexity of interpersonal relationships in which individuals adjust their performance according to social context and public expectations. This approach shows how hierarchical relationships and social values can influence interactions, sometimes revealing contradictions between what a person says and what their body language may suggest. Individuals construct their identities through their interactions with others and their environment (1959). Butler extends this perspective, particularly in the context of gender, arguing that identity is not an innate quality but something that is repeatedly performed through performative behaviours and actions (1990).

The impact of identity on academic performance is complex. Social norms and the school environment have a significant impact on the performance of students, especially those from different social backgrounds. Students from minority groups, for example, may be exposed to stereotypes that label them as less able, which negatively affects their academic performance. This phenomenon, known as **stereotype threat**, can reduce students' ability to perform cognitive tasks as concerns about meeting negative expectations hinder their performance. Research by Akerlof and Kranton shows that cultural identities such as 'jock', 'nerd' or 'quiet' influence students' academic engagement and achievement (2002). These identities, associated with different social expectations and peer pressure, can motivate or discourage students in their academic endeavours.

Stereotype threat is an important dimension in understanding how identity affects performance. When students are reminded of a negative stereotype about their group, their performance can be negatively affected. This phenomenon has been observed across a range of social identities, including race and gender. Experiments in India, for example, show that

students from a lower caste tend to perform worse when their caste identity is highlighted, illustrating how social identity can be a barrier to educational achievement (Hoff & Pandey, 2006)

Importance of Understanding Identity Fluidity in Educational Settings

As in any area of society, identity influences educational settings. Understanding the fluidity of identity is therefore necessary to promote inclusivity, support students' development and meet diverse needs. In this sense, recognising that identities are dynamic helps educators to design effective teaching strategies and create supportive learning environments for students.

According to Mead, identity is formed through social interactions and the internalisation of the perceptions of others (1934). This means that students' identities develop through their interactions with peers and educators. Understanding this is fundamental for educators to be able to better support students as they explore various aspects of their identity. A good understanding on the part of educators can help them in their emotional and psychological development. In the same vein, Goffman (1959) noted that students present different facets of their identity in different contexts. Based on this, educators can adapt their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students.

According to recent studies on gender performativity, gender is not a fixed characteristic but a series of social performances (Jones, 2019). This perspective enables educators to more effectively support gender diverse learners, enhancing their learning experiences and well-being. Similarly, contemporary analysis of power and knowledge shows how social structures influence identities (Smith, 2020). By recognizing these power dynamics, educators can address biases and create equitable learning environments. This approach reduces discrimination and promotes equity. Educators who understand the fluidity of identity can build empathetic relationships with students and foster a supportive educational environment. This relational approach is consistent with symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 2021) and promotes greater engagement and improved academic outcomes.

All of this points to the need to create identity-safe classrooms that promote respect and a sense of belonging. Cohn-Vargas (2013) emphasises that identity safety is about making students feel safe and valued for their unique identities, which increases engagement, motivation, and achievement. Identity security strategies include culturally responsive teaching, an inclusive curriculum, and affirming students' identities through a variety of classroom activities. In short, understanding identity fluency helps educators create inclusive, supportive, and equitable environments that meet the diverse needs of students and promote positive educational outcomes.

Consider:

Consider the notion of "identity-safe classroom" which leads into discussions of classrooms of places of learning as safe spaces. If we consider education to be a political act, is it possible to create a space which is safe for all students and educators?

Is the concept of 'safe space' in education a dangerous one? What happens when class is over? Can you control the beliefs, value systems, and cultural or religious norms and practices both within and outside of the education space?

What happens when one student from a minoritised religion, holds beliefs - which they believe to be true and core to who they are and their own identity – clash with the identity of other students in the space, perhaps LGBTQI+ identifying students? How is it possible to make a "safe" environment for both students to be respected in their own identities? Do we promise what we cannot deliver when we talk about creating safe spaces for inclusion?

Post your thoughts on the Learning Platform discussion forum.

Reflection:

How do your own value systems, beliefs, biases, and assumptions influence your understanding of identity, and how are these aspects shaped by the systems that surround you?
Additionally, how can you apply a range of pedagogical approaches and adult learning perspectives to lead an inclusive learning environment that respects and nurtures the fluid identities of all students?

Suggested Readings and Resources:

Anderson, K. T., & Zuiker, S. J. (2010). Performative identity as a resource for classroom participation: Scientific Shane vs. Jimmy Neutron. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 9*(5), 291–309. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2010.517708

Role-Playing Exercise: Assign students different scientific personas (e.g., a character like Scientific Shane or Jimmy Neutron). Have them participate in a classroom debate or discussion in character. After the role-play, have students write a reflection on how their assigned identity influenced their participation and interaction. Discuss how performative identity can shape engagement in educational settings.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Proposed activity: Analyze a piece of media (e.g., a movie, TV show, or advertisement) for representations of gender. Discuss how the media either reinforces or subverts traditional gender roles.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989*(1), 139-167.

Proposed activity: Have students create intersectionality maps that highlight their own multiple identities and the ways these identities interact.

GLSEN. (n.d.). Retrieved July 26, 2024, from http://www.glsen.org

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.

Kumashiro, K. (2002). *Troubling education: Queer activism and anti-oppressive pedagogy*. Routledge.

Marcus Lyon. Is your identity given or created? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tJKGZ_xSZ0

Proposed activity: Have students create collages that represent their given and created identities.

Teaching Tolerance. (n.d.). Retrieved July 26, 2024, from http://www.tolerance.org

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Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. Anchor Books.

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Jones, S. (2019). Gender performativity in education: Supporting gender diverse learners. Educational Review, 71(3), 1-17.

Karniol, R., Grosz, E., & Schorr, I. (2003). Caring, gender role orientation, and volunteering. *Sex Roles, 49*(1-2), 11-19. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0304-3878(03)00124-7

Mead, G. H. (1934). Mind, self, and society: From the standpoint of a social behaviourist. University of Chicago Press

Nijsten, C. (2016). Fluid identity and cultural sensitivity in youth (bachelor's thesis, Brock University). Brock University Digital Repository.

Pearce, K. E., & Rice, R. E. (2013). Digital divides from access to activities: Comparing mobile and personal computer internet users. *First Monday, 18*(6). https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/2162/2127

Research Solutions. (n.d.). The link between identity and role performance. Retrieved July 26, 2024, from https://articles.researchsolutions.com/the-link-between-identity-and-role-performance/doi/10.2307/3033704

Rudolph, C. W., & Zacher, H. (2017). Generations and work: A review and conceptual framework. In B. J. Hoffman, M. K. Shoss, & L. A. Wegman (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of work and aging (pp. 141-162). Oxford University Press.

Silverchair. (n.d.). *Understanding the social role of academic libraries: A review of literature*. Retrieved July 26, 2024, from https://watermark.silverchair.com/waw019.pdf?token=AQECAHi208BE49Ooan9kkhW_Ercy7Dm3ZL_9Cf3qfKAc485ysgAAA04wggNKBgkqhkiG9w0BBwagggM7MIIDNwIBADCCAzAGCSqGSIb3DQEHATAeBglghkgBZQMEAS4wEQQM2cutAX_qjIvN6lJ2AgEQgIIDAUzJQlfnD5iA53bX3u_4D_fEHLVrsIw250uGU4dPYTf9nGz

Smith, J. (2020). Power dynamics in the classroom: Addressing social structures and biases. Journal of Educational Research, 112(4), 230-245.