AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

APAGS TRAINING VIDEO:
Intersectionalities in Psychology: Intersections of Race, Sexual Orientation, and Gender
Transcript

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Hello, my name is Kiet Huynh and I'm graduate student in the University of Miami Counseling Psychology Ph.D. program. This webinar is presented by myself and Khashayar Farhadi Langroudi, a clinical psychology doctoral Candidate at the American School of Professional Psychology of Argosy University in San Francisco.

We are members of the Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity.

This webinar is part of a series presented by the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students, or APAGS, Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity. APAGS aspires to offer the highest quality graduate training experience for the next generation of scientific innovators, expert practitioners, and visionary leaders in psychology.

With these webinars, we hope to address general areas of interest to graduate students in the field of psychology related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

This webinar will focus on Intersectionalities in Psychology specifically the intersections of race, sexual orientation, and gender.

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This presentation has three key objectives.

First, to provide information on the history and emergence of intersectionality in Psychology

Second, to provide background on the Significance of Intersectionalities and why it can be important to employ this particular framework. We will explore the implication of intersectionality theory on psychological research, the therapeutic relationship, in the policy arena, and last but not least, on public health.

And third, to guide discussion & shed light on lived experiences of people who identify with these intersectional identities.

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Intersectionality can be viewed as a theory, a framework, or a method.
The early emergence of intersectionality in psychology was rooted in the Feminist movement and theories. Especially when it comes to the topic of race, gender, and sexuality, it's worth mentioning that it actually stems from the experiences of women of

color, particularly persons like Kimberle Crenshaw, Bell Hooks, and Patricia Collins, who felt mainstream feminism was too homogenous (Schiller, 2000).

Intersectionality has been used as an approach to social activism examples of these movements are the women's rights movement, or go into more specific examples such as the Occupy Wall street Movement in which that many women of colors were frontiers of the movement, there was also the intersectionality of race, socioeconomic status, and gender.

Intersectionality as an approach has been used to explore multiple marginalized identities (Nash, 2008). Current views of intersectionality emphasize the intersection of all identities, and each intersection of identity is associated with both privilege and oppression (Baca, Zinn, and Thornton Dill, 1996; Choo and Ferree, 2010; McCall, 2005).

An intersectionality lens helps researchers become aware of the variety of intersections between forms of diversity that interact within each person. Therefore, the researcher becomes more aware of the diverse range of experiences of gender and other social identities. It guides the researcher to develop a framework for studying identity. (Warner & Shields, 2013).

In this way, intersectionality is most commonly used as a framework or a lens through which to view topics of research and theory. **As a psychological theory**, intersectionality provides specific explanations about different intersecting identities which differently shape experiences and behaviors and some believe that intersectionality might be able to predicting human behavior. **As an approach**, intersectionality has been used to advocate for social activism. The great example of a scholarly social advocate in intersectionality is Kimberle Crenshaw. She is the first and arguably still most significant contributor to intersectionality as a theory

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Examination of the literature reveals that researchers use intersectionality theory to gain a more nuanced understanding of important health and social issues. What follows are just a few examples of scientists who have employed the intersectional framework for their research.

Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher (2010) examined longitudinal data from a sample of emerging adults to show how the study of identity formation is enriched by examining the intersection of multiple identities, such as sexuality, social class, ethnicity and immigration status.

Meyer (2012) explored anti-queer violence in a qualitative study with 47 Black, Latino/Latina, and White participants. Meyer found that anti-queer violence is experienced differently across race, ethnicity and gender. For instance, lesbians of color coped with anti-queer discrimination through emphasizing autonomy and self-

sufficiency, whereas Black and Latino gay men coped by drawing on emotional and physical strength.

Sevelius (2013) used qualitative data from 22 transgender women of color in San Francisco to show how gender identity impacts sexual risk behavior and body modification practices.

Finally, Veenstra (2013) analyzed data from a nationally representative sample of more than 90,000 Canadians to show that cardiovascular health disparities are best understood with an intersectional framework because these inequalities occur beyond single categories of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. These authors found that hypertension was predicted to be higher in Black men, women with less education than a high school diploma, wealthy South Asian women and bisexual participants, compared to poor Black men, women with college degrees, and poor South Asian women and men.

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Researchers have used the intersectionality framework for both qualitative and quantitative research

For quantitative analysis, commonly researchers have used the regression framework with interaction effects to explore intersectional identities. For instance, racial or ethnic identity and gender may be included in the model as an interaction term to predict a certain health outcome to determine whether differences exist between individuals with several combinations of those identities (for example, do Asian males differ from Native American females on that particular health outcome). A more recent statistical method for examining intersectional identities include the Bayesian approach that provides more power for complex analyses. As intersectional theory and research develops, more tools are emerging for investigators to explore this phenomenon.

An alternative approach is to conduct qualitative intersectionality research which generally involves interviews to explore the nuanced experiences of individuals who have multiple marginalized identities.

It is important to mention that there are challenges of using intersectionality as a framework for research, especially in terms of quantitative research where statistical methods are often additive in nature (e.g. regression) which runs counterintuitive to work. In her highly influential article on the methodological challenges of intersectionality research, Bowleg (2008) makes the claim that inequality and social identities such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, and sex or gender must be viewed in an interactive rather than an additive fashion. She cites her research with Black lesbians to argue that the additive effect of being Black, lesbian, and woman fails to accurately reflect the unique experiences of being a Black lesbian woman.

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The emergence of intersectionality theory has **brought** with it new tools to measure intersecting identities and the **stress** associated with embodying these identities. **Examples** of such tools are the LGBT People of Color Microaggresions Scale by Balsam et al. (2011) and the Dual Identity Distress Scale by Keaton & Corsbie-Massay (2012).

The LGBT People of Color Microaggressions Scale: measures the unique micoaggressions experienced by those with both racial or ethnic and LGBT identities. The measure includes subscales regarding: (1) Racism in LGBT communities; (2) Heterosexism in Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities; and (3) Racism in Dating and Close Relationships

Alternatively, The **Dual Identity Distress scale** includes questions with both open-ended and Likert responses to assess internal and external stigma associated with the combined dual identities. This measure contains 3 subscales: (1) Identification with the dual identity, (2) Negative Affect when considering the dual identity, and (3) Public Discrimination against the dual identity.

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It is essential to take intersectional identities into account when conducting therapy due to the many ways that unique intersectional experiences impact the therapeutic relationship and process. For example, there is a body of research that demonstrates that ethnic minorities have been misdiagnosed, or have been diagnosed based on mainstream cultural norms rather than client-specific appropriate psychosocial criteria specifically in context of mental healthcare.
We also know that most contemporary societies continue to operate within a patriarchal system that undervalues women and gender-nonconforming people. An example of this phenomenal is the past diagnosis of Homosexuality in DSM III, current DSM regarding the gender dysphoria as psychological disorder and also likelihood of women being diagnoses by histrionic personality disorder in the past.

A variety of psychological approaches have been implemented to explore these characteristic and to provide a better understanding of intersectionality within individuals. Examples of these approaches include Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and compassion focused based psychotherapy; these try to promote valued, vital living for individuals with intersectional identities.

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Next we will consider the significance of Intersectionality in policy.

Broadly speaking, intersectionality informs policy by suggesting that people have different levels of access to justice and fairness in policy decisions that affect them in their communities, professional lives, and within defined political borders such as states and nations. Policy that is informed by an intersectionality lens is centered on the notions of equity and social justice. These policies understand that people cannot be reduced to

single categories of identity. For example, a woman may also be cis or trans, disabled or able bodied, and on and on, such that a policy affecting women must consider numerous intersections, identities, systems, and sources of power and oppression that operate in women's lives.

Intersectionality work at the level of professional policy is possible for psychology graduate students. APAGS has two committees: The Committee on the Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Diversity, or CARED, and the Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity. These committees provide services to psychology graduate students and professionals with intersecting identities. Examples of projects produced by these committees include webinars, blog posts, and a resource guide about a range of topics related to sexual orientation, and gender diversity.

There are also other subcommittees within the different divisions in APA that reflect an intersectional approach to policy in the field of psychology. For example, the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity within Division 44, various committees on race and sexuality within Division 35, the Committee on Sexuality within Division 45, and the International LGBT Psychology Network.

Outside of APA, this author is familiar with the Association for Contextual Behavioral Sciences, or ACBS, which supports and promotes an intersectional framework. In ACBS, a diversity committee promotes and provides outreach to international members who are from developing nations, including those who identify with intersecting identities such as pansexual Iranians.

At the national level, there are a number of intersectional policies getting widespread attention. A good example is the Canadian government recently deciding to grant asylum for LGBT Syrian refugees. Their new policy recognizes the importance of supporting a group that faces unique discrimination resulting from their combined racial and sexual minority identities.

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Does having multiple minority identities result in worsened health? The answer to this question varies by the type of identities, the type of health outcomes, and the associated strengths from having multiple minority identities. For some health outcomes, Certain identities can serve as protective factors whereas these same identities can serve as risk factors for other health outcomes dependent on context.

For example, we know that racial discrimination toward Latino/a persons shapes negative health outcomes across the board (e.g. Lee & Ahn, 2011). Alternatively, we also know that familialism connected to Latino/a cultural identity can boost social support and serve as a protective factor against negative health outcomes (e.g. Campos et al., 2008). Identifying as Latino/a can, and often does, serve as both a protective factor and a risk factor depending on other contextual elements such as connectedness to Latino/a cultural norms, skin color, income level, English ability, and citizenship status.

Similar results are found with LGBT research in which discrimination is linked with negative health outcomes, but we also see patterns of community connectedness and resilience among LGBT folks who support one another as a result of their shared minority identity(ies).

Intersectional analyses allow researchers to examine how context shapes identities and the impacts of these identities on health outcomes in more nuanced ways. Rather than just talking about health disparities among Latino/a populations, we can look at how Latino/a identity relates to both risk factors and protective factors, and how these factors are inextricably tied to other intersecting identities which are likely also contextual in nature

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You have heard our voices throughout the webinar, and now we would like to put faces to these voices! Also, in addition to presenting the theory, research, and practice on intersectionality work, we believe it is important to speak on lived experiences as individuals with multiple intersecting identities.

K: I am a first generation gay Vietnamese-American male. My preferred pronouns are “he” and “him”. To me, having intersecting identities means frequently navigating my role through different communities. For instance, the LGBT community, I think about how I belong as someone who is Asian-American. In the Asian-American community, I think about what it means to be a gay man. Because of my identities, I have had to deal with both racial and sexual orientation discrimination, but my identities have also provided me with the privilege to adopt the strength and resiliency from both communities.

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I am a non-Binary Pansexual Middle Eastern with a masculine presentation, which means I generally 'pass' as a heterosexual male in society. However, what I feel and the ways I process the world around me relate to how I personally identify, rather than how I am perceived by society. My preferred pronouns are “them” and “they”. Reflecting on my experiences, it is necessary for me not only to advocate for myself, but to advocate for others who do not fit within limited current social norms, and I try to embody that principal in everyday life — as emphatically and conspicuously as is possible.

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Intersectionality is an exciting field that continues to develop and change as scientists, practitioners, and policy makers continue to do this work. Here are some questions meant to spark further discussion on the topic of intersectionality.

- What might be some arguments against utilizing an intersectional framework?
- What other identities are important to consider when examining intersectionality?
- How can having multiple minority identities be a source of strength or resiliency?

- Considering the potentially large number of identities a single individual can embody, how many levels of intersecting identities is useful or practical to examine?

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The following resources offer information and support regarding the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

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Here are the references we used in our presentation.

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- APAGS Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (Kiet Huynh & Khashayar Farhadi Langroudi). (2016, September). Intersectionalities in psychology: Intersections of race, sexual orientation, and gender. Webinar retrieved from http://www.apa.org/apags

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