

Intersectionality and Peer Support: Working with Marginalized Populations

April 27, 2023

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Chacku Mathai



**Opioid
Response
Network**
STR-TA/SOR-TA

Working with communities to address the opioid crisis

- ✧ SAMHSA's State Targeted Response Technical Assistance (STR-TA) and State Opioid Response Technical Assistance (SOR-TA) grants created the *Opioid Response Network* to assist states, individuals and other organizations by providing the resources and technical assistance they need locally to address the opioid crisis .
- ✧ Technical assistance is available to support the evidence-based prevention, treatment, and recovery of opioid use disorders.

Funding for this initiative was made possible (in part) by grant no.1H79TI083343 from SAMHSA. The views expressed in written conference materials or publications and by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



Working with communities to address the opioid crisis

- ✧ The Opioid Response Network (ORN) provides local, experienced consultants in prevention, treatment and recovery to communities and organizations to help address this opioid crisis.
- ✧ The ORN accepts requests for education and training.
- ✧ Each state/territory has a designated team, led by a regional Technology Transfer Specialist (TTS), who is an expert in implementing evidence-based practices.





Housekeeping

SPEAKER PROFILES



Chacku Mathai (he/him/his)

Chacku is an Indian-American who became involved in recovery advocacy and peer support when he was 15 years old. Chacku's personal experiences with racism, xenophobia, racialized trauma, suicide attempts, and disabling mental health and substance use conditions, including psychosis as a youth and young adult, launched Chacku and his family towards a number of efforts to advocate for improved services, social conditions, and alternative supports in the community. He has since accumulated 35 years of experience in a variety of community service roles as well as international, national, statewide, and local board governance and executive leadership roles.

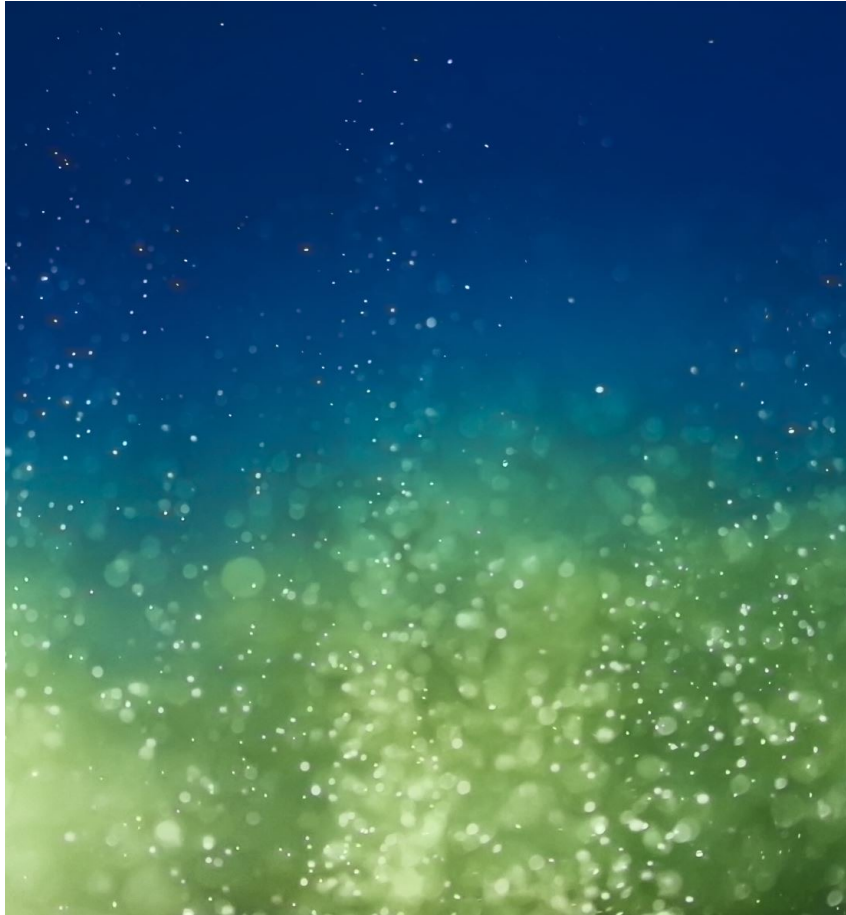


Jonathan P. Edwards (he/him/his)

Jonathan P. Edwards is a social scientist, public health professional, licensed clinical social worker, and person in long-term recovery. He led the largest peer support workforce within the New York City Hospital system at Kings County Hospital Center in Brooklyn. Jonathan's contributions to peer support include research on job satisfaction, involvement with the National Association for Peer Supporters (N.A.P.S.) in developing National Practice Guidelines, and independent consultancy. He is also a Certified Peer Specialist and Certified Personal Medicine Coach. Dr. Edwards also serves as adjunct faculty at Columbia School of Social Work; has received several awards; has co-authored numerous peer-reviewed articles; and co-edited the recent book, "What It Takes: Wisdom from Peer Support Specialists and Supervisors". Jonathan received his Ph.D. and M. Phil degrees in Social Welfare from City University of New York Graduate Center and his MSW from Hunter College.



Land Acknowledgement



We are each likely participating on the ceded or unceded land of an Indigenous people. For me, where I work, it is the Lenape homeland.

Where I live in Rochester, NY, it is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and by honoring the sovereignty of the Six Nations—the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca and Tuscarora.

I ask you to join me in acknowledging all Indigenous People and all ancestral and unceded lands of their People, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations.

Most of the institutions for which we work must also acknowledge that they were founded upon exclusions and erasures of many Indigenous peoples.

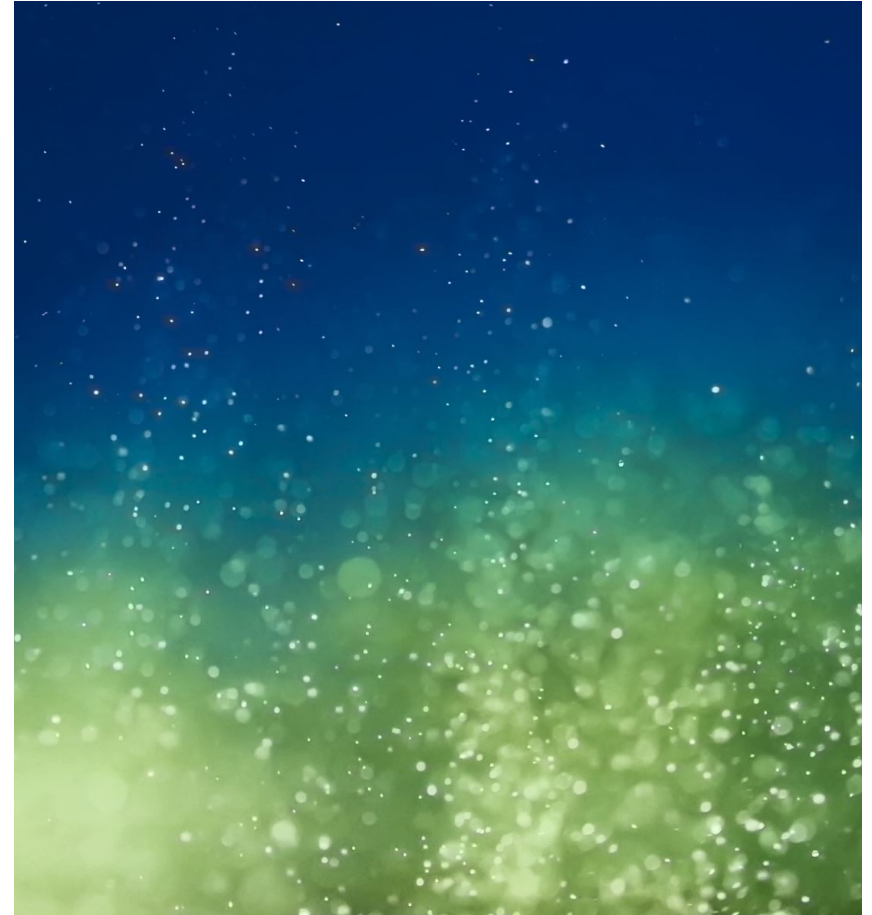
This acknowledgement demonstrates a commitment to begin the process of working to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism.



Labor Acknowledgement

We must acknowledge that much of what we know of this country today, including its culture, economic growth, and development throughout history and across time, has been made possible by the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who suffered the horror of transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow.

We are indebted to their labor and their sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can be felt and witnessed today.



Learning Objectives

1 Define intersectionality as a concept and with respect to identity

2 Describe positionality and privilege.

3 How do I leverage my positionality and privilege in my work as a peer supporter?

4 Identify ways to reflect on my personal biases and how they might show up in my work.



Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations (Glenn Singleton)



Stay Engaged

Speak Your Truth

Experience Discomfort

Expect/Accept Non-closure



Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize



ENGAGE



SUSTAIN



DEEPEN



Our Power is in Our Differences



Pemina Yellowbird

**PRIVILEGE
POWER
AND DIFFERENCE**



Power

The ability to decide who will have access to resources; the capacity to direct or influence the behavior of others, oneself, and/or the course of events.

Privilege

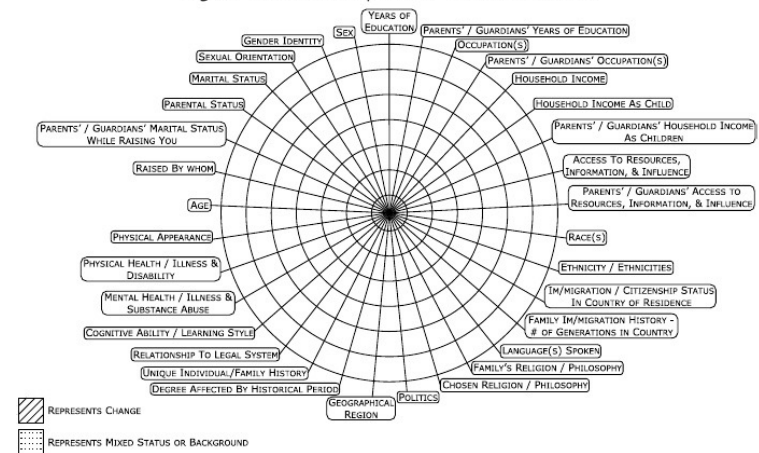
Unearned access to resources only readily available to some people as a result of their advantaged social group membership.



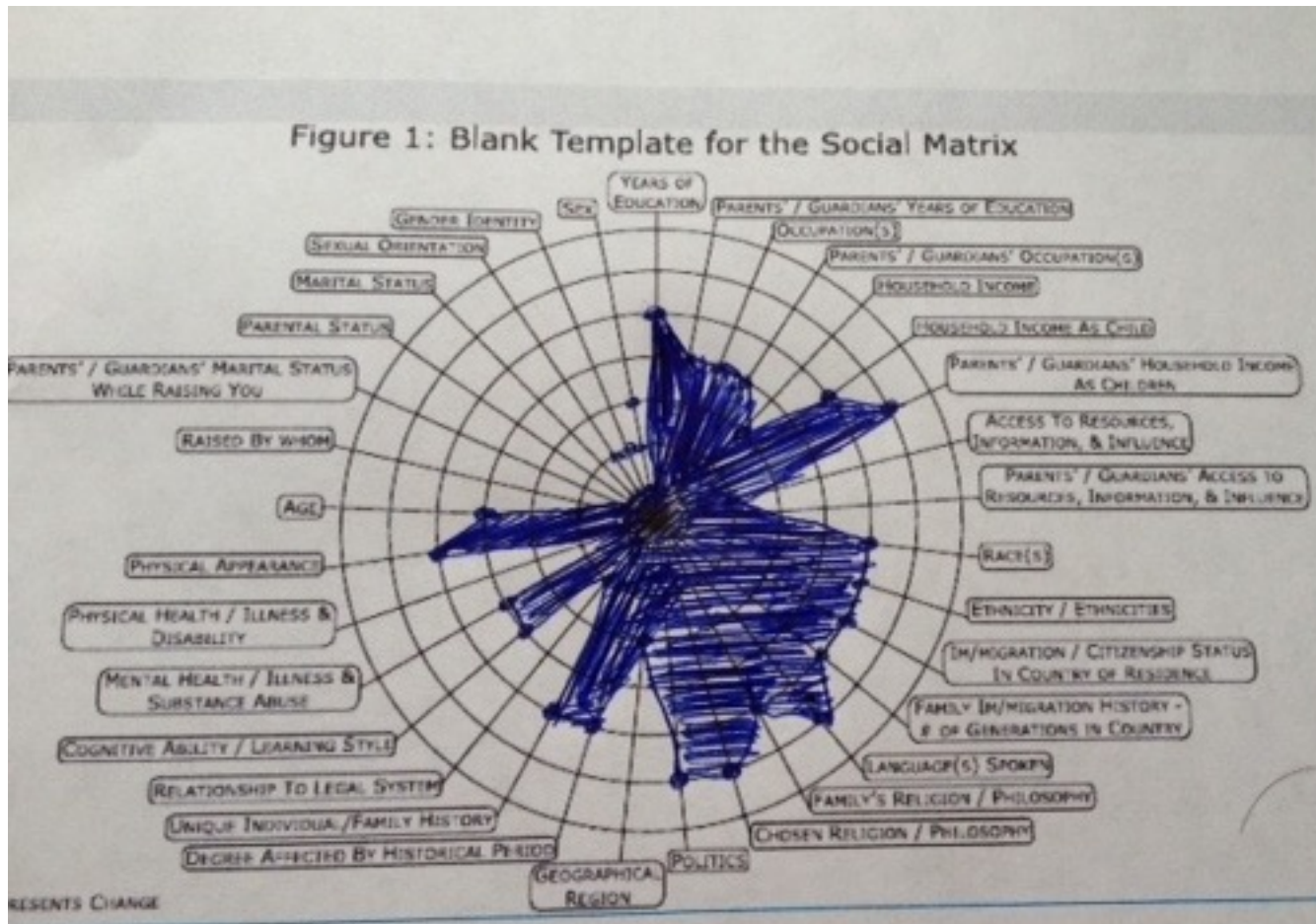
Blank Social Matrix (Kliman, 2008)

- ✧ 33 axes, each representing a domain of social identity or group membership
- ✧ Overlaid with 7 circles representing degrees of centrality (privilege) or proximity to the margins (marginalization)
- ✧ the intersect with the circles presents a 7-point Likert scale of relative privilege, with decreasing privilege towards the margins. Greatest power in the center. Oppression at the outer circle

Figure 1: Blank Template for the Social Matrix

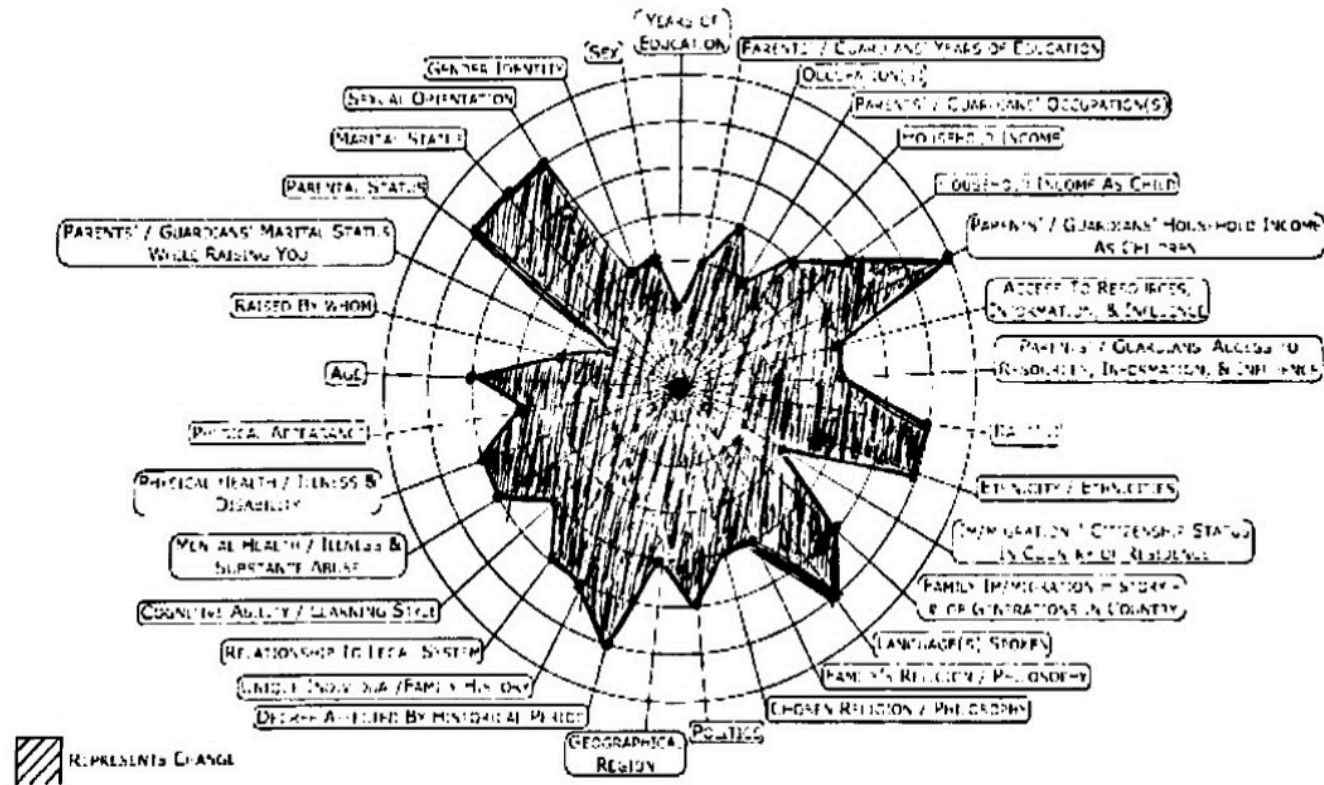


Social Matrix completed



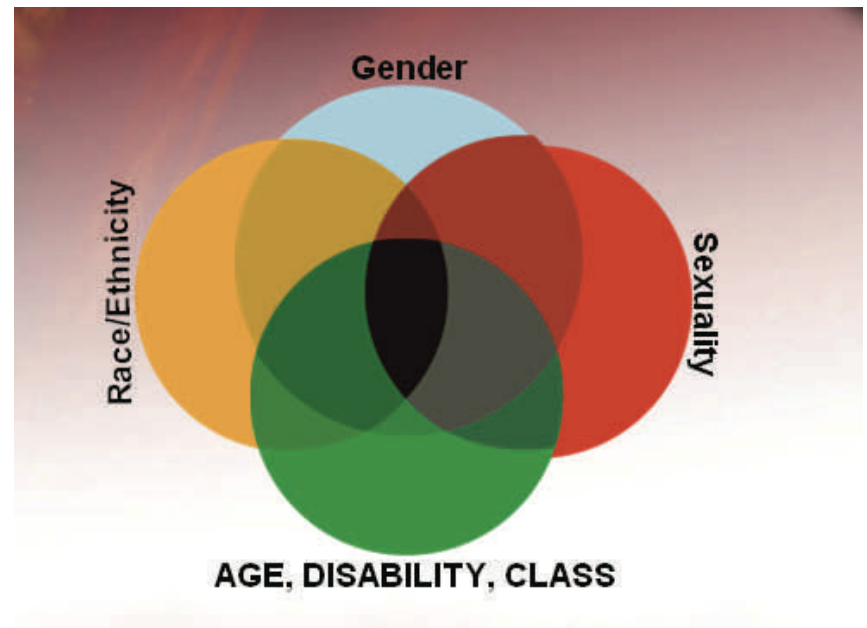
Social Matrix completed

Figure 1: Blank Template for the Social Matrix



Intersectionality

- ✧ Coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989
- ✧ Describes how race, class, gender, and other aspects of our identity “intersect,” overlap and interact with one another
- ✧ Informs how individuals simultaneously experience oppression and privilege
- ✧ Promotes the idea that aspects of our identity do not work in a silo.

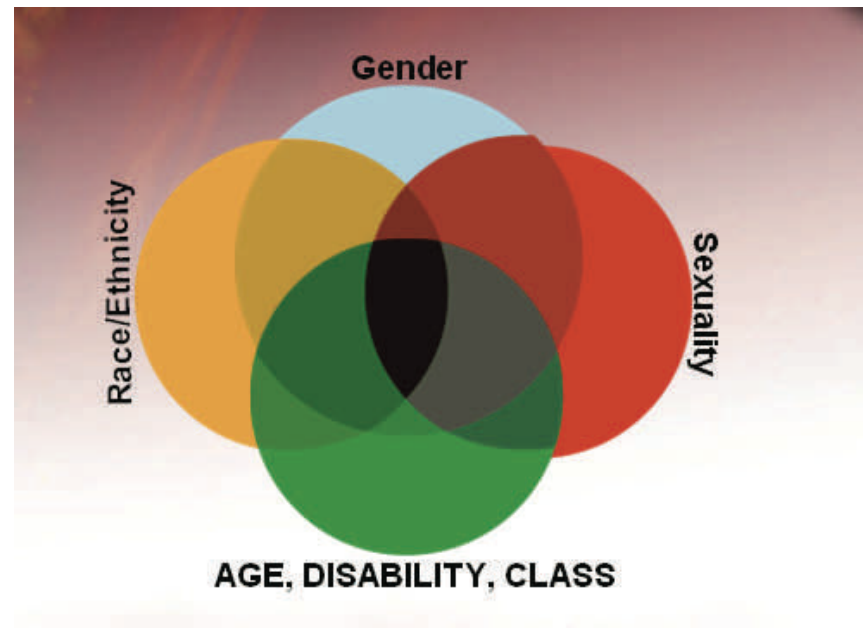


(Center for the Study of Social Policy
www.cssp.org)



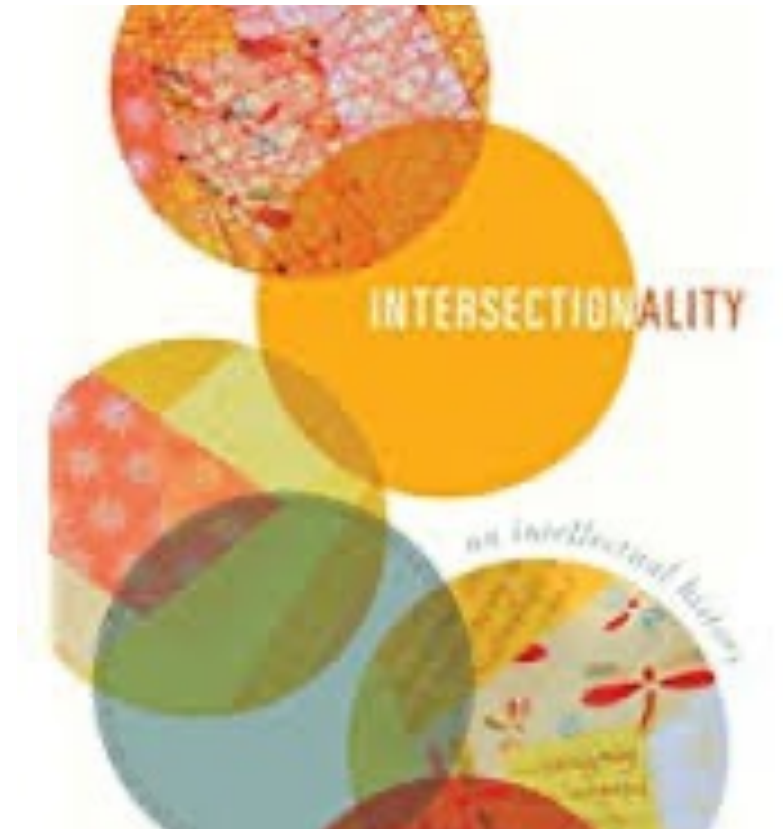
Intersectionality

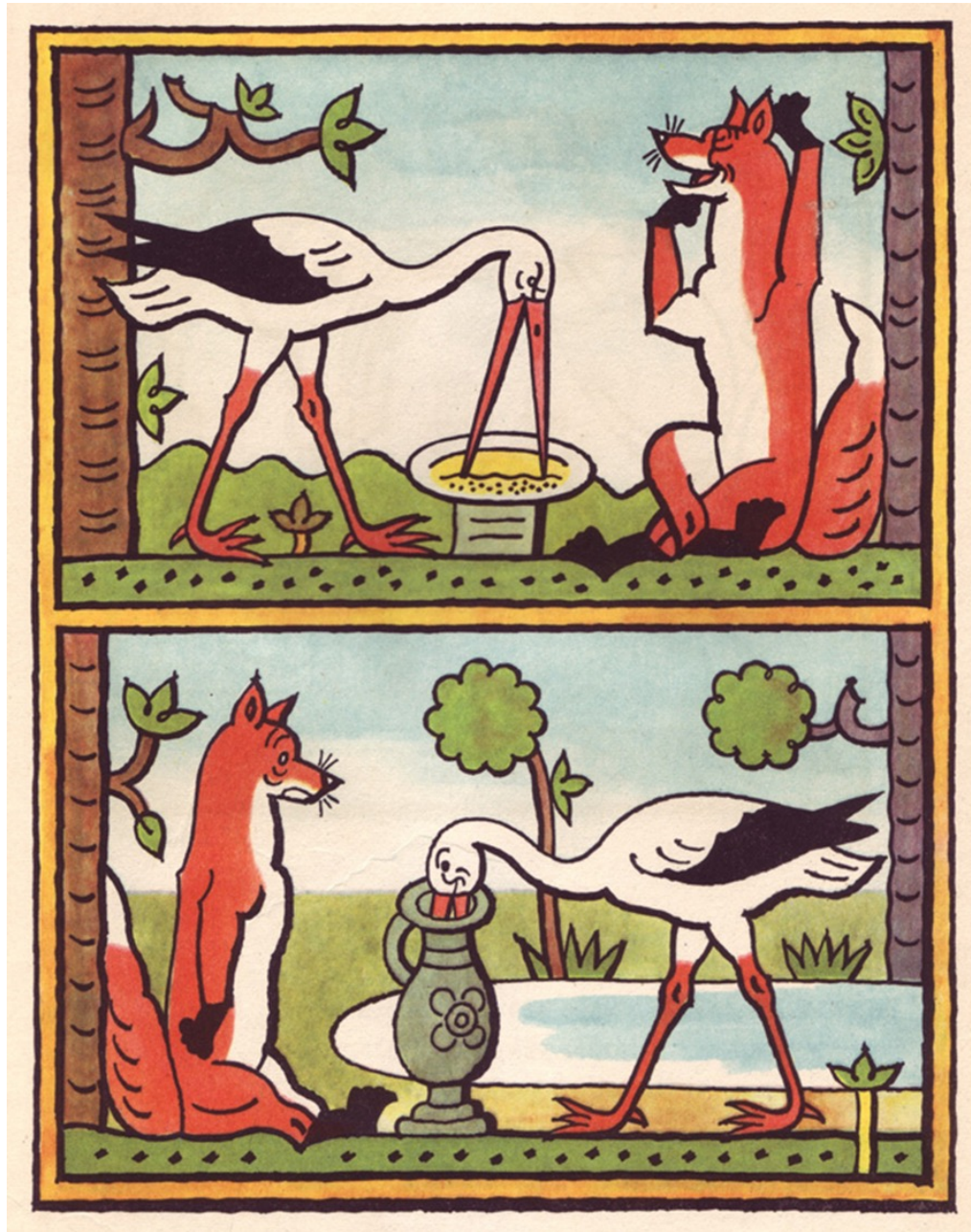
The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.



Tenets of Intersectionality

- Human lives cannot be reduced to single categories
- When analyzing social problems, the importance of any category or structure cannot be predetermined
- Relationships and power dynamics between social locations and processes are linked. They can also change over time and be different depending on geographic settings.



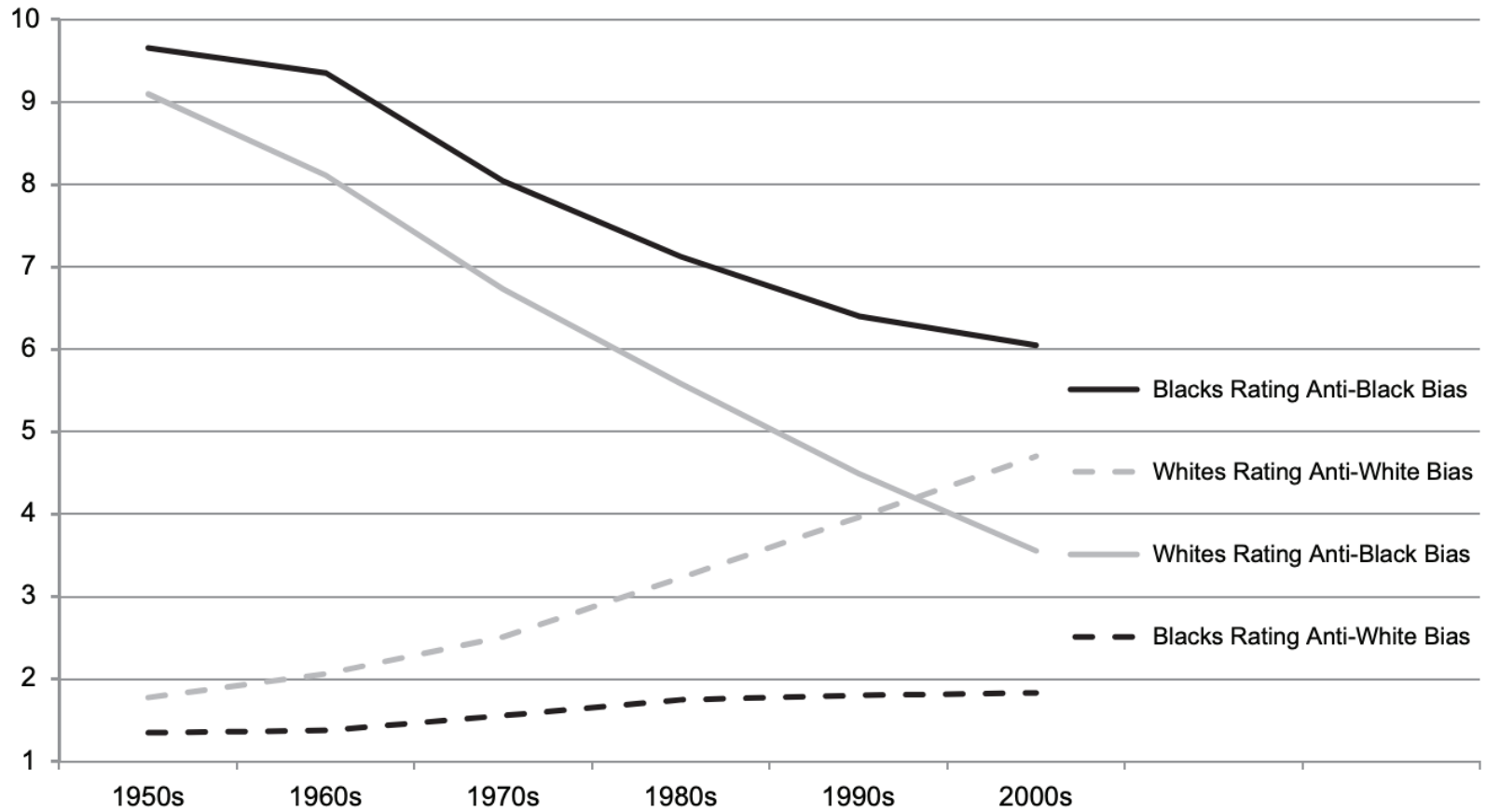


Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game That They Are Now Losing

Michael Norton and Samuel Sommers, 2011

- ✧ Controversies regarding “reverse racism” highlight Whites’ increasing concern about anti-White bias.
- ✧ **Emerging belief reflects Whites’ view of racism as a zero-sum game**, such that decreases in perceived bias against Blacks over the past six decades are associated with increases in perceived bias against Whites—a relationship not observed in Blacks’ perceptions.
- ✧ Moreover, these changes in Whites’ conceptions of racism are extreme enough that Whites have now come to view anti-White bias as a bigger societal problem than anti-Black bias (since the mid-1970s).





Talila A. Lewis’ Working Definition of Ableism



- ✧ This systemic oppression leads to people and society determining people’s value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, “health/wellness” and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, “excel” and “behave.” You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.
- ✧ A system of assigning value to people’s bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism.



Talila A. Lewis' Definition of Disability

- ✧ Is considered a mismatch between a person's body and/or mind and the environment in which they are being forced to live in.
- ✧ Often times people respond to deprivation in their environment, impoverishment, access to food or resources, by responding it and doing things that are labeled illegal to survive.
- ✧ Examples – when a professor or teacher didn't meet your needs as a student; or program requires one to follow rules and regulations that are difficult to meet for a number of reasons.



Key Takeaways

1

What is the meaning of intersectionality as a concept developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw?

2

How would you identify intersectionality in your own life?
As examples in the lives of individuals whom you engage?

3

As peer supporters, we need to recognize and engage multiple aspects of our identities in the context of power, privilege, marginalization, and oppression.

4

Peer support happens in the context of our multiple identities and their cumulative experiences, as well as in the context of our power and privilege.

5

We have power and the privilege to leverage towards change.



Contact the Opioid Response Network

✦ To ask questions or submit a request for technical assistance:

- Visit
 - www.OpioidResponseNetwork.org
- Email
 - Emely.Santiago@nyspi.Columbia.edu
 - Katherine.Cunningham@nyspi.Columbia.edu
- Call
 - 401-270-5900



Your Feedback is Important

Please complete our short ORN feedback survey!



Bibliography & Resources

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Havinsky, O. (2014). *Intersectionality 101*. Vancouver, BC: Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy

Prillettensky, I., (2008) The Assessment of Power Through Psychopolitical Validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*, Volume 36, Issue 2, pages 116-136

Reicherzer, S., Shavel, S., Patton, J., (2013) Examining Research Issues of Power and Privilege Within a Gender-Marginalized Community. *Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences*, Volume 7, Issue 1, Pages 79–97

SAMHSA's Moving Beyond Change Efforts: Evidence and Action to Support and Affirm LGBTQI+ Youth <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep22-03-12-001.pdf>



Core Values of Peer Support

Peer Supporters are:

- ✧ Hopeful
- ✧ Openminded
- ✧ Empathetic
- ✧ Respectful
Agents of Change
- ✧ Honest and Direct

Peer Support is:

- ✧ Voluntary (supports choice)
- ✧ Mutual and reciprocal
- ✧ Equally shared power
- ✧ Strengths-focused
- ✧ Transparent
- ✧ Person-Driven

National Association of Peer Supporters (2019). National Practice Guidelines for Peer Specialists and Supervisors.

