

# **FACILITATION GUIDE**

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# **YOUR Intersectionality STORY**

**To use this document, cite: Capatosto, K., (2021). Your intersectionality story: Facilitation guide. Columbus, OH.**

# OVERVIEW

The term “Intersectionality” was originally popularized by Dr. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a lawyer and scholar specializing in the interconnected issues of race and gender.

The application of an intersectional perspective is meant to shed light on the interactive nature of social identity. For example, much of Dr. Crenshaw’s work highlights the experiences of Black women and explores how their relationship with institutions are qualitatively different from the experiences of both Black men and white women (Crenshaw, 1989). In addition to race and gender, there are many other social identities that can influence individual’s lived experiences, including ability status, socio-economic standing, and age.

The concept of intersectionality and its implications for how institutions treat different social identities has been applied to a wide range research and engagement activities. For example, scholars and community leaders have developed different versions of social and personal identity “wheels” that have evolved to include different identities over time. As an example, the Program on Intergroup Relations at the University of Michigan developed a “Social Identity Wheel” and activity guide (linked in References) to help students explore how they navigate the world at various axes of identity.

This activity builds on these foundational works by asking participants to explore a series of reflective prompts that will showcase the experiences of both privilege and marginalization.

**The Your Intersectionality Story activity which accomplish the following goals:**

**Encourage Self-Reflection:** Participants will reflect on their own identities and experiences. They will also consider how institutions afford privilege and discrimination based on social identities.

**Improve Dialogue:** Participant’s will model interactive dialogue on topics that some may consider challenging, including racism, social privilege, and oppression. Participants will also engage in active listening by offering responses to team members’ stories.

**Authentic Team-Building:** Build trusting, authentic relationships with those who participate. By asking participants to engage in storytelling, facilitators create a space of mutual support.

# INSTRUCTIONS

## Set Up

- **Timeframe: 45 minutes - 1 hour**
  - **Organize participants into small groups of 3-10 people**
  - **You will need 1 facilitator per group to guide participants through discussion prompts**
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- **Look at the list of intersecting identities in Figure 1. Consider the role of at least two intersections in your life, such as:**
    - **Race and Gender**
    - **Education and Religious Affiliation**
    - **Sexual Orientation/Identity and Geographic Location (rural, urban, suburban). One of these must be a “core identity.”**
  - **After you take time to reflect on how your identities shape and interact with one another, answer the set of questions on the following page. The facilitator will check-in at 5 minutes and assign additional time as needed. Participants can also complete the prompts prior to the group facilitation as pre-work. Completing the prompts ahead of time is encouraged for groups larger than 5.**
  - **After the question prompts have been completed, everyone will take turns sharing their responses with the group. The facilitator will start this step by sharing their own story, and they will also make sure that every person has gone through their entire Intersectionality Story before moving on to the next group member.**
  - **After another member of your group shares their responses, consider sharing how their stories resonate with your own experiences or ideas. The facilitator will hold space for 1-2 responses per group member.**
  - **The facilitator will close by thanking the group members for sharing their stories. They will also check-in to assess group members’ reactions to the activity.**

### Here are some example of how you can respond to others in your group

- "I really resonate with experience X because..."
- "I experienced a similar situation, but processed it very differently..."
- "I have not experienced that in my own life, but I appreciate your sharing and I identify with the feelings you shared."
- "I identify with X aspect of your journey because..."

[Participants will complete their Intersectionality Story on the following page.](#)  
[For additional guidance, review the Sample Intersectionality Story on pages 6-7](#)

# INSTRUCTIONS

## What is a Core Identity?

Core Identities are the most central to one's lived experience. This is partially because Core Identities are thought to be perceivable through one's physical characteristics (e.g. skin color).

Importantly, this perception may not actually align with one's true identity. Core identities are also recognized by formal power structures, and are often included in federal identification.

Historically, rights and privileges have been restricted (or provided) at the intersection of core identities, such as women's right to vote, racial segregation, or bans on LGBTQ marriages.

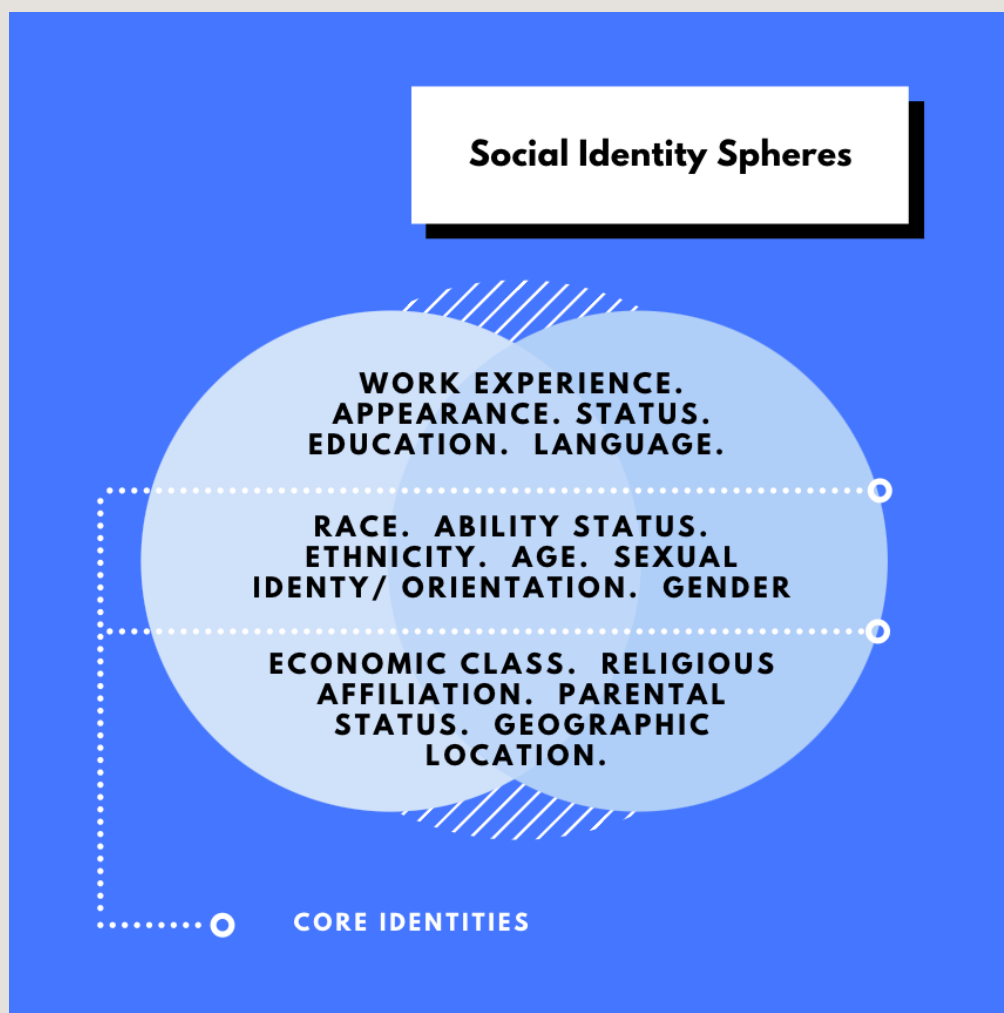
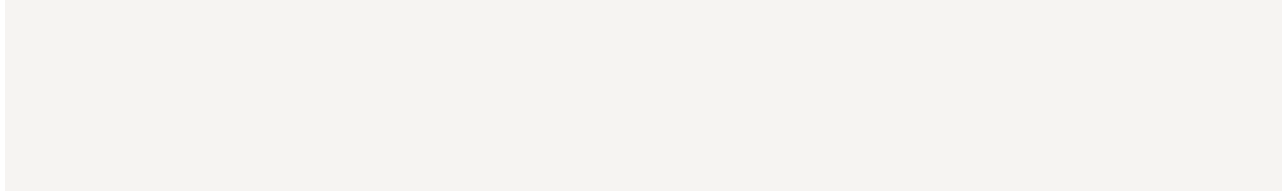


Figure 1

# YOUR INTERSECTIONALITY STORY

## Part 1: Identity Formation

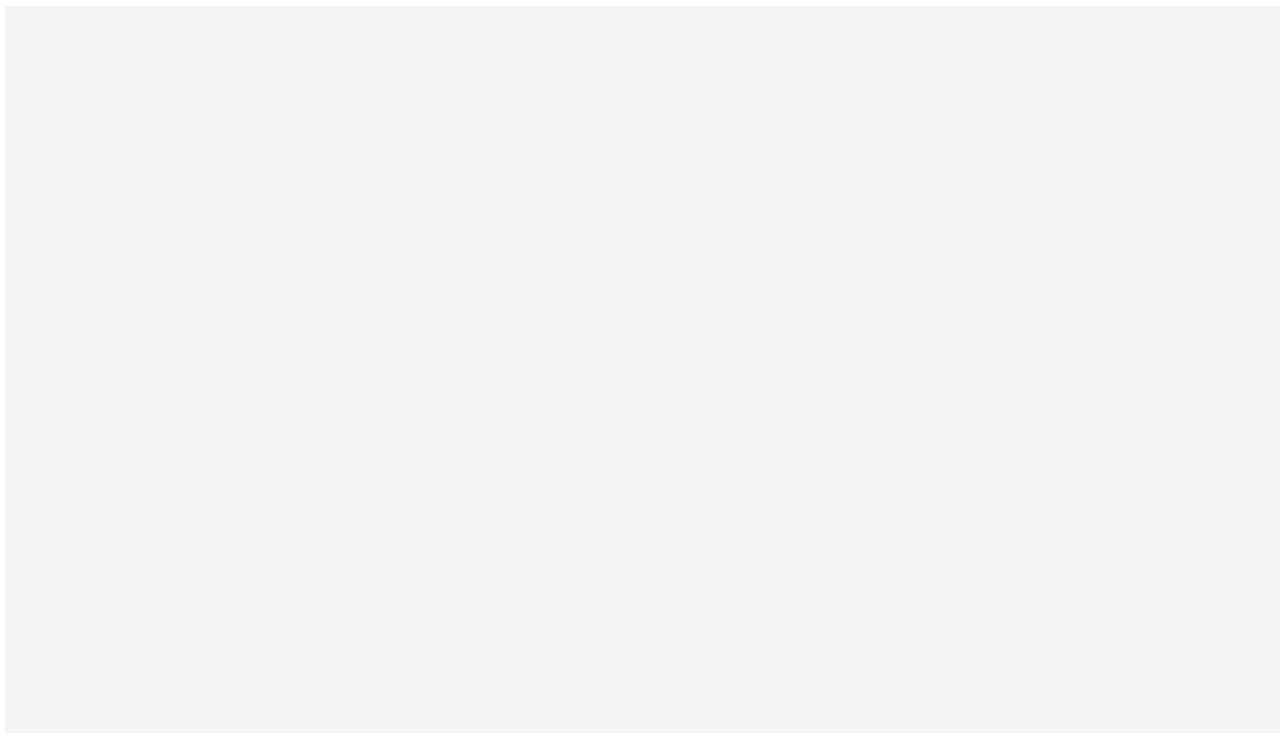
Which two identities did you select?



Write about your early awareness of your identities.

In your narrative, consider responding to one or more of the following prompts:

- When did you first learn about your identities?
- Were these identities stable, or did they change over time?
- Did your perception and others' perceptions of your identities align?
- Do you have any early examples of conforming/vs disrupting social norms around these identities?
- What did you learn about how society views these identities?



# YOUR INTERSECTIONALITY STORY

## Part 2: Institutional Treatment

Describe about how institutions interact with your identities

In your narrative, consider responding to one or more of the following prompts:

- How do government institutions treat your identities?
- Do state and federal forms allow you to check boxes that match your own identities?
- Have there ever been laws in place that have restricted those in your identity group from being able to vote or otherwise participate in society?
- Have your identities been under increased scrutiny from law enforcement or other government agencies?
- What stereotypes have been associated with your identities, and have these shown up in your own life?

# SAMPLE

## YOUR INTERSECTIONALITY STORY

### Part 1: Identity Formation

**Which two identities did you select?**

My gender identity is female, and I am cisgender  
My racial identity is White and Latina

**Write about your early awareness of your identities.**

**In your narrative, consider responding to one or more of the following prompts:**

- **When did you first learn about your identities?**
- **Were these identities stable, or did they change over time?**
- **Did your perception and others' perceptions of your identities align?**
- **Do you have any early examples of conforming/vs disrupting social norms around these identities?**
- **What did you learn about how society views these identities?**

Growing up, I remember having a lot of confusion between what the boundaries of "girl things" vs. "boy things" were. My strongest memory of disrupting norms around gender was by playing pee-wee football in elementary school. Despite breaking gender norms, no one questioned my gender identity. But, as I got older, friends would tell me that I needed to be more feminine to be considered attractive.

I learned about my racial/ethnic identity very early too. My mom is mixed (White and Latina) and my dad is White. I am light-skinned and other people (outside of my family) generally have no idea I have Hispanic/Latino heritage. People used to remark about how different I looked than my darker-complected mom, and that I should be "glad I took after my father." Even if I didn't have the words for it, I knew early on that this was my "White privilege" and that I was treated better than other members of my family just because of the color of my skin.

Taking both together, I learned overtime that whiteness and femininity are important standards of what others consider to be beautiful, good, or desirable.

# SAMPLE

## YOUR INTERSECTIONALITY STORY

### Part 2: Institutional Treatment

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I have never experienced formal gender discrimination at an institution. However, I have been taken less seriously than my male counterparts on many occasions. For example, when dealing with big life decisions, people usually direct their questions to my husband. I have also been mistaken for an intern, student, and assistant during my professional interactions with government representatives and organizational leaders.

When I am asked to self identify my race/ethnicity on government forms, I am usually able to check both White and Latino. For the most part, this aligns with how I perceive my own identities,.

During personal interactions, my Hispanic/Latino heritage is usually invisible to institutions. However, I have seen other members of my family be mislabeled as immigrants and experience explicit acts of racism.



## **REFERENCES**

**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, 1, 139-168.**

**<https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>**

**Program on Intergroup Relations and the Spectrum Center. Social Identity Wheel. Adapted for use by the University of Michigan. Resource hosted by LSA Inclusive Teaching Initiative, University of Michigan**

**<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/social-identity-wheel/>**