

## Overview:

In 2009 and 2011, ABC aired two special episodes of *20/20* that told the stories of children and young adults living in poverty in two different parts of the United States. *Children of the Mountains* (2009) follows youth in Central Appalachia, while *Children of the Plains* (2011) follows youth that live on the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation. Although both groups face immense obstacles to overcome poverty, the children living on the Pine Ridge Reservation may have a particularly difficult time improving their situation because of several overlapping social identity markers that cause them to face discrimination.

Therefore, this activity asks participants to analyze these two specials using Sisneros et al.'s (2008) web of oppression and the concept of intersectionality and consider how identity contributes to discrimination and disadvantage. According to the Oxford Dictionary, intersectionality is "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise." The term was first coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law professor and social theorist, in her paper, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: The Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics."

## Background:

This activity was adapted by Lindsey Macdonald, CILMAR, from an idea presented by Dr. Janet D. Carter-Black during the Q&A portion of a session at the 2020 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE). See citation below for more information.

## Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Define intersectionality and recognize its importance.
2. Apply the concept of intersectionality to real-life scenarios.
3. Discuss how intersectionality can be used as a tool for social justice.

## Time:

2 hours

## Group Size:

Entire group

## Materials:

A computer/tablet and speakers; paper and pens/pencils, Web of Oppression Handout (in [Downloads](#)), intersectionality reading, video clips from the two specials (both in [Links](#)).

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

### Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

### Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

## Other Skills:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## Activity Instructions:

1. Assign participants to read "[What is intersectionality and why is it important?](#)" before beginning the activity.
2. Ask participants the following questions:
  - What is intersectionality?
  - Where does the term intersectionality come from?
  - Why is intersectionality an important term to understand?
3. Ensure that each participant has a copy of the Web of Oppression Handout. Provide an overview of the web and ask participants the following questions:
  - How does this web relate to intersectionality?
  - How might individuals whose identities fall within the categories on the outer edges of the web face more disadvantages or discrimination than those whose identities fall in the middle?
4. Screen the video clips from both specials. Ask participants to take notes on the individuals featured using the Web of Oppression handout.
5. Then, debrief with the following questions:
  - What are the similarities in terms of identities for the Lakotan children and the Appalachian children featured in these specials?
  - What are the differences between their identities?
  - How do those differences affect the level of discrimination/disadvantages that they face? How do they affect their ability to overcome their disadvantages?
  - When considering the individuals featured in these two specials, why does intersectionality matter?
  - How can we use the concept of intersectionality for social justice? In other words, how might approaching the obstacles that these children/young adults face using an intersectional lens enable solutions that improve their situations?

## Related Tools:

### *Similar tools:*

- [COVID-19 & Intersectionality](#)
- [Intersecting Identities: "Coming Out Meatless"](#)
- [Intersectionality Exercise](#)
- [Intersectionality: A History](#)

Activity adapted by Lindsey Macdonald, CILMAR, from an idea presented by Dr. Janet D. Carter-Black during the Q&A of the following session at the 2020 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE):

Reynolds, A. & Wijeyessinghe, C.L. (2020, June 24). *Using intersectionality in teaching and training: Strategies for pedagogy, facilitation, and self awareness* [Panel presentation]. National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE) 2020, virtual.