



Luskin  
**Social Welfare**

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## **Intersectionality: Implications for research design, measurement, and interpretation of existing studies conducted with SGM youth**

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# Defining intersectionality

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## MY INTERPRETATION...

- Intersectionality (INT, hereafter) is the study and critique of how oppressive forces overlap to produce and sustain complex inequalities (Grzanka, Santos & Moradi, 2017)
  - Research that explores intersecting categorical identities or intersecting identities with no attention to oppressions associated with these identities is generally viewed among intersectionality scholars as not “intersectionality” – some suggest “intersecting identities” as a more feasible terminology
  - Testability of claims plausible
  - Oppressive forces overlap and have implications across systems or levels SGM youth are embedded in
- Implications for how we measure oppressive forces experienced by SGM
  - Measuring oppressive forces (e.g., heterosexist and racist events separately vs. jointly)
- Less understood but implied in claims: oppressive forces co-occur with privilege
  - Potential buffering effect? Example: being discriminated for being gay man, while benefitting from male privilege in larger society
- Has broad implications for how we study *all youth*
- Historically foregrounds social justice activism and social transformation: INT prominence in writing and organizing in 60s and 70s precedes Crenshaw’s articulation of INT in courts

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH DESIGN

# Framework vs. theory

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- Diversity in defining “theory”
  - Intersectionality calls for interdisciplinary approaches thus important to consider across disciplinary approaches how term might be applied or viewed.
  - Certain fields (e.g., psychology) emphasize claims that draw on intersectionality must be empirically tested to call intersectionality a theory.
  - Others may use term theory to speak of intersectionality but not treat it as simply tested or falsified, rather a critical interpretive framework or analytic disposition (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Collins, 2000).
- Intersectionality as a framework
  - May facilitate application of certain components of intersectionality that are challenging to measure (e.g., achieving social justice goals).
- Intersectionality as a theory
  - Intersectionality makes clearly testable claims with implications for SGM (e.g., can test if and how SGM-related discrimination co-occur with other forms of oppression diverse SGM youth may experience (e.g., racism, income inequality)).

# Attending to intersectionality's various components through SGM research design

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- Calls for addressing (in addition to understanding) how oppressive forces intersect to affect diverse SGM youth.
- Calls for social justice and social impact calls attention to potential limitations in how we traditionally engage with SGM research design (more below) + findings (e.g., rethinking dissemination efforts to have greater social impact).
- Given critical analysis of systemic forces and the role of power dynamics across multiple levels, INT calls for attention to issues of power & privilege in research conducted with SGM youth.
  - Attending to CBPAR principles in research design can serve critical function – e.g., aiding precision in how we capture overlapping oppressions (and privileges) in SGM youth.
  - Highlights how systems, including systems of knowledge production, may implicitly or explicitly promote “intersectional invisibilities” in our understanding of needs and stressors experienced by diverse SGM youth.

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERPRETATION OF SGM RESEARCH

# Interpretation of INT research with SGM youth

- **Does this study presume intersectionality to simply mean “intersecting identities”?**
  - In recent years commonly framed as INT, however, may lack direct measurement or even discussion of how oppressive forces intersect or co-occur
    - Some have suggested a “moratorium” on using “intersecting identities” as an euphemism for employing (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017)
  - Yet, from a social identity theory perspective (and many others), intersecting identities, measured beyond categorical level (e.g., pride, positive affect related to being SGM and/or POC) may buffer or attenuate the effects of discrimination on outcomes
- **Does this study attend to issues concerning overlapping systemic oppressions and how it operates across multiple levels?**
  - Does not require direct measurement of this but needs to ground findings, measures, design within this larger discussion of the multi-level nature of how these forces operate
- **Does this study attend to issues concerning measurement of intersectional phenomena?**
  - More on this in the next section.

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR MEASUREMENT IN SGM RESEARCH



# Measurement from an INT perspective

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- **Examples of intersectional constructs**
  - Capturing co-occurring of heterosexist + racist events
  - Capturing co-occurring social identities
- **Examples of intersectional measures**
  - Conflicts in allegiance to one's ethnic/racial and sexual minority identities (Santos & VanDaalen, 2016)
  - Perceived racism in sexual minority communities among POC SGM individuals (VanDaalen & Santos, 2017)
  - Gendered racism (Lewis et al., 2017)
  - Gendered racial identity centrality (Lewis et al., 2017)

# Thank You

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