

Outcomes: Webs of Intersectionality Exercise

The webs of intersectionality exercise provided a compelling visual display of people, with their multiple social identities, caught in webs of institutional oppression, facilitated by individuals who collude with the oppression in those systems. Groups in the room followed guidelines to produce how racism, sexism and heterosexism are held in place and communicated for intersection of three identities: Woman, Person of Color, and Lesbian.

Hearing the “messages” was hurtful to many, especially those who are caught in these oppressive webs on a daily basis. One interaction in the session addressed what we can do about these hurtful dynamics: We can be authentic, we can engage and be positive; we can see people for who they really are and respond to that. Presenter Michelle responded, “To deeply see somebody is big!” To do these things, and to read and listen—these are “lessons for success.” “We can all do that,” Michelle said. “We have to look at everything in relation to each other—that is our humanity. Be the relationship oasis—this is what helps to dismantle the larger oppressive systems.”

That statement, of course, relates to the theme of the 2020 Series, Transforming culture clash—distrust and discomfort—into resilient relationships!

Each web involved several of the following industries or systems: Entertainment, Education, Family, Military, Culture, Police, Media, Religion, Athletics and Politics.

#1 - Institution: Entertainment

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race:**

I am the: Entertainment Industry.

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: “by lack of broad representation and pigeon-holing People of Color into stereotypes or ‘tokenism’.”

The message to you is: “You are in the minority and you can only play certain roles.”

2. Message in regards to **gender:**

I am: Entertainment Industry

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: by generalizing using gender stereotypes and sexist ideology.

The message to you is: “This is a man’s world.”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation:**

I am: Entertainment Industry

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: under representing and generalizing homosexual relationships and over-sexualizing Lesbians

The message to you is: “The broad society doesn’t understand or accept your homosexual lifestyle.”

#2 - Institution: Education

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Education system

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: discipline brown & black students more than their peers. Limit my peers to careers in Athletics, Entertainment

The message to you is: “These students are bad, only useful on fields, courts, jail.

(I must continue to advocate for equity, diversity, inclusion.)

2. Message in regards to gender:

I am the: Education System

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: hire/promote white women, faster/more budget less \$\$ for female sports, scholarships, programs, charge \$\$ for feminine products, police my[your] attire, sexualize physical appearance

The message to you is: “I am less than. My body...

3. Message in regards to sexual orientation:

I am the: Education System.

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: signs (restroom); sorority & fraternity housing, reinforce love stories between man/woman

The message to you is: “One way street, not welcoming, I[you] don’t belong.”

#4 - Institution: Family

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to race:

I am the: Family

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: warn you against being with other races, especially dark-skinned ones

The message to you is: “No one will want to be with you because of the problems you and your children will have.”

2. Message in regards to gender:

I am the: Family

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: boys – no emotions, girls can cry, girl work vs. male work

The message to you is: “Be emotional, do women’s work.”

3. Message in regards to sexual orientation:

I am the: Family

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: waste of your womanhood to not procreate =
equate to mental illness
The message to you is: “You are not normal.”

#4 -Institution: Military

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race:**

I am the: Military

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: provide obstacles to leadership positions, keep traditions, i.e. white males dominant [allies?]

The message to you is: “That you are not good enough, cannot command respect of the troops.”

2. Message in regards to **gender:**

I am the: Military

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: I perceive women to be unable to carry their own. I relegate them to more admin/less physical roles

The message to you is: “You are weaker and unable to save lives and cannot withstand combat conditions.”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation:**

I am the: Military

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: I am traditionally heterosexual male-oriented and focused

The message to you is: “You are too different, too complex to deal with and not wanted.”

#5 - Institution: Culture

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race:**

I am the: Culture (Institution)

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: perpetuate white supremacy, education, economic, housing, criminal cash-bail justice system

The message to you is: “less than, outsider, unable to share authentic self. What do you pick?”

2. Message in regards to **gender:**

I am the: Culture

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: value - where bully[ing] is okay, treat you with less respect, judging appearance

The message to you is: “seen and not heard, support role, not leading”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation:**

I am the: Culture

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: value “traditional”, legitimize heterosexual

The message to you is: “not valued, not real, not a choice”

#6 - Institution: Police

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Police

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: Racial profiling, gender bias, stereotype, abusing my power, the court supports me

The message to you is: “You’re guilty.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Police

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: I use physical intimidation to dominate

The message to you is: “I am superior (physically, mentally).”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Police

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: My orientation (belief) disagrees with your “choice”.

The message to you is: “You’re wrong for your love.”

#7 - Institution: Media

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Media

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: by reporting negative aspect[s] of race that tend to support/reinforce stereotypes, instead of aspects of humanity/human condition.

The message to you is: “I can’t win no matter how hard I try, as this stereotype is constantly reinforced.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Media

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: to make, portray you “less than”, you should be someone other than myself[yourself]”, like I’m not to be taken seriously

The message to you is: “I’m too emotional, I’m not intellectual, I’m not pretty/polished/put together enough, I’m not credible.” (It’s not about indulgence, it’s about self preservation)

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Media

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: We don't talk about it unless we have to;
when the news is "so big" we need to talk about it

The message to you is: "I am invisible or a token."

#8 - Institution: Religion

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Religion

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: excluding, discrediting other religions

The message to you is: "You are not wanted, you are inferior or wrong."

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Religion

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: not allowing females to hold leadership positions,
patriarchal in general

The message to you is: "You are inferior, not important."

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Religion

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: not allowing same-sex marriage, not
acknowledging other sexual orientations

The message to you is: "You are wrong."

#9 - Institution: Education (2nd)

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Education

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: discipline more students of color for acts that their
peers are also guilty of, but justified, as "boys will be boys".

The message to you is: "People of color are bad."

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Education

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: male students excel at studies to math and science
and receive more admissions offers to competitive programs.

The message to you is: "Boys are smarter than girls."

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Education

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: by presenting lectures & material in a man/woman dynamic. Also, the housing options are separated by male/female.
The message to you is: “Only women and men are recognized on campus.”

#10 - Institution: Athletics

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Athletics Institution

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: higher barrier to entry due to lower socio-economic status, biological determinism

The message to you is: “Because you are a POC [person of color] you are limited to certain sports and performance expectation[s] will be higher.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Athletics Institution

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: underfunded, under promoted because women shouldn't play sports

The message to you is: “Why bother playing sports? Go have babies.”

Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Athletics Institution

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: if trans, you can't participate, if gay- don't ask, don't tell policy, hyper-sexualized

The message to you is: “Keep your sexuality to yourself and if you don't identify with your gender, you're not welcome.”

#11 - Institution: Police (2nd)

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Police

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: racial profiling, stereotyping

The message to you is: [blank]

Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Police

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: I use physical intimidations

The message to you is: I am physically & mentally superior to you.”

Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Police

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: [blank]
The message to you is: “You’re wrong for your love.”

#12 - Institution: Media (2nd)

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Media

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: biased coverage

The message to you is: “Less positive representation of people who look like you.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Media

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: less opportunities, higher levels of criticism, higher barriers to entry

The message to you is: “Change who you are to fit the norms, or don’t aspire to these roles/those opportunities aren’t for you.”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Media

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: less normalization of homosexual relationships, more typecasting/stereotyping of LGBTQ character[istics]

The message to you is: “You need to change, you are only acceptable if you fit into a role that’s comfortable for others.”

#13 - Institution: Culture (2nd)

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Culture

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: to use the majority, not minority, to create a culture that promotes the majority.

The message to you is: “You don’t match the perceived standard; you aren’t good enough.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Culture

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: to create stereotypes that support what to believe

The message to you is: “That you have a ceiling.”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Culture

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: to create a picture of man & woman as the norm

The message to you is: “That you are not in a normal relationship.”

#14 - Institution: Family (2nd)

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Family

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: [blank]

The message to you is: “Don’t marry outside of your race, don’t marry darker skin. Nobody wants to be with you because of the problems you and your children have.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Family

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: [blank]

The message to you is: “women cry – clean look, male – many ‘things’ non emotional”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Family

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: killing you

The message to you is: “It’s a waste of your womanhood to not be with a man to procreate; being a lesbian equated to mental illness; you’re not normal.”

#15 - Institution: Politics

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Political System

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: voter suppression, language, gerrymandering, favoring citizens over immigrants

The message to you is: “If you fit my mold I can govern you, change is too hard so don’t try.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Political System

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: by supporting maintaining outdated gender roles, keeping women in support positions, in order to appease you – power granted by men

The message to you is: “Men created this world and maybe we can choose to let you in.”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Political System

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: creating laws banning other lifestyles

The message to you is: “Your sexual orientation is wrong and unlawful and other...”

#16 - Institution: Education (3rd)

Intersectionality: Woman, Lesbian, Person of Color

1. Message in regards to **race**:

I am the: Education System

The way I work to support and uphold racism is: through socio-economic barriers, segregation, not welcoming, exemplifying dominant culture

The message to you is: “You will not be successful here and success does not look like you.”

2. Message in regards to **gender**:

I am the: Education System

The way I work to support and uphold sexism is: not allowing access to higher level roles/programs actively teaching social roles, supporting gender (or stereotypes) modeling of power positions.

The message to you is: “Take a step back, you have limited options, keep status quo, don’t speak up aim lower.”

3. Message in regards to **sexual orientation**:

I am the: Education System

The way I work to support and uphold heterosexism is: lack of representation, shaming/fear [of] cultural tolerance, lack values, no allyship

The message to you is: “Stay closeted, fit in, you may not be safe here; you do not belong as whole self.”

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