

# IN|TER|SEC|TI|O|NA|LITY

What does it mean?



## IMPRESSUM

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Landeszentrale  
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# **Intersectionality**

**What does it mean?**

Infotext + Exercises

## What is Intersectionality?

The term „Intersectionality“ can be divided into two words:

“inter” and “section”

“Inter” means: being or comprising of two or more...

“section” means: department, group, specialist area within an authority, institution, organization.

Therefore, we can describe “intersectionality” as something that exists between two or more groups, departments etc.

The focus in the term “intersectionality” lies on how people live together. People are always different. These differences could for example be:

- » Residence
- » Citizenship
- » Skin-color
- » Marital status
- » Social status
- » Education
- » Age
- » Gender
- » Health status
- » Geographical origin
- » Religion
- » Sexual orientation

And much more.

These differences are a reality. But this reality also includes the fact that, depending on

- » which «group» we belong to,
- » how old we are,
- » how much money we have,
- » what the color of our skin is,
- » what passport we possess,

and so on...

we are treated differently, we have different opportunities or problems, and accordingly, our lives can also be different. Treating people differently because of differences is also known as «discrimination».

The term «intersectionality» is used by researchers, educators, social workers, activists and other actors to try to describe the effect of belonging to a group and to different life situations, the connections between the affiliations and how a society can become more just.

This quote from lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw is often used to describe the term «intersectionality». Kimberlé Crenshaw described intersectionality like a crossroad:

«Let us take an example of a street intersection, where traffic comes from all four directions. Like this traffic, discrimination can also be multi-directional. When an accident occurs at an intersection, it may have been caused by traffic from any direction - sometimes even traffic from all directions at the same time. Similarly, if a Black woman is injured at an «intersection»; the cause could be sexist as well as racial discrimination.»

(Crenshaw 2010:38; original, Crenshaw 1989:149, cited in Walgenbach 2012).

We can say that, there are many crossroads in our society. And depending on who and how we meet at the crossroads, injustices arise. This can be seen in terms of:

- » unequal distribution of resources: who has how much money available, who has how much housing available, who has health insurance, etc.?
- » unequal access to power and policy-making: who is allowed to vote? Which people from which groups are in parliament, etc.?
- » self-determination: who gets to decide what she\* or he\* wants to do in life and how?
- » Social relations: Who can participate where? Who is allowed to go everywhere, who is not allowed to go everywhere, which relationships and which family forms are accepted, which aren't, etc.?

With the term intersectionality, we can look critically at the crossroads in our society. And thereafter, we can contemplate on how we can make our society more just, with less racism and lesser discrimination.

But the first step is to look at the intersections. And this includes looking at what positive aspects we have when we belong to a particular group.

For example: I am a foreigner, I graduated and have a good job. I earn enough money to pay for my flat, my living expenses, my hobbies, my holidays and much more. I don't look «so German», I need a visa for many countries and sometimes I don't get it. I am not allowed to vote and am not allowed to be elected. I am a female person and I don't have any disabilities.

In «my crossroads» there are both positive and negative aspects. We also call the positive aspects «privileges»:

	<b>Positive Aspects = Privileges</b>	<b>Negative Aspects</b>
<b>Gender</b>		I experience sexism.
<b>Social class</b>	I could get a good job through my high school and college graduation.	
<b>Education</b>	I graduated high school and college.	
<b>Citizenship</b>		I am not allowed to vote and I am not allowed to fly to many countries. I am not allowed to be abroad for more than six months, or I will be deported.
<b>Health status</b>	I am healthy and would not be disabled.	
<b>Financial situation</b>	I can afford several things.	
<b>Geographical origin</b>		I experience racism.

## What do your crossroads look like?

When describing the differences and the intersections, it is important to pay attention to the fact that each person has an individual experience of differences and privileges. The description is therefore not an evaluation. Only if we keep this in mind will we manage to work together for a more just society. Hence, those who have privileges can share them. There are many different ways to do this:

- » Seeing the individuality in every person.
- » When we see people being stereotyped, for example «all women etc.», we react.
- » We show that all people belong to different groups and their lives can be described by different aspects.
- » We look closely at what exclusions exist in our society and work to ensure that there is more participation for as many people as possible.
- » We listen to people and give them space to describe the different aspects of their lives.
- » We look at our privileges and see how we can share them.
- » We think in terms of «...as well as...» and not «either...or». And when put to practice, this means:
- » We are in solidarity and support each other, even if we live in different crossroads.

Und in der Praxis gilt demnach:

Wir sind solidarisch und unterstützen uns gegenseitig, auch wenn wir in verschiedenen Kreuzungen leben.





# Exercises

## **The “Bingo» Method.**

To get to know each other and find common ground.

Duration: approx. 5 minutes.

Group size: best between 12 and 25 people

Material: Bingo slips

- » Each person receives a bingo slip.
- » You go around the room and talk to each other.
- » You look for people who can answer «yes» to one of the questions.
- » Then you go to the next person, because you can only ask each person once.
- » The first person to fill 5 boxes in a row (horizontally or vertically) shouts «Bingo» and wins.

<p>You love to cook</p>	<p>You have a car</p>	<p>You had your birthday last month</p>	<p>You love spring season .</p>	<p>Your favourite colour is blue</p>
<p>You know the abbreviation LGBTIQ and can say what it means.</p>	<p>You know people, who use wheelchair</p>	<p>You have atleast once had a bad experience with the police</p>	<p>You love to go to the movies</p>	<p>You have family in other countries</p>
<p>You are in love right now.</p>	<p>You speak more than two languages.</p>	<p>You have kids.</p>	<p>You love the house, where you live.</p>	<p>You love the rain.</p>
<p>You have more than two siblings.</p>	<p>You were discriminated against atleast once.</p>	<p>You play an instrument or love to sing.</p>	<p>You were not born in Germany.</p>	<p>You are more than 50 years old.</p>
<p>You own a mobile-phone.</p>	<p>You went away for vacation this year.</p>	<p>You love to dance.</p>	<p>You write poetry.</p>	<p>You have a hobby.</p>

## **I / I-Don't**

Exercise to become active, get to know each other, sensitization for minorities

Duration 20-15 minutes

From 10 participants

Material: Two pieces of paper with «I» and «I DON'T

### Phase 1: Setting up

Two pieces of paper with «I» and «I don't» written on them are placed on opposite sides of the room.

For each question, you go around the room and stand (without speaking!): Either to «I» (if you would say «Yes») or to «I Don't» (if you would say «No»).

Look around at who you are standing with, whether you are many or alone.

Who...

- » slept in this morning?
- » lives in [...]?
- » has been in the in house here before?
- » has pets?
- » is left-handed?
- » used to play with dolls?
- » owns a bicycle?
- » has siblings?
- » has more than two siblings?
- » travels once a year?
- » lives in the city where he\*s born?
- » wears glasses or contact lenses?
- » plays sports in his or her free time?

- » plays an instrument?
- » likes music

... You can also ask or add your own questions.

## Phase 2: Evaluation

Sit down together (preferably in a circle) and talk about your experiences.

Use the questions as a guide:

- » How did you feel?
- » What did you notice?
- » Which question elicited the strongest reaction?
- » Were you more often with many people or with few people? What did it feel like?
- » What could this have to do with «intersectionality»?
- » What do you take away from the exercise?

## 4 sides of discrimination

### Goal:

- » Dealing with discrimination
- » Dealing with personal biography and experiences
- » Developing options for action in the face of discrimination

Time: 90 minutes

Participants: 30-6 people

Material: 4 - fields - table

Phase 1: Each person fills in the table individually (15 minutes).

Phase 2: Group work with 2 or 3 people (20 minutes).

Present your table and talk about it.

Phase 3: Discussion with everyone

- » What forms of discrimination became visible?
- » How did you deal with it?
- » What are possible strategies for taking action against discrimination?
- » What helps you to become active? What makes it difficult for you?

I discriminated against another person	I was discriminated against.
I got to know about discrimination but did not take action.	I got to know about discrimination and acted against it.



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