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# Introduction to intersectionality



Elizabeth Wynn

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9/7/2020

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## University of Chicago Legal Forum

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Volume 1989 | Issue 1

Article 8

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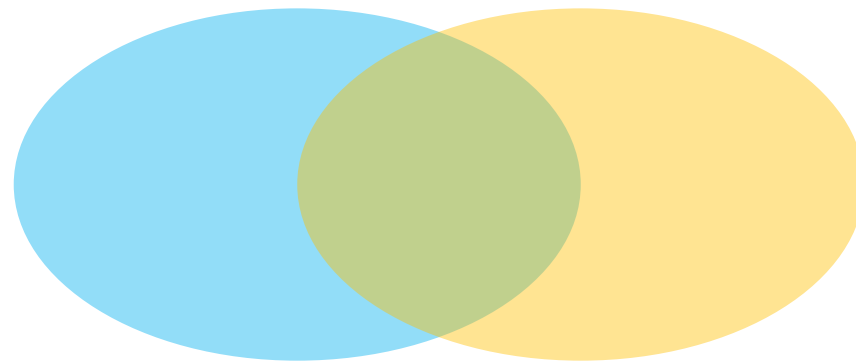
# Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics

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Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double discrimination – the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women – not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women.





**There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.**

**Audre Lorde**

## **A Black Feminist Statement** *Combahee River Collective\**

We are a collective of Black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974;<sup>1</sup> During that time we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements. **The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.** The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face.

We will discuss four major topics in the paper that follows: (1) the genesis of contemporary black feminism; (2) what we believe, i.e., the specific province of our politics; (3) the problems in organizing Black feminists, including a brief herstory of our collective; and (4) Black feminist issues and practice.

### **1. The Genesis of Contemporary Black Feminism**

Before looking at the recent development of Black feminism we would like to affirm that we find our origins in the historical reality of Afro-American women's continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation. Black women's extremely negative relationship to the American political system (a system of white male rule) has always been determined by our membership in two oppressed racial and sexual castes. As Angela Davis points out in "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," Black women have always embodied, if only in their physical manifestation, an adversary stance to white male rule and have actively resisted its inroads upon them and their communities in both dramatic and subtle ways. There have always been Black women activists – some known, like Sojourner

\*The Combahee River Collective is a Black feminist group in Boston whose name comes from the guerrilla action conceptualized and led by Harriet Tubman on June 2, 1863, in the Port Royal region of South Carolina. This action freed more than 750 slaves and is the only military campaign in American history planned and led by a woman.

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# BLACK LIVES MATTER



We affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. Our network centers those who have been marginalized within Black liberation movements.



## Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles

Recognizing that women have intersecting identities and are therefore impacted by a multitude of social justice and human rights issues, we have outlined a representative vision for a government that is based on the principles of liberty and justice for all. *As Dr. King said, "We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back."*

## Definition

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The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. – Oxford English Dictionary

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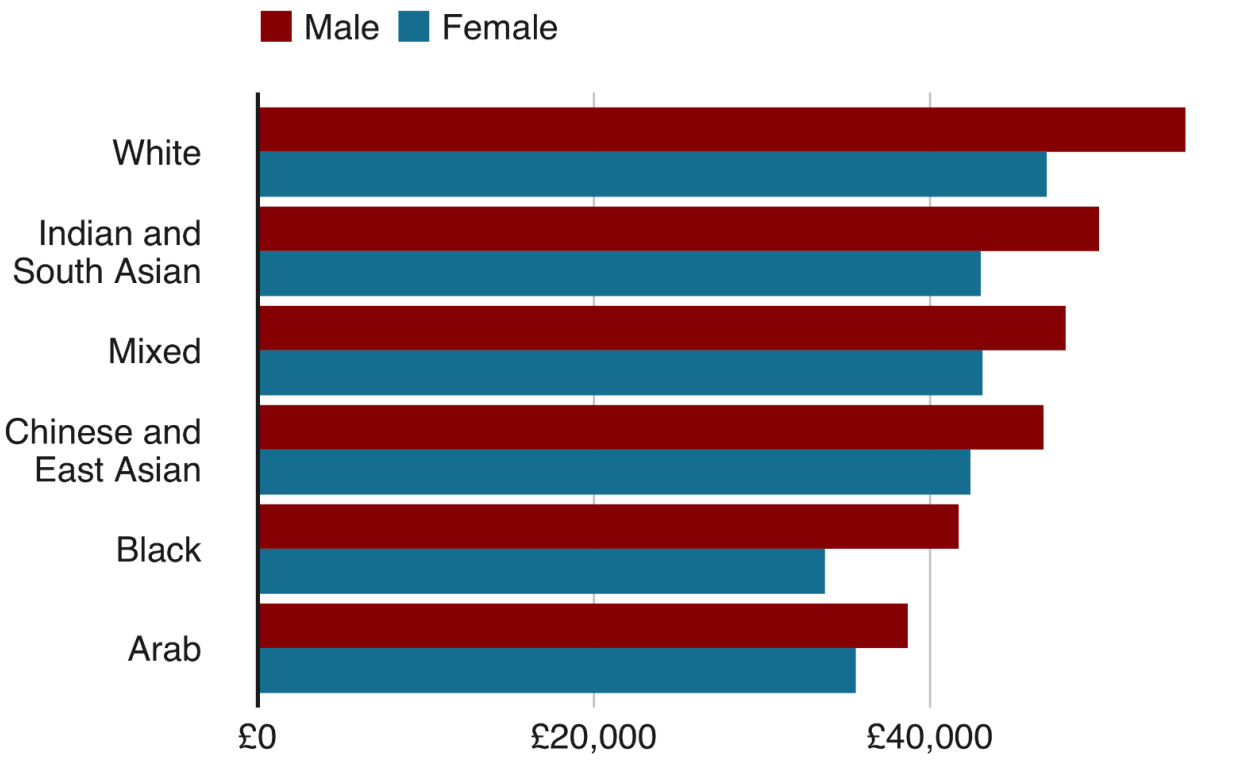
## Intersectionality IS

- Acknowledging the fact that people experience the world differently based on their combination of characteristics
- A lens for understanding the ways different forms of inequality work together
- A framework for challenging discrimination and inequality

## Intersectionality IS NOT

- About a 'new hierarchy of victimhood', 'identity politics on steroids', or 'oppression Olympics'

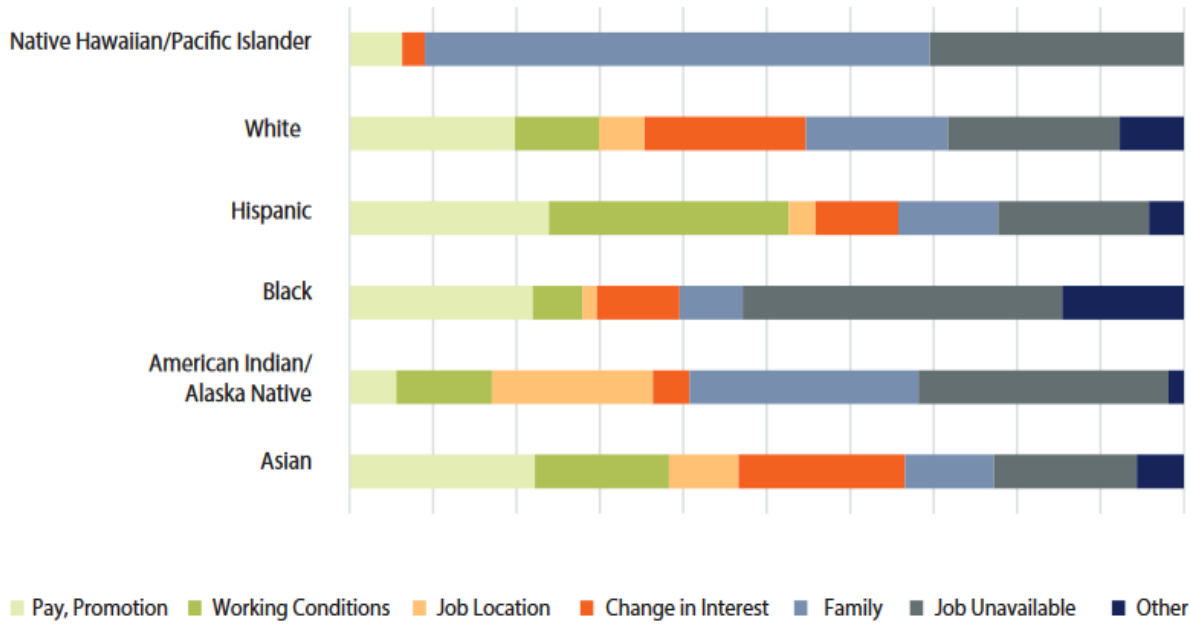
Average salaries of Russell Group academic staff



Source: BBC Freedom of Information requests of 22 Russell Group universities



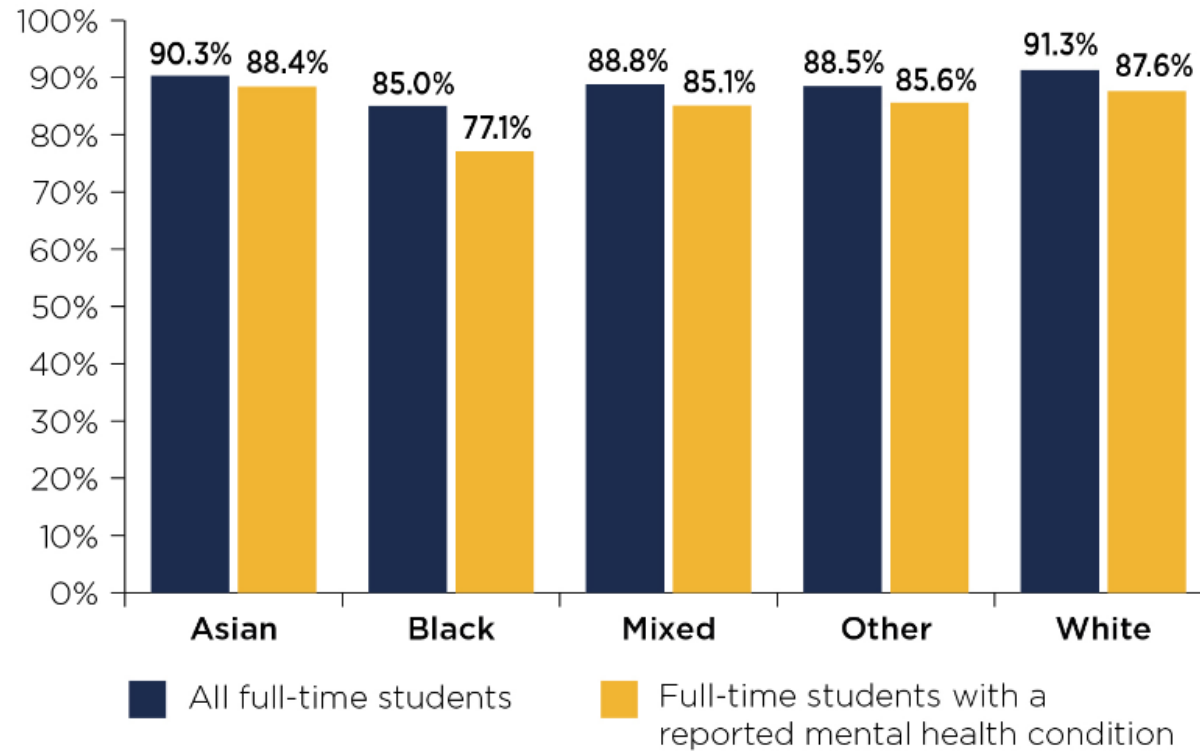
Primary Reason Women with STEM Degrees Take Jobs Outside Their Field By Race



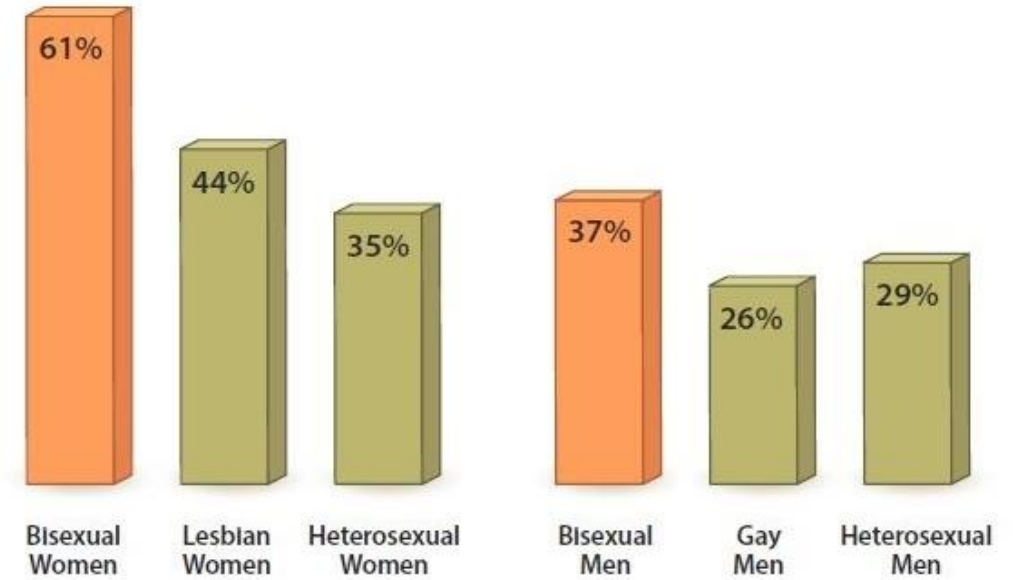
Sources:  
Morgan, K.P. Describing the emperor's new clothes: Three myths of educational (in)equity. In *The Gender Question in Education: Theory, Pedagogy, & Politics*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1996, 105–122.



**Figure 2: Continuation rates of full-time students by ethnicity for courses starting in 2016-17**



**Percent of Respondents Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence, by Sexual Orientation**



Source: Mikel L. Walters, Jieru Chen, and Matthew J. Breiding, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation" (Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 2013), [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs\\_sofindings.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_sofindings.pdf).

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## How to take an intersectional approach:

- Recognise differences exist
- Use specific language
- Show solidarity with other movements
- Fill out your demographic data

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Any questions?

## Further reading

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- [Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics](#)
- [The intersectionality wars](#)
- [Intersectional feminism: what it means and why it matters right now](#)
- [What is intersectionality? All of who I am](#)
- [She Coined the Term 'Intersectionality' Over 30 Years Ago. Here's What It Means to Her Today](#)
- [Kimberlé Crenshaw - On Intersectionality - keynote - WOW 2016 \(video\)](#)