Key Advice

Important concepts explained

Social identity refers to the way individuals define themselves in relation to the groups they are part of or feel connected to (Tajfel et al., 1979). This can include, but is not limited to, aspects such as ethnicity, nationality, gender, social class, religion and professional or hobbyist groups. It is a critical aspect of self-concept that influences perceptions, behaviors and interactions within societal contexts. Social identities are both self-selected and ascribed by society, shaping one's sense of belonging and influencing interpersonal dynamics and social structures.

Intersectionality is a conceptual framework for understanding how various social and cultural identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class) intersect at the individual level and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It highlights the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term in 1989, used it to critique the single-axis framework that dominated feminism and anti-racism discourses, arguing that it overlooked the unique experiences of those who face simultaneous discrimination on multiple fronts. Intersectionality emphasises that social categories are interconnected and cannot be examined in isolation from one another.

Read more about intersectionality on intersectionaljustice.org/what-is-intersectionality.

The Wheel of Power is an illustrative tool, designed by Sylvia Duckworth, to visualise and discuss the complexities of power, privilege and systemic oppression. It incorporates various dimensions of identity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability and more, mapping them onto a circular diagram to demonstrate how different aspects of a person's identity can intersect to confer or deny power and privilege.

Inclusive social design is a holistic and reflective process aimed at consciously creating spaces, products and systems that are accessible, safe and welcoming for a diverse range of individuals. It emphasises the importance of understanding and addressing the real human needs of a broad group of people, thereby fostering vibrant and attractive environments that cultivate a sense of safety, trust and belonging within communities. This approach is grounded in the principles of human-centered design and engages stakeholders throughout the research and design process to ensure that outcomes are not only innovative and functional, but also genuinely inclusive and reflective of the diverse needs and perspectives of all community members.