Intersectional approach as a researcher and trainer

MSc. (Dipl.) Psych. Sabrina Saase, PhD candidate
TU Braunschweig / SFU Berlin, Germany
sabrina.saase@sfu-berlin.de
Every change needs Inspiration
“Intersectionality, then – whether conceived as theory, concept, methodology, heuristic, or all four – has been extraordinarily generative and has unleashed a burgeoning archive of feminist critical inquiry. [...] Includ[ing] negotiations over the ‘proper’ intersectional analysis [...] a deconstructive mode of analysis [...] redirect[ing] attention away from the relational dynamic that emerges among diverse constituencies of feminists and women’s studies scholars in feminist gatherings [...] neglect[ing] some of the very issues of inequality and differentiated subjectivities constituted in intersectional matrices as they are played out in the spaces of feminist infrastructure”

(Lewis, 2013, p. 869-870)
What is your queer-feminist inspiration which gives water to new seeds of social justice?
My inspiration:

"The current debates about intersectionality recall, if not repeat, many of the battles fought between black and Asian feminists (along with their white anti-racist compañeras) and white feminists who felt the struggle was being diverted by the call to pay attention to the inseparability of misogyny, racism, homophobia and class. While there remains much to do to expand an intersectional understanding of the conditions that determine what it means to be a woman and who may be included, without those earlier moments of infighting, feminism today would be all the poorer."

(Lewis, 2014, in Morgan et al., 2014)
Intersectional approach as a researcher and trainer

Juggling:
- power relations / social inequalities
- Complex human identities
- Underrepresented perspectives / allyship
- Critical reflection of self & institutions
- Prioritising analysis of inequality over playing out specific intersections against each other
Intersectional approach as a researcher and trainer

**Resource-oriented -> focusing discrimination & privileging**
- intersectional privilege awareness

**Showing own vulnerability**
- location of self (Watts-Jones, 2010)
- intersectional (therapeutic) self-disclosure (ITSD) (Saase, in press)
- describing researchers as part of the participants in a study (Burkhard et al., 2006)
- making yourself a research object
  „insufferable together. A documentary mosaic“ about lesbian activism in the old GDR (Ah, Saase & Stevens, 2020)

https://www.jackie-inhalt.net/reh/gemeinsamunertraeglich.html
Resource-oriented -> focusing discrimination & privileging
• intersectional privilege awareness

Showing own vulnerability
• location of self (Watts-Jones, 2010)
• intersectional therapeutic self-disclosure (Saase, in press)
• describing researchers as part of the participants in a study (Alan Burkhard et al., 2006)
• making yourself a research object (see Ah, Saase & Stevens, 2020)

Interstitiality as a social competency

https://www.jackie-ihnt.net/reh/gemeinsamunertraglich.html
**Intersectional approach as a researcher and trainer**

**Literature**


Intersectionality-informed quantitative research
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research stage</th>
<th>Who is included within this category?</th>
<th>What role does inequality play?</th>
<th>Where are the similarities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation of hypotheses</td>
<td>Is attuned to diversity within categories</td>
<td>Literature review attends to social and historical contexts of inequality</td>
<td>May be exploratory rather than hypothesis testing to discover similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Focuses on neglected groups</td>
<td>Category memberships mark groups with unequal access to power and resources</td>
<td>Includes diverse groups connected by common relationships to social and institutional power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalization</td>
<td>Develops measures from the perspective of the group being studied</td>
<td>If comparative, differences are conceptualized as stemming from structural inequality (upstream) rather than as primarily individual-level differences</td>
<td>Views social categories in terms of individual and institutional practices rather than primarily as characteristics of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Attends to diversity within a group and may be conducted separately for each group studied</td>
<td>Tests for both similarities and differences</td>
<td>Interest is not limited to differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of findings</td>
<td>No group’s findings are interpreted to represent a universal or normative experience</td>
<td>Differences are interpreted in light of groups’ structural positions</td>
<td>Sensitivity to nuanced variations across groups is maintained even when similarities are identified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intersectionality-informed quantitative research – easy steps: describing researchers as participants

Method

Participants

Therapists.

Interviewers and auditor. The primary research team consisted of two counseling psychology faculty members and two counseling psychology doctoral students (two women and two men; age range = 35–45). Three of the team members were European American, and one was Latina. All team members served as interviewers and as judges for the coding of interview data and the abstracting of core ideas. A 53-year-old European American female counseling psychology faculty member served as the auditor for all phases of the project.

Because biases of the research team may influence the interviews or analysis of the data, the researchers documented and discussed their biases and expectations regarding several aspects of the study (i.e., general use of TSD, graduate training on the use of TSD, therapeutic experiences with racially different clients, TSD use with racially different clients).

(Burkhard et al., 2006, p. 17)
Gender self-concept

In this chapter we kindly ask you to describe your gender self-concept. To answer this question, the only thing that matters is your personal feeling.

2. Which of the following notations describe you best? *(You can have one answer in each column.)*

- [ ] Woman
- [ ] Man
- [ ] Trans*
- [ ] Polygender
- [ ] Transsexual
- [ ] Transgender
- [ ] Transidentical
- [ ] Intersexual
- [ ] Searching

- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Both, female and male
- [ ] Neither female nor male
- [ ] Different:

- [ ] I refuse to categorize myself

3. In daily life it can happen that we are not perceived and treated in line with our gender self-concept because the environment can’t categorize it or doesn’t respect it.

How often is your self-chosen gender recognized usually?

- [ ] never
- [ ] sometimes
- [ ] mostly
- [ ] always
Intersectionality-informed quantitative research – easy steps: using self-concepts

Fuzzy gender concept

Likert scales capturing grades of femininity and masculinity:

ranging from

0 (“few female characteristics”) to 10 (“many female characteristics”)

0 (“few male”) to 10 (“many male characteristics”)

(Wängnerud, Solevid & Djerf-Pierre, 2019)
Intersectionality-informed quantitative research – easy steps: context variables

Context variables can map social, historical, and geo-political circumstances of life. They include "social identities and social positions that are related to potential privilege or oppression" and even more "social processes or policies that may generate, amplify, or temper inequalities" (Bauer, 2014, p. 12)

Solution focused variables

(Blofters & O’Campo, 2012)

(Bowleg & Bauer, 2016)

Context variables for sex/gender:
- having children,
- access to childcare,
- length of parental leave,
- sole or shared parental leave
Intersectionality-informed quantitative research – Equality monitorings

In Germany exist data gaps for a profound Equality Monitoring due to simplified operationalizations of variables.

In twenty examined social scientific population surveys social categories referring to discrimination were not or only partly gathered through the utilized variables and their operationalization.

(Baumann et al., 2018)

The Good News:

in 2020 the Afro-Census was filling this research gap. It is the biggest survey among Black, African and afro-diasporic people in Germany till now.

(Aikins et al., 2021)
Intersectionality-informed quantitative research – Equality monitorings with intersectionality-informed graphics

Afro-Census 2020

**Demographics**

**Number of total languages**

- 3935 total languages
  - 0 languages: 6.2%
  - 1 language: 9.3%
  - 2 languages: 12.5%
  - 3 languages: 15.3%
  - 4 languages: 10.7%
  - 5 languages: 4.7%
  - 6 languages: 1.6%
  - 7 languages: 0.2%
  - 8 languages: 0.2%

**Number of African languages**

- 3840 African languages
  - 0 languages: 2.7%
  - 1 language: 3.4%
  - 2 languages: 10.1%
  - 3 languages: 17.2%
  - 4 languages: 26.1%
  - 5 languages: 17.2%
  - 6 languages: 9.4%
  - 7 languages: 1.4%
  - 8 languages: 0.3%

**Languages**

**Total sample**

- n = 3935
  - No school-leaving qualification: 0.3%
  - No professional qualification: 26.1%
  - Professional training in dual system: 17.2%
  - Secondary modern school qualification / qualification from board school: 10.0%
  - Ten-class general education polytechnical secondary school: 11.1%
  - Secondary school certificate: 12.0%
  - Abitur / A level / university of applied sciences entrance qualification: 23.1%
  - University of applied sciences degree: 25.5%
  - University degree: 23.6%
  - PhD: 4.2%

**Persons with african migration background**

- (2019)
  - No school-leaving qualification: 26.1%
  - No professional qualification: 17.2%
  - Professional training in dual system: 10.0%
  - Secondary modern school qualification / qualification from board school: 11.1%
  - Ten-class general education polytechnical secondary school: 12.0%
  - Secondary school certificate: 23.1%
  - Abitur / A level / university of applied sciences entrance qualification: 25.5%
  - University of applied sciences degree: 23.6%
  - University degree: 4.2%
  - PhD: 0.3%

**Germany total population**

- (2019)
  - No school-leaving qualification: 4%
  - No professional qualification: 23.2%
  - Professional training in dual system: 6.4%
  - Secondary modern school qualification / qualification from board school: 46.4%
  - Ten-class general education polytechnical secondary school: 6.5%
  - Secondary school certificate: 23.1%
  - Abitur / A level / university of applied sciences entrance qualification: 25.5%
  - University of applied sciences degree: 23.6%
  - University degree: 1.2%
  - PhD: 9.3%

(Translated from Aikins, Bremberger, Aikins, Gyamerah, Yildirim-Caliman, 2021, p.68-69)
Intersectionality-informed quantitative research – Equality monitorings with intersectionality-informed graphics

Afro-Census 2020

Average net income
Germany total population (2020)

3510€

Afro-Census sample (2020) n = 3512

3281€

Persons with african migration background (2020)

2332€

(Translated graphics from Aikins, Bremberger, Aikins, Gyamerah, Yıldırım-Caliman, 2021, p.71; 73)
In sum, for an intersectionality-informed quantitative analysis the following aspects are of relevance: examining the impact of identity variables and their differentiated combinations to take multidimensionality of identities into account, examining heterogeneity of each identity variable to avoid essentialization of intersectional sub groups, including identity related context variables on micro and macro level to prevent individualization of societal phenomenon and focusing mediation and moderation effects to prevent simplifying causalities.
Intersectionality-informed quantitative research

Literature


Bridging power imbalances between many public policy makers and marginalized perspectives
Bridging power imbalances between many public policy makers and marginalized perspectives

- Intersectionality-informed approaches / concepts for more justice to human complexity
- Shaping new ways of data gathering and analysis
- Providing data about consequences of discrimination
- Ability to change academic institutions (internal policy making) through mainstreaming intersectionality-informed topics in teams, classes, theses, publications, interviews, funding applications, recruitment for jobs and conferences (#visibility)
- Fostering participatory research in each step of a study
- Considering NGO suggestions from interest groups/communities
- Learning and un_learning things while taking part in events aiming at allyship and solidarity
Mainstreaming specific dimensions of identity variables with potential for discrimination has a long history in policy making. For example, at my time at the UN, the population unit of UNECE, we promoted mainstreaming ageing regarding discrimination of elderlies, life long learning and best practice examples from different countries.

There was also the active aging index (AAI) developed as a tool to measure the untapped potential of older people for active and healthy ageing across countries. It measures the level to which older people live independent, healthy, secure lives, participate in paid employment and social activities as well as their capacity to actively age.

As we all grow older regardless our (self-chosen) gender, context variables like age and correlating life circumstances such as independent, healthy, secure lives, participation in paid employment and social activities as well as capacity to actively age are important to be considered when doing intersectionality-informed quantitative research.

(UNECE, 2012)
Bridging power imbalances between many public policy makers and marginalized perspectives

I imagine a future where researchers, activists and policy makers have very divers identities and work together for a just, queer-feminist, post-colonial and post-migration society.

This way we can all work together like the Us-American tv-series power ranger, an adaption from the Japanese super-sentai-series where the main characters are a team, working together against a hostile organisation.
Bridging power imbalances between many public policy makers and marginalized perspectives

Literature
UNECE (2012). AAI – Active Ageing Index. UNECE. https://statswiki.unece.org/display/AAI/