The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People: A Proposed Framework to Address Intersectionality in Efforts to Prevent Discrimination

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Abstract

Since Kimberlé Crenshaw conceived the theory and concept of intersectionality in 1989, intersectional research has flourished. However, despite there being a significant increase in the understanding of the lived-experience of people, there has not been enough progress toward eliminating discrimination and achieving equality for all. This paper begins by highlighting the current state of inclusion, then reviews existing research on the application of intersectionality in efforts to address discrimination. The literature review includes an overview of several existing models designed to assist the application of intersectionality in reducing discrimination, followed by the identification of need for a framework that is practical, operationalizable, and addresses the needs of all people and intersectionalities. In light of the identified gap, an analysis of existing research on the discrimination causes of 13 individual identities and 5 intersectional identities was undertaken, from which eight common themes emerged. In light of the findings, a proposed new framework, called The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People, is presented. The framework is then illustrated with recommendations for application in government and policy making, the law, advocacy work, and in organizations with the goal of providing a useful framework for expediting social justice and equitable outcomes for all people.

Keywords: Diversity; Inclusion; Equity; Intersectionality; Identity; Discrimination

Introduction

Diversity, inclusion, and reducing discrimination has become a business imperative for organizations. Aside from the increasing social pressure for companies to demonstrate their commitment and efforts toward inclusion (Chang et al., 2019; Stahl et al., 2020), and the huge cost of discrimination cases (McDonnell & King, 2018; Unsal, 2019; Unsal & Brodmann, 2019), organizational researchers have demonstrated the benefits of diversity and inclusion including; above-average profitability (Hunt et al., 2018), industry leading performance on value creation (Hunt et al., 2018), greater market share growth (Hewlett et al., 2013), and reduced risk (Frederiksen, 2018; Unsal, 2019). While there is
considerable evidence that organizations are adopting strategies to increase diversity, be more inclusive, and reduce discrimination (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Dover et al., 2020), despite this; women globally still earn ~37 percent less than men in similar roles (Word Economic Forum, 2021), 22 percent of LGBTQI+ Americans are not paid equally or promoted at the same rate as their peers (HRC Foundation, 2021), the poverty rate for people with a disability is 26 percent compared to 10 percent for those without a disability (Erickson et al., 2022), the net worth of a typical white family is 8 times greater than that of a Black family (Yun et al., 2022), and the unemployment rate of Native Americans is twice that of the overall US population (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

There is also a large body of theory and empirical evidence of the lived-experience and impact of discrimination and exclusion on single identities, such as; gender (Belingheri et al., 2021), race and ethnicity (Pager & Shepherd, 2008), LGBTQI+ (van der Toorn et al., 2020), and disability (Schur et al., 2017). Further, critical diversity studies have investigated the impact of intersecting identities, of which there are an incredibly large number of potential combinations of intersections. A few examples of intersectional studies include; gender and race (Rosette et al., 2018), race and LGBTQI+ (Whitfield et al., 2014), and Indigenous and disability (Puszka et al., 2022). While it is absolutely necessary to research and measure diversity and inclusion to understand the experience of people and the impact discrimination and the lack of inclusion has on them – there is an apparent gap in the research. A practical solution is needed for organizations, and the individuals working within those organizations, to proactively address the inequities and needs of all identities and possible intersectionalities.

This article provides an overview on how intersectionality is currently being applied in practice by policy makers, the legal profession, advocacy groups, and organizations. The complexity and barriers to practically addressing intersectionality in efforts to eliminate discrimination is addressed, followed by an outline of the calls by researchers and practitioners for a solution. Then a new framework is proposed to fill the need for a practical solution that addresses the needs of all people and all intersectionalities in efforts to prevent discrimination and increase inclusion. Finally, recommendations for practical application of the proposed framework are outlined with examples.

Addressing Discrimination with Intersectionality

*Discrimination* is a result of the decisions and actions of individuals, organizations, communities, and governments that either intentionally or unintentionally have a harmful and/or differential effect on underrepresented identities (Pincus, 1996). In this definition, *identity* is the aspects of a person that are applied to themselves, either by themselves or imposed upon by others. Identities may include, but are not limited to; gender, race, ethnicity, LGBTQI+, disability, age, and religion. Also in this definition, *underrepresented* is not necessarily measured numerically rather it refers to groups that, in context, lack power. For instance, in the United States women are not a numerical minority in society but are often underrepresented and experience discrimination (Childs & Krook, 2009).

While discrimination is commonly considered and addressed based on a singular identity of an individual (eg. gender, race, disability), this overlooks the whole identity of an individual which is constructed of multiple identities (eg. a trans-female person of colour who has a disability). These multiple identities cannot be viewed or addressed independent of each other because they intersect to create one whole identity of the individual which constructs a unique lived-experience for that person (Bešić, 2020). Adopting an intersectional approach, when seeking to understand the lived-experience of diverse groups of people, recognises and values the magnification of oppression and discrimination when identities overlap (Steinfield et al., 2019). *Intersectionality* as a term was first coined in 1989 by Kimberlie Crenshaw in the context of the inadequate legal frameworks to address the inequality and employment discrimination experienced by Black Women in the United States (Crenshaw, 2014). Intersectionality has now been adopted far beyond gender and race in considering the intersections...
between various other multiple identities (Dennissen et al., 2020) and across multiple domains, such as; in policy, law, advocacy, and organizations.

In the United States, initially public policy was predominantly critiqued through a feminist lens, coupled with black feminism, to highlight policy that favours and supports the needs and values of those in power – at the expense of others. Race and ethnicity (Yanow, 2015), class (Hill et al., 1995), sexuality (Richardson, 1998), and disability (Percy, 2018) later became perspectives to evaluate public policy for inclusion and equitable outcomes. While there is recognition that an intersectional approach to policy is needed, the complexity of applying the theoretical concept in practice means it remains a challenge for policy makers to implement (Hankivsky et al., 2014). Similarly, antidiscrimination law has struggled to apply intersectionality in practice arguing that it cannot be easily ‘organized’ (Conaghan, 2008) or the cumulative impact measured (Sheppard, 2011). The laws protecting multiple categories of identity based on “race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or age” (EEOC, 2022) are a list of categories and when responding to identity-based discrimination the law responds by focussing on one of those identities. This is further reinforced by the continued low success rate of intersectional claims brought before the court (Sanchez, 2021), and the dominance of single-identity advocacy groups (Goldberg, 2009). While advocacy groups tend to share the same ideals as intersectional theorists in the desire to eliminate discrimination for all people, their advocacy work remains primarily siloed in identity categories, such as; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Global Fund for Women; International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association; The National Disability Rights Network; The Religious Freedom Institute; and The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Researchers (Dennissen et al., 2020; Steinfield et al., 2019; Woods et al., 2021) have also found little evidence of organizations adopting an intersectional approach to addressing diversity and discrimination in the workplace, including there being no consensus (Woods et al., 2021) on how to incorporate the diverse lived-experiences of intersecting identities into inclusion interventions. Instead organizations are using a standardized approach (Steinfield et al., 2019) that over simplifies the complexities of injustice and oppressions of identities beyond the single identities the organization selects to focus their efforts on. Consequently, inclusion interventions invariably end up being identity focussed, rather than addressing the inclusion barriers in the organizational system or the actions and behaviours of the those that need to be more inclusive.

There is little question that those working on equitable public policy, in discrimination law, in advocacy groups, and those leading inclusion efforts in organizations are working toward the same end goal – to eliminate discrimination and create equitable experiences for all people. While some progress toward equitable outcomes has been made, we are still 267-years from gender parity in economic participation and opportunity (Word Economic Forum, 2021) and we have been working towards gender inclusion even before the suffragettes took to the streets in protest for the right to vote over 110-years ago (Berkovitch & Berqôvič, 1999). Addressing discrimination one identity at a time, or in isolation, is not making the progress needed for all people of all identities fast enough. Intersectionality aims to challenge inequality, enact change to eliminate it, and provides a framework to analyse and interpret the lived-experience of the whole person and all people (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Consequently, many scholars have stated it is now imperative to put intersectionality into practice (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Steinfield et al., 2019; Verloo et al., 2012), moving from investigation to intervention. However, intersectionality’s complexity and comprehensiveness is challenging for organizations, and those working toward inclusion, to implement wholistically in a practical way. In response to this, researchers have specifically called for a better way to apply intersectionality to address discrimination in practice and facilitate real change for the inclusion of all people (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Carastathis, 2008; Dennissen et al., 2020; Simien, 2007; Thomas et al., 2021).
A Proposed Framework to Address the Needs of all People

Efforts to reduce discrimination that fail to account for the complex intersectional lived-experiences of people, fail to consider and include the needs of the whole person and the needs of all people. The objective of this paper is to purpose a framework that addresses the calls for a practical way to adopt and implement intersectionality in inclusion efforts by all key stakeholders responsible for and involved in driving inclusion and eliminating discrimination.

Applying a multilevel model of intersectionality Nunez et al (2020) developed a conceptual application of intersectionality for research and practice to advance equity. The model incorporates individual identities on one level, domains of institutional power on the second, and cultural-historical context on the third level (Núñez et al., 2020). While this model presents ‘considerations that span multiple identities, institutional practices, and historical contexts for exploring the application of intersectionality to advance equity’ and recommendations for its use (Núñez et al., 2020 p. 111), it remains complex in its potential for operationalisation in efforts to reduce discrimination for all people and all intersectionalities. Rodriguez et al. (2016) propose a Transformative Intersectionality Framework (TIF) designed to ‘broaden intersectionality from a focus on categories to a recognition of the depth and breadth of oppressions’ (Rodriguez et al., 2016 p. 32). The TIF dimension of depth reveals why inclusion intervention initiatives sometimes only achieve surface-level change, rather than the transformational change desired. The breadth dimension ‘relates to the span of visibility of social groups and interests’ (Rodriguez et al., 2016 p.16) with the intention of encouraging analysis that recognises the complexity of social injustice. While the TIF addresses macro, meso and micro levels of discrimination and presents reflection questions for analysis, it does not present what specific needs have be addressed to better include the needs of all people. Fredman (2016) analysed the lived-experience of intersectional identities to develop a framework for substantive equality with four functions; (i) the need to redress disadvantage, (ii) the need to address stigma, prejudice, stereotyping and violence, (iii) the need to facilitate participation and voice, and (iv) the need to accommodate difference through structural change (European Commission et al., 2016). While this multidimensional approach promotes proactive measures for systemic change and can be mapped to targets of action, it does not provide a method for determining or analysing the action’s suitability in addressing the intersectional needs of all people. Nunez et al., Rodriguez eta al., and Fredman have proposed models and frameworks that have certainly advanced the application of intersectionality in practice, however, there still remains the gap of a practical and operationalizable method for individuals and institutions to apply to address the intersectional needs of all people in all actions and in all contexts.

With the objective of creating a practical framework to address the intersectional needs of all people in all actions and in all contexts; development of the framework proposed in this paper began with the identification of the most commonly addressed identities in diversity and discrimination research, followed by some of the less researched identities, as well the most commonly combined identities used in intersectional research. In total 13 individual identities and 5 intersectional identities (Figure 1.) were included in the analysis of existing research on the lived-experience of underrepresented identities and impacts of discrimination. The findings of the existing research was then thematized into a matrix (Figure 2.) from which eight common themes emerged.
Table 1. Identities included in the analysis of existing research on the lived-experience of underrepresented identities and impacts of discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual identities</th>
<th>Intersectional identities</th>
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<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender and race</td>
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<td>Race / ethnicity</td>
<td>Race and socioeconomic status</td>
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<td>Socio-economic status / class</td>
<td>Indigenous and mental health</td>
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<td>Indigenous</td>
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<td>LGBTQI+</td>
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Table 2. Matrix used to thematized the findings of existing research from which 8 common themes emerged.

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<th>Theme 1</th>
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Then, the research papers identified within a common theme were re-reviewed to assist in clarifying and defining that theme. The output of this analysis resulted in the creation of The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People framework:

1. Access - Ensuring all people can see and hear, or understand via alternatives, what is being communicated; and physically access or use what is being provided.
2. Space – Ensuring there is a space provided that allows all people to feel, and are, safe to do what they need to do.
3. Opportunity – Ensuring all people are provided opportunity to fulfil their potential.
4. Representation – Ensuring all people can contribute and are equally heard and valued.
5. Allowance – Ensuring allowances are made without judgement to accommodate the specific needs of all people.
6. Language – Ensuring the choice of words or language consider the specific needs of all people.
7. Respect – Ensuring the history, identity, and beliefs of all people are respectfully considered.
8. Support – Ensuring additional support is provided to enable all people to achieve desired outcomes.

Access reflects the necessity to ensure all people can see and hear (or understand via alternatives) what is being communicated, and they can physically access or use what is being provided. This includes meeting the vision (Branham & Kane, 2015), hearing (Wang & Piper, 2018) and physical access (Saha et al., 2021) needs of people, as well as access to property and facilities (Fujimoto et al., 2014; Lerner, 2021), resources (Einstein & Glick, 2017; Resurrección et al., 2019), health care (Button et al., 2020), credit (Begley & Purnanandam, 2021; Weier et al., 2019), and justice (Brinks, 2019; Decker et al., 2019).

Space is about making sure people feel safe, and are safe, in the workplace (Topić & Bruegmann, 2021) and in the community they live (Green, 2019). This includes providing a psychologically safe workplace (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013) that is free from bullying and harassment (Bergman et al., 2012; Topić & Bruegmann, 2021) where people can be their authentic selves (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2018), and their physical safety is protected with safe work practices (Krieger et al., 2008). It also means providing a safe space for people to meet their own personal needs, such as; to breastfeed, take time-out, pray, and/or administer medication (Haapakangas et al., 2018; Mross & Riehman-Murphy, 2018; Rosen-Carole et al., 2018).

Opportunity requires that all people are provided opportunities to fulfil their potential through participation (Ballen et al., 2019; Clark, 2022), when applying for jobs and promotions (Crown et al., 2020; Dostie & Javdani, 2020; Russen et al., 2021), and in education, training, and development (Brown et al., 2022; Cech & Waidzunas, 2021; Sisco, 2020).

Representation is about ensuring all people can contribute, are equally heard and valued, and can see themselves fairly and equally reflected in government and policy making (Bishin et al., 2021; Doel-Mackaway, 2019; Lajevardi & Spangler, 2022), the organizational hierarchy (Baldwin et al., 2022; Gerull et al., 2020; Trudgett et al., 2022), pay scales (Canedo, 2019; Longhi, 2020; Smith-Doerr et al., 2019), occupations (Alegria, 2020; Cech & Waidzunas, 2021; Nasager, 2020), communications and the media (Dutta & Elers, 2020; Fields & Newman, 2020; Johnson, 2015), and in decision making (Fujimoto et al., 2014; Harrison et al., 2019; Tabesh & Jolly, 2019).

Allowances must be made without judgement to accommodate the specific needs of people so they can do what needs to be done. This means providing allowances for people must be the rule, rather than the exception (Raymond et al., 2019), and can include accommodations such as (but not limited to); flexible working and job redesign (Blanck et al., 2020; Chathuranga, 2021; Dickson, 2020), work scheduling and leave (Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Tabesh & Jolly, 2019), learning and assessment
adjustments (Lindsay et al., 2021; Wilks et al., 2020), and work equipment (Blanck et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Language means choosing words or language that is suitable for the audience and does not reflect any exclusionary or discriminatory language. This means avoiding unnecessary complex language (Peled, 2018), jargon and acronyms (McCarthy et al., 2020; Shulman et al., 2020), gendered or racial or ableist language (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021; Leth, 2019; Szcesny et al., 2016), offensive or discriminatory terms (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020; Ramjattan, 2019; Worthen, 2020), and providing interpreters, translations or transcriptions when needed (Kasten et al., 2020; Oswald et al., 2019).

Respect is the need ensure the history, identity, beliefs, and value of all people are respectfully considered. This includes respecting the histories of exclusion and oppression and appreciating the impact that has on individuals and identity groups (Di Napoli et al., 2021; O'Loughlin et al., 2022; Radis & Nadan, 2021), respecting how people self-identify and how they choose to reflect and express their identity (Casey et al., 2019; Reddy-Best, 2018), respecting an individual’s belief system (Héliot et al., 2020) and traditions (Caron et al., 2019; Tiwari et al., 2019), and recognizing and valuing the capability and contribution of all people (Grant & Kara, 2021; McCoy, 2021; Topić & Bruegmann, 2021).

Support is about providing additional support to people so they can achieve desired outcomes and fulfil their potential. That support may include, but not limited to; social services (Gibbons, 2022; Montgomery et al., 2020; Resurrección et al., 2019), policy and legal support (Brinks, 2019; González, 2018; Hessami & Baskaran, 2019), community and peer support (Ahmed et al., 2011; Holley et al., 2019; Roberts & Christens, 2021), education and training support (Brown et al., 2022; Chathuranga, 2021; Lindsay et al., 2021), support following an harassment claim (Castro & Goldbach, 2018; Daniel et al., 2019; Snyder & Schwartz, 2019), and organizational and leader support (Baldwin et al., 2022; Lyubykh et al., 2020; Nadler et al., 2017).

The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People Framework in Practice

There is significant consensus amongst researchers that intersectionality is essential as a framework in addressing discrimination (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2015; Atewologun, 2018; Chun et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Steinfield et al., 2019; Verloo et al., 2012), and that there is a gap in the literature on how to apply an intersectional lens in a practical and meaningful way (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Carastathis, 2008; Dennissen et al., 2020; Simien, 2007; Thomas et al., 2021) to create environments where all people are included and thrive. The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People is proposed as a framework to compliment advances made by intersectional researchers and to fill the demand for a practical and operationalizable framework that individuals, organizations, and institutions can apply to ensure that decisions and interventions meet the needs of all people and prevent discrimination. At its simplest, the framework can be applied as a set of questions and/or considerations in decision making and designing inclusive solutions.

Following are examples of recommendations for application of The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People in government, law, advocacy, and in organizations to illustrate the framework in practice.

• Government and policy makers can apply The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People in: (i) extending the scope of people and needs protected from discrimination without the need to list hundreds of identities and potential intersectionalities; (ii) evaluating proposed legislation and its impact in creating inclusive and equitable outcomes for all people; (iii) the review of existing policies and legislation to identify barriers where needs may be unmet, overlooked, or unjustly oppressed; (iv) consultation with the community and people with diverse lived-experiences to guide discussion, input and insights on inclusive solutions; (v) the design, planning, and funding of community facilities, social services and inclusion interventions to ensure they meet the needs of all people;
(vi) setting the local, State, and Federal standard for inclusive practice and requiring compliance by government suppliers and contractors.

- The legal profession can apply The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People in: (i) moving away from establishing discrimination based on comparator groups and instead wholistically addressing the contextual lived-experience of the individual; (ii) establishing an intersectional approach to evaluating and measuring the cumulative discrimination impact experienced by people; (iii) shifting the focus from identities instead to the sources of exclusions and disadvantages created by failure to meet the needs of people; (iv) creating a framework for legal reform to protect the ‘whole’ person and replace the existing separate laws protecting individual identities; and (v) encouraging legal practitioners to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the needs of all people rather than specialising only in singular identity categories.

- Advocacy groups can apply The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People in: (i) breaking down silos and increasing collaborative efforts to achieve inclusion with a standard framework that works towards meeting the needs of all identities; (ii) reducing assumptions and/or stereotyping of identities into singular groups; (iii) validating the lives of people with diverse and unique intersectionalities that do not see themselves represented in singular focussed advocacy groups; (iv) reducing competition for focus and attention amongst the ‘other’ identities; (v) increasing a deeper understanding of the similarities between people with different ‘identities’ leading to greater coalition; (vi) speeding up the inclusion of all people as all identities will be addressed in inclusion interventions at the same time; and (vii) utilising funding in more cost efficient and effective ways by focussing on inclusive solutions that address the needs of all people.

- Organizations and institutions can apply The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People in: (i) consolidating diversity and inclusion intervention efforts with a focus on common needs for all people and all identities; (ii) providing a practical framework for people to use in their decision making to ensure solutions meet the needs of all people; (iii) aligning employee resource groups and efforts to a common goal; (iv) the review of existing policies and procedures to identify barriers where needs may be unmet, overlooked, or unjustly oppressed; (v) evaluating and identifying inclusion gaps in the organizational climate and ways of working; (vi) the design and development of products and services to meet the needs of diverse customers; and (vii) international geographies with disparate cultures and laws that may conflict with identity specific inclusion.

Applied as a framework to guide thinking and assess decisions against 8-needs, in place of the overwhelming endless number of potential intersectional identities of people, it is proposed The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People closes the knowledge-practice loop, and is practical and operationalizable (Rodriguez et al., 2016), addresses the complex and contextual realities of multiple inequalities and identities (Sheppard, 2011), can be applied at the individual, structural, and institutional level (Rodriguez et al., 2016) in a proactive way (European Commission et al., 2016), is more than an adaptation of gender mainstreaming (Verloo et al., 2012), while not losing sight of the unique oppressions and lived-experience of specific identities (Warner et al., 2016), enables change and inclusion for all identities equally (Thomas et al., 2021), and serves as a method for people to relate to one another and work collectively in new and inclusive ways (Chun et al., 2013).

**Conclusion**

The 8-Specific Needs of All People framework proposed in this paper is both conceptual and practical. Conceptually, it provides a new perspective for shifting the focus from the list of identity categories and intersectionalities to addressing the needs of the whole person and all people. Practically, it provides a guide for inclusive design making and consolidated inclusive interventions that eliminate discrimination for all people so they can thrive. While it is acknowledged that intersectional purists may dispute the suitability of The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People framework in addressing intersectional
needs and insist that the mainstreaming of intersectionality dilutes its initial intention and ‘critical edge’, the proposed framework does not seek to replace intersectionality, but rather operationalize it in a practical way in order to affect inclusive change and eliminate discrimination of all people. It is recommended future research be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions that adopt The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People and measure the impact it has on inclusive outcomes for all identities and intersectionalities. Further, as the framework was developed based on the review of the existing available secondary research, there is potential for bias and consequently calls for its empirical testing. Finally, it is hoped that The 8-Inclusion Needs of All People framework is a means for governments, the legal profession, advocacy groups, and organizations to expedite social justice and equitable outcomes for all people.

References


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