



Intersection of Identities



Get boosted so we can leave our mark at Pride and beyond.

Action Brief

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Photo: Image shows hands and fists raised in solidarity. Each is a different size and there's a diversity of skin tones and all are wearing colorful wristbands representing a different Pride flag. Flags are (from left to right): bisexual, genderqueer, traditional rainbow, and non-binary. The image is from Equality CA and was made for promoting COVID-19 vaccinations.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) have long served communities formed from shared identities and shared experiences of oppression. To further advance equity, CBOs can apply knowledge of intersectionality to consider the diverse and interlocking identities within one community. Intersectionality is a social framework for understanding the ways that groups' and individuals' various social and political identities simultaneously result in unique experiences within society. The term was originally coined by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the multifaceted connections among race, gender, and other identity markers. In OCPSC's "Trusted Messenger Learning Lab: Intersection of Identities," leading advocates for women of color, LGBTQ+, and disabled communities shared examples of intersecting identities, with approaches and considerations for outreach and public awareness.

Examining disaggregated data is an application of intersectionality, as it demonstrates variations within a single identity. For example, Filipino Americans faced disproportionate higher COVID-19 death rates compared to other Asian American groups, relevant to their overrepresentation in the healthcare workforce¹. Intersectional approaches recognize that communities are not monoliths, and investment in data disaggregation is a first step in expanding health equity.

People with disabilities and people who identify as LGBTQ+ are at times rendered invisible by service providers. An intersectional approach to language and communication access is ensuring access to people with different disabilities. At the same time, disabled and LGBTQ+ communities can take action to be more inclusive of people of color who have been historically excluded from disabled and LGBTQ+ representation and organizing efforts. Policies and programs are most equitable when designed to be accessible and inclusive to diverse, marginalized populations.

This **Action Brief** is a product of the series **"Trusted Messenger Learning Labs: From Discovery to Action."** It is based on the session held on January 25, 2024, and features excerpts from a discussion with Krishanti Dharmaraj (Human Rights Advocate and Lecturer, Glasgow Caledonian University), Tho Vinh Banh (Special Counsel, Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement, Disability Rights California), and Erin Arendse (Program Director, Equality California).

¹ Escobedo, L. A., Morey, B. N., Sabado-Liwag, M. D., & Ponce, N. A. (2022). Lost on the frontline, and lost in the data: COVID-19 deaths among Filipinx healthcare workers in the United States. *Frontiers in public health*, 10, 958530. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.958530>

What Partners are Saying and Doing

What is intersectionality?

Krishanti Dharmaraj: On a daily basis, we navigate more than one identity. That's our lived experience. Multiple and intersecting identities form compounded levels of oppression individuals experience that reflect within community. It acknowledges that people hold various identities simultaneously, at the intersections of race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and others, which shape their experiences and interactions with society. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the disproportionate impact on communities of color, particularly women of color, highlights the need for an intersectional approach in understanding and addressing systemic inequalities making experiences both personal and political.

How does disability rights fit into intersectionality and what does that mean for a person with disabilities?

Tho Vinh Banh: In a lot of conversations, including in DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) efforts, people with disabilities are not often included. Intersectionality is so important, and disability is another facet of life. I ask everyone to see all the spaces that you are in and include persons with disabilities in that space. In the materials that you put together, I would ask that you include disability along with race and gender, etc.

What does intersectionality mean for LGBTQ+ communities?

Erin Arendse: LGBTQ+ communities can often be rendered invisible, and it's important to ensure that we are recognized as being members of many different types of communities. It is also important to remember that LGBTQ+ people are not just cisgender white men and we, especially those who are white and in leadership, remember that this is an intersectional community. There are people from wide ranges of backgrounds. and we have to be collaborative and have to make sure we are recognizing everybody.

How have you used an intersectional approach for outreach and communications?

Tho Vinh Banh: One example is that for Deaf Latinx individuals, if they have issues around immigration and they went to traditional services that serve the Deaf and hard of hearing community, their Latinx culture may not be recognized and, or understood. If they went to immigration spaces, they may not be accommodated with a sign language interpreter. We should be intentional and recognize that we receive funding to provide services so any barriers that exist, fall on us and not on the community we are serving. One example related to communication is to create materials in plain language to begin with, so then when it's translated or interpreted, it's going to be in plain language all around. This will help many individuals, including individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability.

Erin Arendse: We tested COVID-19 messaging for LGBTQ+ youth. Most of the folks at our office are not under the age of 21, and we didn't want to make assumptions on how best to communicate with young folks in our community. One of the things that we validated through that messaging was it's important in our community not only to see themselves in the messages, but the message should be representative of the full diversity of the community.

The Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications, housed within the Office of Planning and Research, initiates and executes campaigns related to the state's highest priority public awareness and community outreach efforts. The intent of a single state entity coordinating California's most important campaigns is so that the state can realize more inclusive and effective outcomes while preventing equity gaps in statewide outreach.

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