

# INTERSECTIONALITY IN MINORITY STUDIES

TIMEA CROFONY

**Course:** European Minorities: Interactions, Community Building, and Sense of Belonging

**Project:** Jews, Muslims and Roma in the 21st Century Metropolises: Reflecting on Polyphonic Ideal and Social Exclusion as Challenges for European Cohesion



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# WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?



- concept and analytical framework
- coined by **Kimberlé Crenshaw** in 1989 to describe lived experience of women of colour in USA (***Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics***)
- bell hooks, Combahee River Collective, Audre Lorde (feminist thought on intersectionality)
- **individuals have multiple social identities:** based on/influenced by categories (race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, dis/ability, religion, language, citizenship...)
- **identities are interconnected and overlapping:** creates unique experience and unique forms of oppression/discrimination
- **specific intersection of the categories determines opportunities, possibilities, choices, disadvantage/privilege**
- single-axis analysis of distorts reality and reinforces the oppressive systems
- **CONTEXT always MATTERS!**

**TERM**

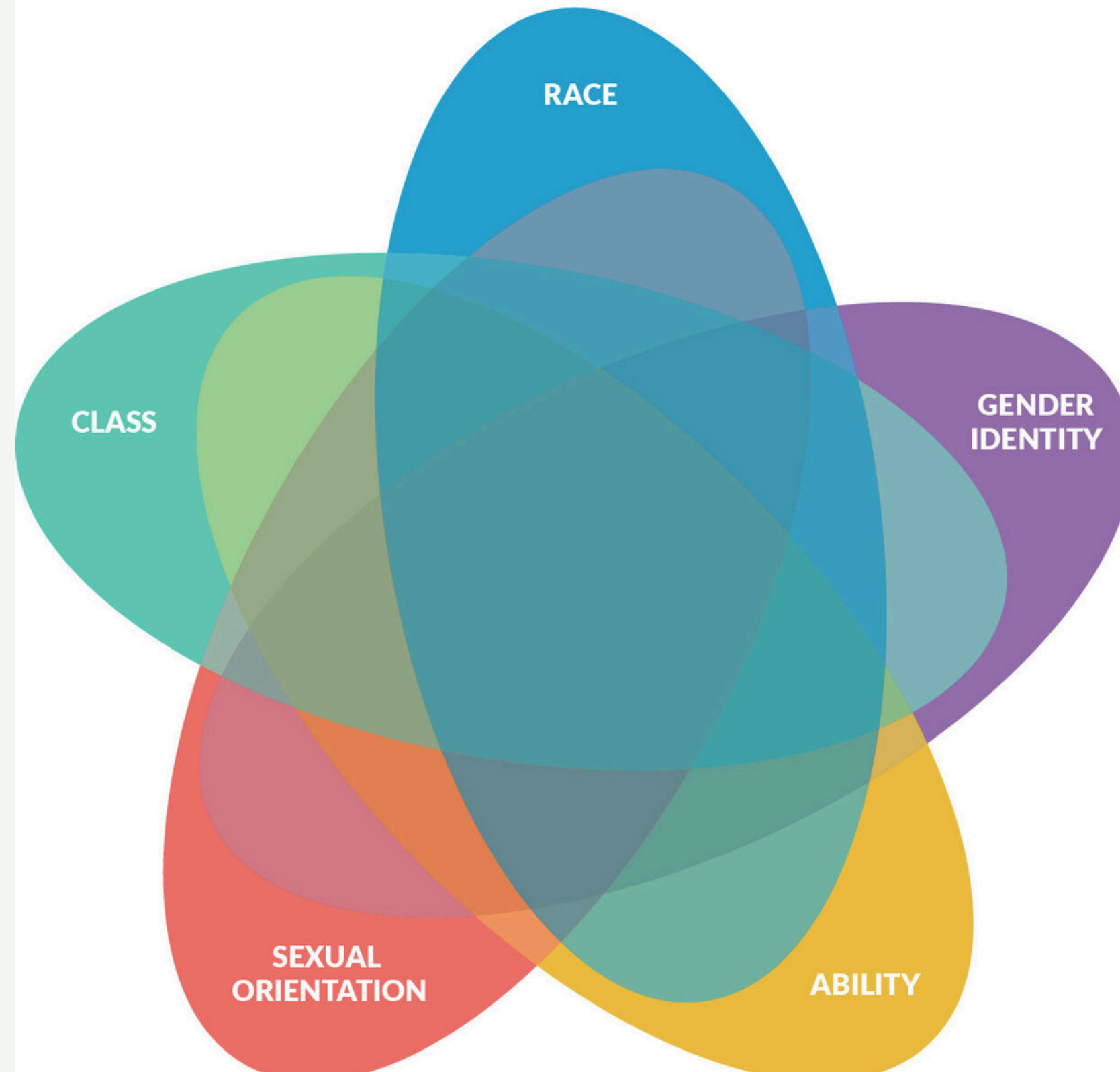
**&**

**FRAMEWORK:**

**INTERSECTIONALITY**

# INTERSECTIONALITY

This graphic illustrates the concept of intersectionality, which is a theory developed by Kimberle' Crenshaw that shows how the overlap of various social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc., contribute to systemic advantages and disadvantages experienced by an individual.



Source: <https://nastad.org/inequities-and-intersectionality>

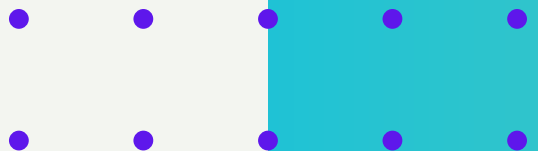
## TERM

&

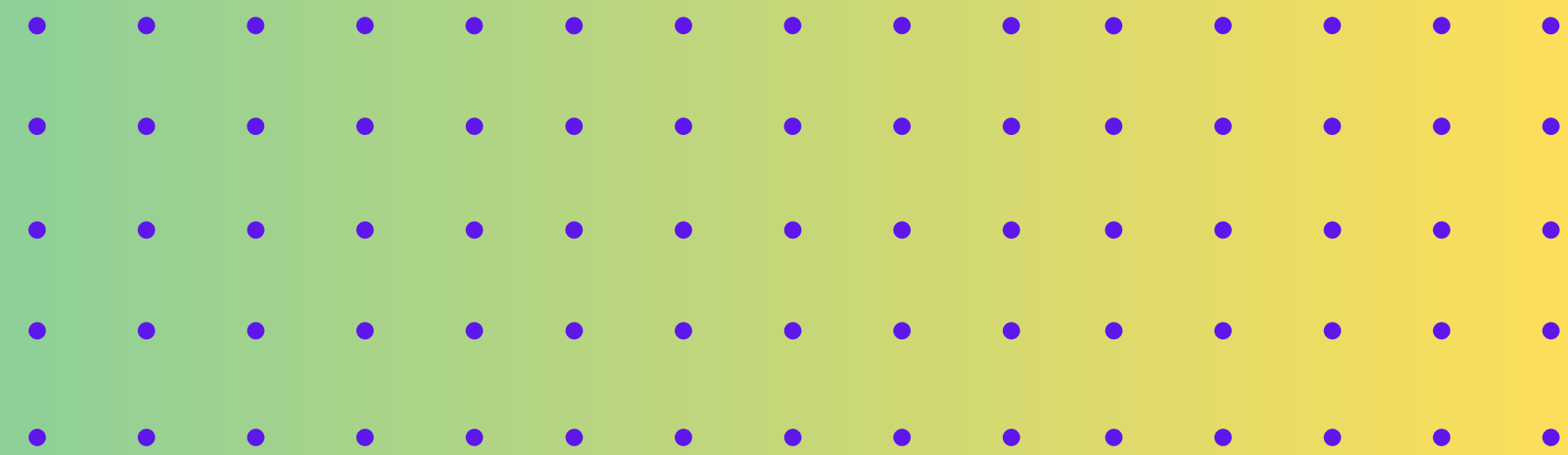
## FRAMEWORK:

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Oxford English Dictionary 2015:  
*"The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise"*



# WHY DO WE EVEN SPEAK ABOUT IT?



- brings **depth and precision** into research
- **avoiding homogenization**
- increases **sensitivity** to the research problem
- makes **marginalized groups visible**
- through the perspective of critical theory: **exposes structures of domination, privilege and hegemonic narratives**, and consequently can **contribute to social change**
- examines the **complex and interconnected experiences** of individuals belonging to various minority groups
- brings **recognition**: people can belong to multiple groups simultaneously, and their experiences are shaped by the intersections of the identities
- helps to **create effective policies**

**IMPORTANCE  
TODAY**



# REFLEXIVE QUESTION:

*HOW MIGHT INTERSECTIONALITY HELP US TO BETTER  
UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCES OF MINORITY GROUPS IN OUR  
OWN COUNTRY, CITY OR COMMUNITY?*





- **Essentialization and Homogenization:** erasure of the unique struggles and perspectives
- **Tokenism:** reinforcement of stereotypes
- **Oversimplification:** complex experiences are reduced to superficial or one-dimensional portrayals
- **Language invisibility:** marginalized or underrepresented in common discourse
- **Power dynamics:** between and within the groups, imbalances and hierarchies
- **Gatekeeping:** certain voices/identities may be given more prominence or legitimacy than others
- **Methodologies and research limitations:** potential gaps in understanding

## THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION





# APPLYING INTERSECTIONALITY: EXAMPLES



***"What happens when our analysis goes just through one axis?"***

- minorities as a homogenous group and facing the same challenges, having the same needs
- particular minority as a monolithic entity

**IN GENERAL**

**IDENTITY POLITICS :**

**CH. TAYLOR**

**J. HABERMAS**

**N. FRASER**

- **problems of a representation and gatekeeping:** who speaks for the "community"? Is there even a single community? About whom do we speak? Is it even useful to use this category of analysis? When yes and when no? What about people who are not affiliated to any of the officially recognized organizations?
- **gender dynamics:** when we speak about Muslims, where are the voices of women? Where are the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals?
- **Chandra Talpade Mohanty** (1984) *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* - critique of Western feminism and its discursive construction of "Third World Woman" which needs to be saved as a single, collective Other
- "the headscarf problem", agency of religious women (**Saba Mahmood** *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*)

# MUSLIMS

- **representation:** "Who is the Jew"?, "What makes a Jew?"
- **postsecular critique:** predominantly Christian view on what is religion (“inter-faith dialogue”)
- **intra-ethnic differences,** animosity and class problems, diversity along lines of observance, ethnic origin and class
- **local and regional particularities:** differences based on the size of the community and its specific needs and challenges
- **gender and religious practice:** e.g. Jewish Orthodox feminists

**JEWS**

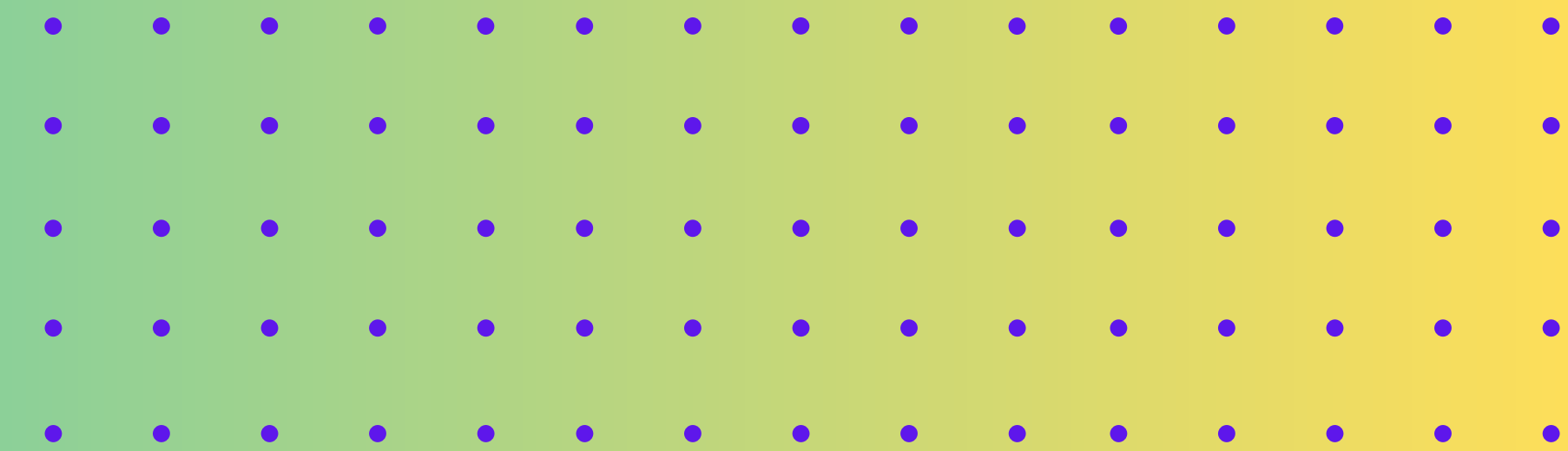
- **diverse experiences:** different groups in Czech Rep., excluded locations vs. big cities
- framed as "unadaptive" by the public discourse, sometimes a synonym for Romani in general
- **cultural misunderstandings:** some use specific forms of organization (kinship, endogamy) but non-Roma lens are used for the understanding of family units
- **language and ostracization**
- **ethnicity, gender and reproduction:** sterilization of Roma women in Communist Czechoslovakia
- **Věra Sokolová:** Cultural Politics of Ethnicity: Discourses on Roma in Communist Czechoslovakia (2008, 55): "*The repression of gypsy difference under the label of dysfunctionality, deviance and abnormality functioned at the same time as a way to reinforce normalized notions of sexual, reproductive, parenting and gender behavior of all Czechoslovak citizens.*"
- **current issues:** Ukrainian Romani and the war – not the "right" type of refugees

## ROMA/ROMANI



# REFLEXIVE QUESTION:

*CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO MINORITY GROUPS IN YOUR REGION OR FIELD OF STUDY?*



**THANK YOU!**

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