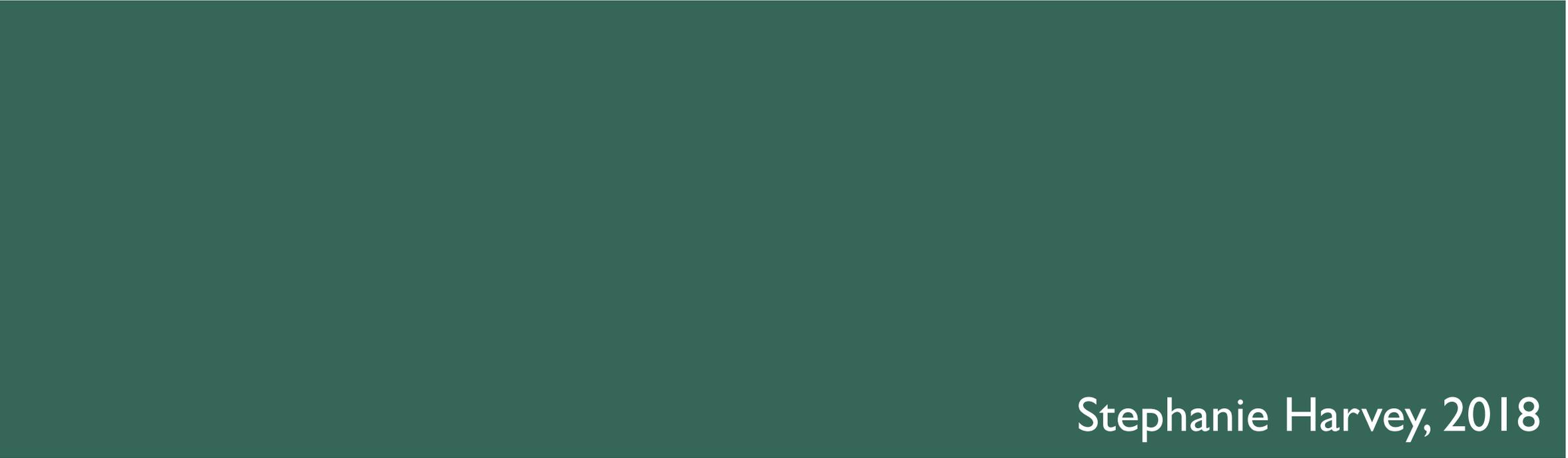




THE THEORETICAL TO THE APPLICABLE:

INTERSECTIONALITY IN A DISABILITY CONTEXT



Stephanie Harvey, 2018

INTERSECTIONALITY: THE THEORY

Intersectionality as the structures that make certain identities the consequences and the vehicle for vulnerability.

(Crenshaw, 2016)

‘...people’s lives and the organisation of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other.’

(Collins and Bilge, 2016)

INTERSECTIONALITY: THE THEORY

Intersectionality:

- Acknowledges that some people exist at the ‘intersection’ of multiple systemic oppressions;
- This intersectionality results in *different* experiences of oppression, *not additive ones*;
- These are revealed and understood through examination of structural phenomena and individual experience; and
- Not acknowledging intersectionality effectively *silences* the most marginal in our societies.

INTERSECTIONALITY AT PLAY

Examples:

- Case of a black woman challenging recruitment practices in the US (Crenshaw, 1989).

In disability context:

- Case of a young black girl with learning difficulties in the US (Everelles and Minear, 2016).

INTERSECTIONALITY AT PLAY?

UK disability-related statistics:

- Over 54% of Black patients in inpatient mental health units are detained on a compulsory basis, compared with 32% of the general population;
- Women with learning difficulties have a shorter life expectancy (aged 63) than men with learning difficulties (aged 65), or women without learning difficulties (aged 83);
 - with deaths being 4 times more likely to be from preventable causes.
- Disabled Pakistani and Bangladeshi people persistently have the lowest employment rates;
 - and experience pay gaps of 36% and 56% respectively.
- Children with SEN are significantly more likely to face exclusion from schools.

I. CASE FOR INTERSECTIONALITY POLICY APPROACHES

Focussing on school exclusions in England:

- 'Persistent disruptive behaviour' cited as the most common reason for exclusion;
- **Gender** - Boys are over **three** times more likely to be excluded than girls;
- **Poverty** - Socio-economically disadvantaged pupils are more than **four** times likely to be excluded;
- **Disability** - Children with SEN are **seven** times more likely to be permanently excluded;
- **Ethnicity** - Children of Black Caribbean heritage are more than **three** times likely to be excluded from school than the general pupil population; children of Chinese and Asian backgrounds have the lowest exclusion rates.

A CASE FOR INTERSECTIONALITY POLICY APPROACHES

'Dyson and Kozleski (2008) argued that diagnosis of non-normative disabilities is contingent on professional judgement, which is occasionally skewed by prejudice and discrimination. This is reflected in the over-representation of students from ethnic minority groups in non-normative disability categories, such as emotional and behavioural difficulties...'

(Liasidou, 2016)

2. CASE FOR INTERSECTIONALITY POLICY APPROACHES

Hate crime in the UK:

- Five protected characteristics are covered by hate crime legislation;
 - ‘race’, disability, religion, transgender identity and sexual orientation.
- Hate crimes can be reported on the basis of multiple characteristics.

But:

- This is a multi-category approach, not an intersectionality approach;
- Supports a hierarchy of oppressions – which was recognised and cautioned about by policy-makers; and
- Doesn't include all possible factors or groups who experience hate crimes.

A CASE FOR INTERSECTIONALITY POLICY APPROACHES

'Policy is often reduced to one axis of oppression, meaning that intersections and diversity are rendered invisible. The impact of this is to "miscategorise" people who might then suffer from a lack of support and face difficulty in negotiating different social and cultural spaces.'

(Mason-Bish, 2014)

APPLYING INTERSECTIONALITY TO POLICY MAKING

Proposed key Intersectionality principles for policy making:

- ‘...human lives cannot be reduced to single characteristics;
- human experiences cannot be accurately understood by prioritizing any one single factor or constellation of factors;
- social categories/locations, such as ‘race’/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality and ability, are socially constructed, fluid and flexible;
- social locations are inseparable and shaped by interacting and mutually constituting social processes and structures, which, in turn, are shaped by power and influenced by both time and place; and
- the promotion of social justice and equity are paramount...’

(Hankivsky, 2014)

APPLICABILITY: PROPOSED MODELS

1. 'Space' as an analytical tool (Ronnblom, 2008)
2. Intersectionality Policy Process Analysis (Bishwakama et al., 2007)
3. Multi-strand Project (Parken and Young, 2010)
4. Intersectionality-based Policy Analysis Framework (Hankivsky et al., 2012)

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

‘An ongoing challenge... is the further development of explicit and user-friendly methods that can more effectively translate intersectionality theory into practical approaches...’ (Hankivsky et al., 2014)

The challenge:

- Having a policy environment willing to examine power structures and privilege;
- Structural issues that support ‘single issue’ approaches;
- Knowledge of intersectionality approaches among policy practitioners; and
- Translating complex analysis into scalable policy solutions.

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