

## Intersectionality:

Describe Intersectionality Theory. Why is this theory considered to be a critical contribution to understanding the lived experiences of women of color? Apply this theory to the issues women of color face (African American, Asian American, Latinx, Native American).

### Your Answer:

Intersectionality is a theory that studies how many socially and culturally created categories interact on several levels to cause social injustice. The classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability, do not act independently of one another according to intersectionality; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, resulting in an oppressive system that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination. Intersectionality theory is the belief that women face oppression in many forms and degrees of intensity (Ritzer).

Kimberle Crenshaw proposed the notion of intersectionality in her paper for the University of Chicago Legal Forum in 1989,. The fundamental point of this black feminist article is that the experience of being a black woman cannot be defined in terms of being black and being a woman taken separately, but must incorporate the constant interactions between the two. Her study was also essential in the formation of intersectional feminism, which explores the overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination to which women are subjected as a result of their race, sexual orientation, and economic background.

It is necessary to apply Intersectionality theory to women of color because intersectionality has exponential effect, and that understanding the theory can contribute to better address the issues occurring to women of color, such as domestic violence, wage inequity, identity crisis, etc. For instance, when it comes to workplace harassment of women of color, while many people may regard sexual harassment about sexism and power, it is actually also about race and culture—For women of color, sexual

harassment is rarely about sex or sexism alone it is also about race.

When it comes to feminism, America's feminism is usually more focused on white middle-class women, rather than the marginalized groups such as African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American. In the study of Maternal power and male supremacy in the Course reader, the article pointed out that American feminism is criticized for failing to appropriately include these issues in feminist ideas, political objectives, and institutionalized programs. They challenge American feminism's inclination to "universalize" white middle-class women's experiences and to overlook or reduce racial, ethnic, cultural, and social disparities amongst women to a broad idea of women's shared oppression.

To begin with viewing issues about women of color, I would like to discuss the living conditions of African American women. Throughout history in the US, African American women have been carrying the double burden of racial discrimination, segregation, and gender marginalization.

Rape is one of the most significant issues that African American women face. It is especially heartbreaking that Black women in history were considered "unrapable"—They have been victim-blamed and sometimes not believed by the jury, the police, and the court. The culture of "silence" and the sexually promiscuous myth accounts for their complex situations. The animalization of African American women can be seen reinforced in popular cultures such as hip-hop music, like 2-Chainz's lyrics and music videos, saying: "all I wanted for my birthday is a big booty ho" and picturing black girls with exaggerated and revealing bodies. Black women avoid "taking advantage of" gender harassment because they regard the women's rights movement in America as being led and defined mostly by White women..... In reality, sexual harassment is pervasive and extremely deadly for Black women. Also, in Jeanne Amber's article regarding sex trade and abuse, she noted that 300,000 American children are at risk of being forced into prostitution. Oakland has especially been a hard hit."

Intersectionality based on gender and class interrelate to make girls of colors targets and suspects.

In addition, in the article "The Pain of Gender Silence," it can be observed that intersectionality puts women of color in a tough spot of picking how to defend themselves. It struck me when I read the narration: "I was willing to defend myself as a Black person but not as a Black woman." The cultural norm in the Black community is to acknowledge race and racism only. For example, when it comes to the victims of police brutality, people knew the name of George Floyd, but seldom the black women's names such as Breonna Taylor and Atatiana Jefferson. For African American women, racism and sexism are not mutually incompatible. They don't get to choose which will haunt them and leave them alone. The Black community must develop strategies to identify and confront this prejudice. "Gender silence is paralyzing and corrosive," the article ended, which I feel is an excellent assessment of the dangers of this phenomenon.

When it comes to the workplace, intersectionality can be especially profound. The article "Doing Double Duty" showed that African American women were facing more challenging situations such as being underpaid; having difficulties in being recruited; being invisible in businesses; receiving little praise although doing a lot of effort. African American women may be prompted to wonder, "Is it me or is it bias?"

Black women are frequently seen as sex objects at work, making them targets for unwelcome sexual activity and solicitations. They were affected by assumptions that they are more promiscuous than other women (such as white women), and workplace harassment may be more difficult for them. Moreover, they must decide whether to report a White harassed person and risk reinforcing false stereotypes about the sexuality of Black women. Alternatively, they may be confronted with the tough decision of whether to report a Black colleague who is sexually harassing them, maintaining the notion that Black guys are sexually aggressive. Because "black women are consistently labeled as lazy, welfare-dependent, and inept," this misconception continues.

When it comes to the notion of "beauty," which is typically based on White norms, including physical variances such as body form, skin tones, and so on, Black women also confront a dilemma. This lowers their self-esteem.

Asian American women is another group under intersectionality. Domestic abuse is often unnoticed to others among Asian Americans. Leung and Cheung's study on partner abuse in Asian American communities in the United States addresses the problem that Asian American partner abuse is an understudied subject.

Domestic violence is frequently characterized as abusive conduct by a spouse and is seldom reported. Understanding intersectionality can lead to more efforts to develop and extend culturally relevant Asian services (community and individual awareness). After all, if domestic abuse in Asian communities is not publicly addressed, assistance will be ineffective.

In addition, Jennifer Weil and Hwayun Lee of the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing discovered a lack of research on family violence in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) groups in their study. Many individuals feel that because AAPIs are regarded the model minority, domestic abuse does not exist in this community. 'General Asian attitudes: AAPI cultures are community-oriented, focused on healthy interpersonal ties and independence,' according to the report. Furthermore, shame is a key concept in Asian civilizations that prioritizes communal ideals over individual desires. Traditional family and gender roles assumptions strengthen male privilege, worsening Asian American women's living situations. When tackling the issue, cultural beliefs might be critical— One of the most challenging parts of dealing with domestic violence. When it comes to dealing with family violence in Asian countries, one of the most challenging parts is reconciling Western concepts of freedom and individuality with Asian values of interdependence and communal harmony.

When it comes to sexual assault and sex exchanges, it's important to remember the Oakland Sex Trades, where Asian women are exorcized. Worse, recruiters target Southeast Asian females from

refugee groups because they are aware of the girls' anxieties about ethnic identification.

Identity crisis often occurs to Asian American women because their belief of traditional domestic and family-oriented values in Asian extended families have usually been found in conflict with western values that they perceive in the United States. People such as sex trade recruiters, abusers, and family members could take advantage of their difficult conditions when struggling with an identity crisis. The crisis is a leading factor that contributes to the high rates of mental health issues of Asian American women, such as depression, anxiety disorder, and bipolar.

Also as immigrants, Latina women face exploitation and challenging conditions such as different forms of violence. It should be noted that to Latina women, violence occurs in different forms other than physical violence, for instance, economic violence or the retention and loss of maternal surname.

Court cases such as *Madrigal VS. Quiligan* in 1978 reflect the difficult living conditions for Latina women. The case involves unsuspecting Mexican immigrant women who were sterilized without informed consent or under duress. The use of sterilizations was justified by the belief that immigrant families would burden government expenditures.

Because of their race, national origin, and gender, Latinas face a number of challenges; this multifaceted discrimination influences how Latinas experience and respond to domestic abuse; and institutional racism and patriarchal institutions are intertwined in the Latina experience... Recognizing the significance of intersectionality may aid in changing and recognizing these realities; for example, the Latino community may emphasize efforts to fight domestic abuse. Latinos have long been characterized as aggressive and hot-blooded, whilst Latinas are portrayed as innocent virgins and beautiful vixens. In a male-dominated culture, the Latina is portrayed as modest and domestic. To satisfy the ardent lover, the Latina must be sensual and sexually responsive. Latina identities in the Latino community are shaped by their roles as moms and

wives..... Latinas are expected by the Latino community to be traditional and to reside exclusively inside the Latino family system. A Latina must be a daughter, wife, and parent, placing her family's needs ahead of hers.

Latina women frequently have challenges in receiving legal/social service aid—if a Latina chooses to seek assistance from those who are already perceived as advocates for institutional oppression, the community may view her actions as a betrayal. Because of a lack of bilingual and bicultural services from social care providers and shelters, Latinas feel vulnerable and powerless. They may also face cultural isolation.

Furthermore, Latina women are often exploited as domestic workers, making them vulnerable at work. The article "Cleaning up a dirty business" investigated the issue of paid domestic labor arrangements, which pose numerous issues, primarily because paid domestic work is not considered legitimate employment and the women who perform it—in Los Angeles, Latina immigrant women are among the most disenfranchised members of society. Unfair working hours and a lack of adequate rules produce issues that can only be solved by forming worker unions. On the other hand, those striving to organize and enhance work face spatial and legal constraints. Organizations like the Liberty Hill Foundation and the Los Angeles Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights are using the system and filing claims to combat wage theft.- Recognizing intersectionality allows us to advocate for public education and societal acknowledgment that paid domestic work is work. That it is an important part of how our society is organized today, and that the Latina immigrant women who do the work are individuals with their own families, communities, and interests.

Chicana feminists have been making their efforts to support their community under intersectionality. Mirta Vidal, describing the Unity of "La Raza," is an example (1972) While it is true that La Raza's unity is the fundamental tenet of the Chicano movement, when Chicano males talk of preserving La Familia and the 'cultural legacy' of La Raza, they are actually referring to the age-old notion of keeping the woman barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. There

can be no true unity based on women's subjugation.... The only true solidarity between men and women is that which is formed through their battle against tyranny. Ana Nieto-Gomez also speaks on Chicanas and Race and Class (1974) She concentrated on Chicanas' identification issues. The only thing the middle-class Anglo lady has in common with the Chicana is that they are both women. They are, nevertheless, women of varied ethnicities, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. All of these elements influence the various socioeconomic requirements of these women, and so influence their political viewpoints.

Native American women were facing especially difficulties both on and off the reservations due to intersectionality and marginalization. In the Documentary "Rape of the Reservation", it reveals the shocking fact that 1 in 3 American Indian and Alaska Native women will be raped, but survivors rarely find justice on tribal lands. The documentary uncovered breakdowns in the federal and tribal criminal justice systems so severe that sexual perpetrators often received minimal or no punishment and survivors were left with little justice.

When tribes and the federal government refuse to collaborate, sexual assault investigations can slide between the cracks. Even in the infrequent occasions where tribal court convicts, federal law prohibits most courts from sentencing culprits to more than a year in prison. Survivors who come forward to report attacks are sometimes confined in tiny communities with their attackers, and numerous have stated that the flawed judicial system exacerbated their anguish.

The subsequent series of Supreme Court judgments and federal statutes resulted in a confusing legal structure among federal, state, and tribal governments, making it difficult for survivors of sexual assault to get justice. Because of institutional racism and stereotypes, Native American women's accusations are dismissed. Beginning in late 2012, the tribal court was allowed to impose three-year punishments. There were three sexual assault convictions from 2013 to 2018, however, none of them resulted in harsher penalties. The longest punishment remained one year.

Victims may choose not to disclose what occurred to them due to fear of revenge. Reporting a sexual offender may be interpreted as causing conflict with his whole tribe, which may result in a series of repercussions.

In The Book “Lakota Women” by Mary Crow Dog, she talks about the difficulty of being a Native American woman. Crow Dog discusses the struggles that Sioux women and girls face, such as sexual harassment and rape by white men, as well as being expected to meet the sexual needs of Sioux men without question. Crow Dog also describes how girls used to be celebrated at their first periods, but this tradition has been lost and menstruating women are now excluded from rituals. She notes that men pay lip service to the status of women in the tribe, but she herself felt unsure about her role as a medicine man's wife and the part women are allowed to play in Native American religion.

To sum up, women of color were facing hardships under intersectionality. Understanding the theory can contribute to solving their problems including workplace exploitation, domestic violence, etc. African American women, Asian American women, Latina women, Native American women have different experiences and living conditions under different social and cultural influences. However, I do believe that we all have one thing in common—we are marginalized and oppressed women, we share the sisterhood of being a woman, and we shall fight for our equity with joint efforts and intersectionality theory.