

Race, gender, social class and intersectionality

Why are race, gender, social class and intersectionality important to social research?

Umut Erel, Tracey Reynolds and Ann Phoenix:

UMUT EREL: Can I ask you, Ann, to explain in your own experience, why race, gender, social class, and intersectionality are important to social research?

ANN PHOENIX: Race, class, gender, and intersectionality are crucially important to social research because intersectionality gets at the way in which we're all always positioned in different social categories. Now, many people think that society is somehow innocent, that anything that happens to people happens in the present. But one of the things that intersectionality reminds us is that we're all positioned differently because depending on how we're racialized gendered, the social class position that we come from, the nation that we're in, and so on.

We have different experiences, different histories, and our own personal histories, and histories of the groups to which we belong. And those all have an impact on what's likely to happen to us, the sorts of experiences that we have, the way in which we are received, and indeed how we ourselves feel about what happens what's said to us, the position we're in, and so on.

So, the point about intersectionality is that it is never possible just to think about a person as a person without understanding the ways in which the social categories to which they belong. All are in play at one at the same time, and in social research attempting to understand the difference that those differences make.

UMUT EREL: Thank you. That's really helpful. Tracy, can I ask you the same question?

TRACEY REYNOLDS: OK, so race, class, gender, and intersectionality in social research really is about how people understand us, people perceive us, and how the social world treats us. So, for example, I see race, class, and gender as interconnected as other-- in other aspects of our identities, which interconnect, but those are the main ones and that has a huge

impact on the way in which, for example, in social research and the types of topics which are chosen. The way about researchers understand us, understand our lived experiences.

For me, it's hard to unpack my race, class, and gender. So, as you can see, or you may not be able to see I'm Black woman. And as a Black woman from working class background but has had a huge impact on the way that I do my research. It impacts the questions that I-- the topic that I choose, impacts the questions that I ask. It impacts the way about the participants will respond to me as a Black woman, and it also impacts the way that I then analyse and write up the findings.