

Race, gender, social class and intersectionality

Why is it important that students learn about race, gender, social class and intersectionality?

Umut Erel, Tracey Reynolds and Ann Phoenix:

UMUT EREL: Why do you think it is important that students learn about race, gender, social class, and intersectionality to better understand social research?

ANN PHOENIX: I think it's crucially important that students learn about intersectionality. The reason for that is that as we've understood society much more as intersectional, so too we've understood that for our research really to take on the complexity of society or rather to approach it because I don't think that actually we can take on the whole complexity of society in any one research project. But what intersectionality helps us to do is to avoid oversimplifying to the extent that we treat social categories as if they were operating in isolation and as if any one category is explanatory in itself of the social processes at play in our research.

TRACEY REYNOLDS: I think it's important that we understand that social identities are not one dimensional. As Ann's talked about the complexities and the nuances, it's also relational as well. So, we talk about categories like black, white, male, female, but in order to understand whiteness, there has to be a blackness. In order to understand female, there has to be male. So, it's this idea that all identities, they relate to each other and we can't understand one without understanding the other.

I think it's also important for students to understand that the world isn't homogeneous. There's lots of differences in diversities in society, even within an individual identity or individual person. And it's important that we understand how these different identities come into play. I would also add that we're all made up of these different identities and components, but which identity we choose to focus on varies according to time, location and also audience as well. And I think that's really important to be mindful of.

UMUT EREL: Thank you so much for bringing so much clarity to this and also for really explaining the complexities, the nuances both in terms of identities, power, the way in which

the social world works and in which we understand it and research it. Thank you so much to both of you.

TRACEY REYNOLDS: Thank you.

ANN PHOENIX: Thank you very much.