

WELCOME TO ENGAGING IN INTERSECTIONAL RESEARCH APPROACHES: APPLYING A FOUNDATIONAL HUB PRACTICE TO THE 2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

WHY INCLUDE ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE PROPOSAL APPLICATION?

Intersectionality is a term coined by Black feminist scholar and lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 that explains how aspects of identity are experienced simultaneously. The Hub is committed to taking an intersectional approach to research, recognizing that gender is not a social identity experienced in isolation from other identities.

In order to fulfill the Hub's mandate of providing credible thought leadership and generating an evidence base to support gender equity for all genders in sport, research (specifically, Black feminist, Indigenous, critical disability and queer scholarship) shows that we must shift our resources to focus on how multiple, overlapping systems of oppression impact gendered experiences of sport participation and leadership. We are learning, as a Hub, how to operationalize intersectionality in our research and how to facilitate that same learning for gender equity in sport researchers. This is a journey we are on together.

One of the ways in which we will follow through on our commitment to intersectional approaches to research is by requesting that researchers applying to our grants include demonstration of thoughtfulness and practice around the multiple ways coinciding systems of oppression shape research processes and the resulting knowledge.

In short: gender is not a social identity experienced on its own. We require applicants to demonstrate engagement with intersectional approaches to research and intersectional methodologies in order to offer excellence in gender equity in sport research and work together towards our goal of sport for all genders.

WHAT KINDS OF TOPICS SHOULD I INCLUDE?

There are lots of different areas of your research project for which you might consider intersectional approaches or methodologies:

- Whose research you cite and on whose knowledge your work relies;

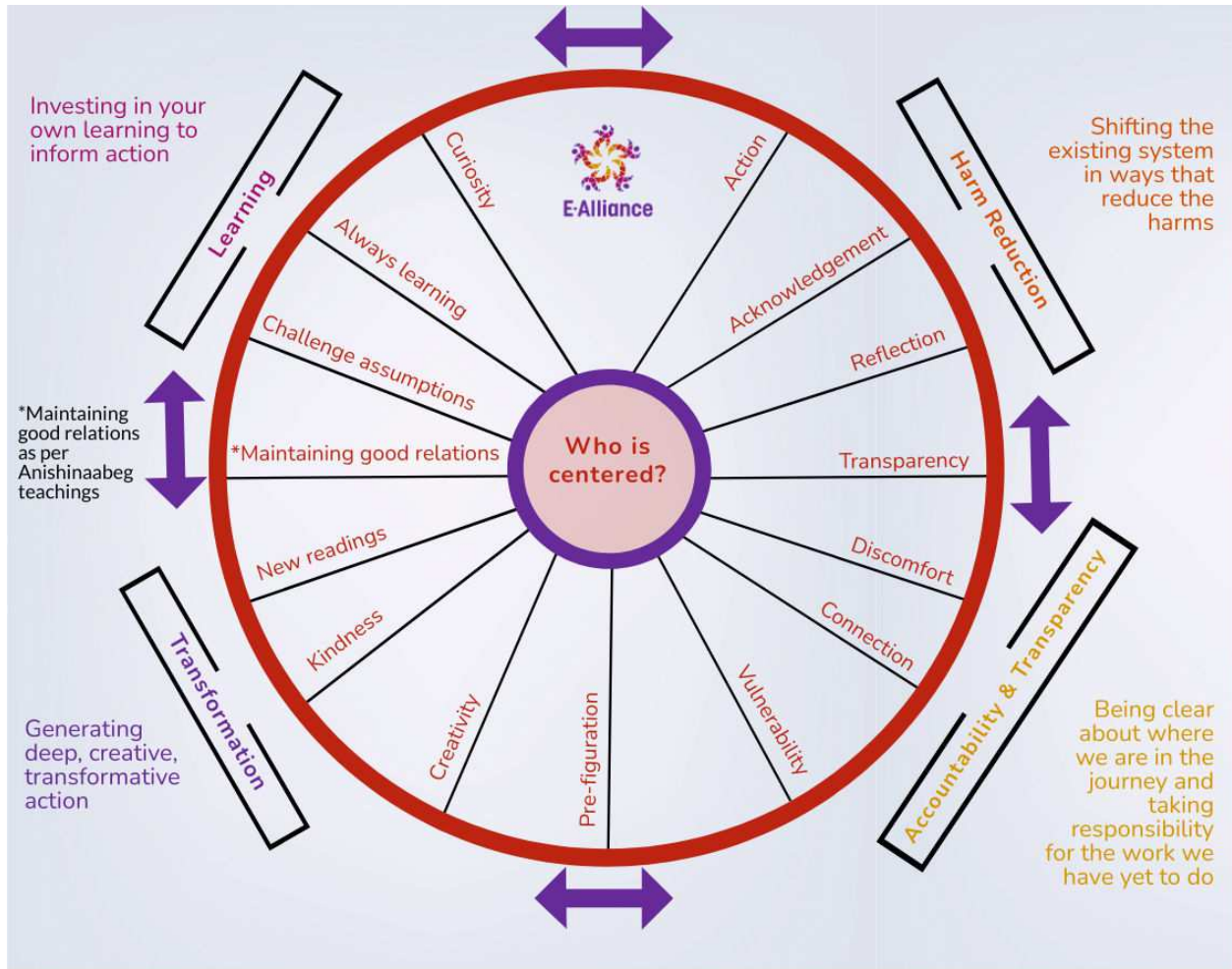
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- Who you recruit to participate (and how you recruit them);
 - Who constructs the research questions and data collection processes;
 - What is considered data;
 - The topic of research and framing of that topic;
 - Who is on your research team;
 - Where and how you publish or present (e.g. open access, creative means, with community);
 - Maintaining good relations, as per Anishinaabeg teachings, through research;
 - With whom you partner or collaborate;
 - Mentorship of your research team;
 - Kinds of opportunities provided to and accesses enabled for research team members;
 - Authorship and leadership within the research team;
 - Accessible spaces of research/making the research process accessible to participants;
 - Research paradigms (upon which ontologies and epistemologies does your research draw? What assumptions are made? Whose knowledge systems are trusted/promoted?);
 - Definition of terms, such as 'gender', 'sport', 'equity', 'intersectionality';
 - Level of control participants have over self-definition of identities (e.g. which aspects of identity are highlighted, language used, pronouns) and data;
 - And many, many more!

Each of these research practice areas is notably ripe for reflection and re-design. Every aspect of the research process can be linked to broader systems to be disrupted. Use our framework below, get creative, and let's develop excellent research.

THE HUB'S FRAMEWORK

The Operationalizing Intersectionality Working Group at the Hub, comprised of (in alphabetical order by last name) Dr. Janelle Joseph, Dr. Amélie Keyser-Verreault, Dr. Debra Kriger and Dr. Danielle Peers, developed the Hub's Framework for Operationalizing Intersectionality.

Visualized as a wheel with spokes, the framework includes four, non-hierarchical points of traction for operationalizing intersectionality in research: **learning**, **harm reduction**, **accountability**, and **transformation**.



Cite as: Keyser-Verreault, A., Kriger, D., Joseph, J., & Peers, D. (2020). Framework for Operationalizing Intersectionality [unpublished proposal guidance document]. *E-Alliance*.

Learning is always a good place to start. While the framework is intentionally non-hierarchical (and oftentimes simultaneous!), investing in your own learning to inform action is essential to any practice towards justice. Learning is the point of traction where a researcher listens to knowledges that may be new to them; to scholars and activists who share knowledge from marginalized peoples' experiences and ideas of how to disrupt the systems of oppression in which we are each embedded and in which we each act.

The terminology of **harm reduction** has gained traction in public health spaces after decades of activist work in the area of substance use and addiction. The principles of

harm reduction recognize that reducing the risks or impacts of harm in a circumstance that is or could be harmful is an important and effective strategy to facilitate human thriving. Harm reduction is evidence based, non-judgemental and client-centred, and primarily relies on the knowledge of the people who live in the context of harms to find apt interventions to reduce harm to them.

In our framework, harm reduction is a means of shifting the existing systems in ways that reduce the harms and impacts of those systems on marginalized people. Harm reduction recognizes that oppressive structures induce harms and that part of equity work is in reducing the risks or impacts of those injuries. Colloquially, the harm reduction point of traction refers to practices which facilitate the thriving of individuals 'within the system'.

Transformation is an especially exciting point of traction. Transformation refers to deep, creative, transformative action. Colloquially, and in complement to a harm reduction approach, you can think of transformation as research and research processes that change the systems themselves. Transformation entails changing research processes as a means of creating the just world we want to live in.

One of the most important and basic actions researchers can take is to be accountable to their practices. **Accountability** is about being transparent and taking responsibility for the work we have yet to do or the mistakes we have made. As researchers, we need to be clear about where we are in our own personal journeys in understanding and practicing research that takes into account coinciding systems of oppression. Sometimes there are aspects of research that are beyond our control or aspects we wish we had done differently; accountability compels us to be honest and transparent about the resulting impacts, including, for example, who we included and did not include in our projects and from which research paradigms or positions we are coming as investigators.

Part of accountability is welcoming constructive criticism. If a person provides negative feedback or complaints, you can consider these as gifts given to you towards your self-improvement from a perspective you do not otherwise have. The saying goes that if one person has taken the time to give you that feedback, you can estimate that there are at least a hundred others who feel the same way who haven't had the time, energy, or care to tell you. In the case of intersectional approaches to research, we encourage considering any negative feedback as a rare, generous gift crafted and delivered at great expense of time, energy, labour and care. If we practice understanding negative feedback as a generous gift that helps us learn how to improve our intersectional approaches, then we move towards more vulnerable, appreciative and inclusive - better - research.

As part of accountability, consider the ways in which your research team and project might practice listening to, including and transparently sharing with the community(ies) they serve and each other.

HOW TO USE THIS FRAMEWORK: SOME EXAMPLES

This framework was built to be intentionally flexible for use on any level of research design and action, and to accommodate varying levels of simplicity and complexity. For your proposal, you can start by: identifying your practices or methodologies that take intersectional approaches and locate them within the frame OR picking an area, picking a point of traction, and seeing what you can do within that area.

Another way to use the framework is to focus on some of the spokes. The spokes represent the qualities needed to support the work; consider how you and/or your research team will practice those qualities through your work.

This framework always asks the question of 'who is centered?'

You do not need to explicitly include to which points of traction your project adheres, nor to which spokes it links (as has been done in the examples below) in your proposal. The framework is meant to help organize thoughts, show you how we are thinking of intersectional approaches, and open possibilities of what you can include in your proposal.

Examples:

Area: Research Paradigm

In preparation for this project, I have read about what kinds of research paradigms, ontologies and epistemologies exist (**learning**) so I can explicitly include from which paradigm(s) I draw upon in my work (**accountability**).

- Links to spokes: always learning, new readings, reflection, acknowledgement, transparency, curiosity

Area: Definition of Gender

My research focuses exclusively on cisgender women in relation to cisgender men. While I continue to learn about gender as a non-binary concept and how to implement that understanding in my research (**learning**), in the interim, I commit to specifying that my work is on 'binary gender' to provide clarity on the definition of gender for my project and acknowledge the exclusion of non-binary genders in my current work (**accountability**).

- Links to spokes: transparency, discomfort, acknowledgement, always learning

Area: Mentorship of Research Team

I will provide mentorship to students on my research team by connecting them with my colleagues, sharing authorship with them on at least one academic publication, and giving guidance through the publication and presentation processes (**harm reduction**).

- Links to spokes: connection, maintaining good relations, action

Area: Knowledge Sharing

In addition to traditional academic publications and presentations, I intend to hold a more casual virtual event for research participants and members of the relevant community(ies) to discuss and listen to their feedback on the findings of my research (**learning, accountability**).

- Links to spokes: vulnerability, discomfort, always learning, transparency

Area: Research Method

This project explores power relations and movement on public trails through video performance, through a collaboration between a local activist hiking group whose members face multiple, overlapping systems of oppression and our research team (two of whom are members of the activist hiking group; **transformation**).

- Links to spokes: creativity, maintaining good relations

WHERE TO GO TO LEARN MORE

There's a long history and ongoing wealth of knowledge, scholarship and activism to continue your journey in learning about intersectionality, and we would be remiss not to share a couple resources to start. We share two from distinguished scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw (J.D., LL.M.) and Dr. Patricia Hill Collins, respectively, listed below: Kimberlé Crenshaw's (J.D., LL.M.) 1989 legal journal article in which she coined the term, and Dr. Patricia Hill Collins's recent book on the topic. Both of these distinguished scholars, and many more with them, have published prolifically throughout their careers - there's lots to discover.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics.



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University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989(1):139-167.

<http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

Hill Collins, P. (2019). *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. USA: Duke University Press.