

**Joint Expert Group
Meeting on
Older Persons and
Intergenerational Solidarity**

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Session 1

**Ageing and intergenerational solidarity –
setting the stage**

***Issues of intersectionality and
intergenerational solidarity***

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Overview

1. Overarching question: do these two concepts have anything to offer each other and, if so, what?
2. Intersectionality: origins, nature and scope
3. Intergenerational solidarity
4. Intergenerational solidarity: a stimulus for human rights protection?
5. Human rights, including intersectionality, as a means of informing and promoting intergenerational solidarity?
6. A new convention on the human rights of older persons as a means of promoting human rights and intergenerational solidarity

1. Overarching questions

Intersectionality and *intergenerational solidarity* not constant companions in each other's world

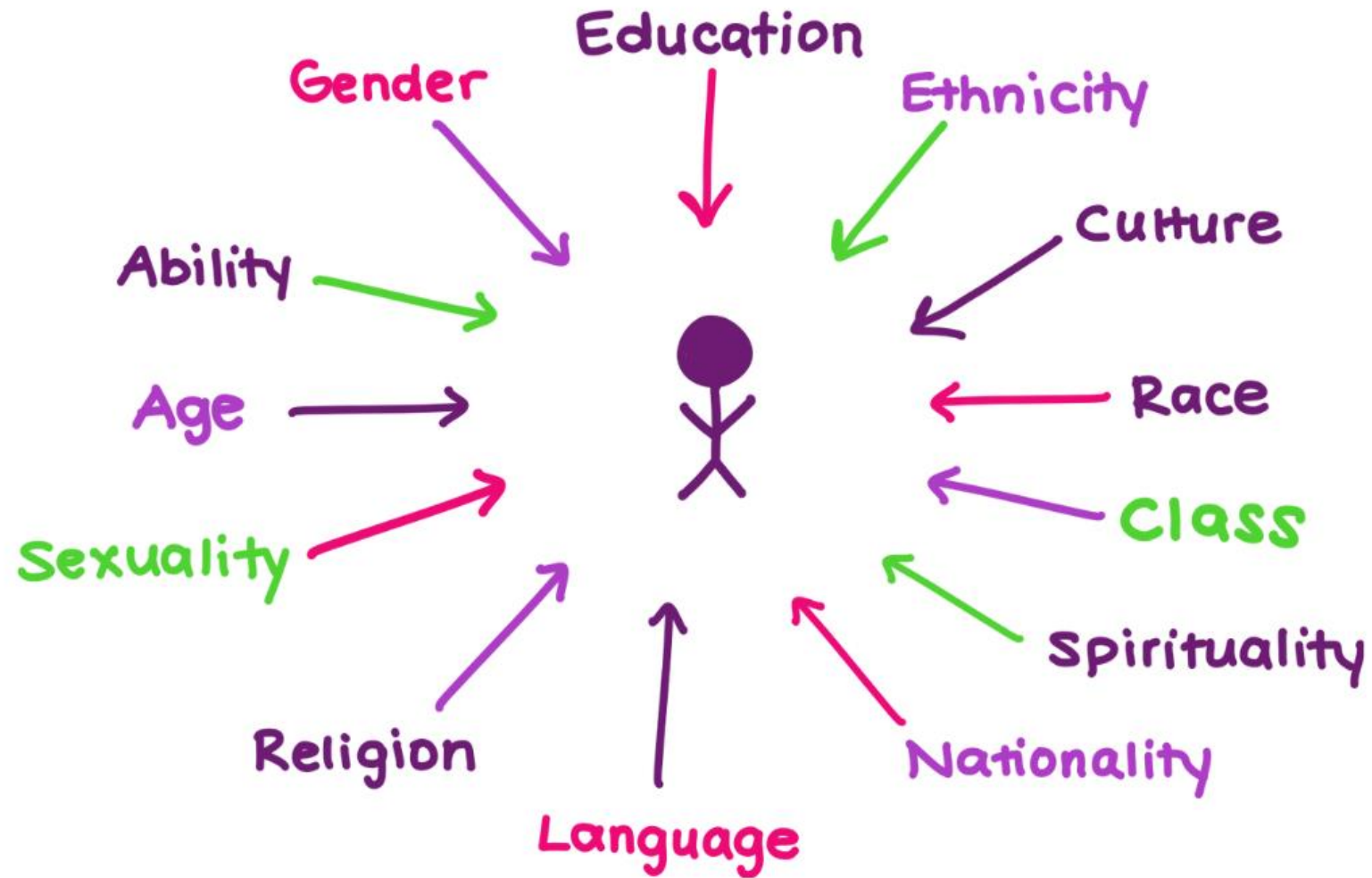
- Do these terms from two different discourses have anything to offer each other (and us)?
- Do approaches to intergenerational solidarity include intersectional perspectives? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What difference would it make if we brought an intersectional framework based in human rights law to how we understand and strive to promote intergenerational solidarity?

2. Intersectionality: origins, nature and scope (1)

Origins of the term in US legal scholarship in the context of the interaction of race- and gender-based discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) against African-American women

“Intersectionality has . . . emerged as the go-to idea for making sense of disadvantage which cannot be neatly segregated into silos of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, ageism etc.” (Atrey, 2021)

“Intersectionality refers to the fact that one and the same person can belong to several distinct groups, each of whose members are victimized by widespread discrimination. This overlapping membership can generate experiences of discrimination that are very different from those of persons who belong to just one, or the other, of the groups” (Altman, 2020)



Source: IWDA, <https://iwda.org.au/what-does-intersectional-feminism-actually-mean/> (Sign art by Julie Devine)

2. Intersectionality: origins, nature and scope (2)

The concept has expanded beyond the particular axes of race and gender to include a variety of other characteristics and status – treated as an open-ended list.

“women’s ethnicity/race, indigenous or minority status, colour, socioeconomic status and/or caste, language, religion or belief, political opinion, national origin, marital status, maternity, parental status, age, urban or rural location, health status, disability, property ownership, being lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex, illiteracy, seeking asylum, being a refugee, internally displaced or stateless, widowhood, migration status, heading households, living with HIV/AIDS, being deprived of liberty, and being in prostitution, as well as trafficking in women, situations of armed conflict, geographical remoteness and the stigmatization of women who fight for their rights, including human rights defenders.. ..”

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General recommendation No 28 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992)*, [CEDAW/C/GC/35](#), para 12 (2017) (footnotes omitted)

2. Intersectionality: origins, nature and scope (3)

“What is intersectionality? Is it an idea, a concept, a metaphor, a theory and praxis, a research paradigm, a heuristic and analytical tool, a methodological approach and epistemological stance or an analytical and political orientation?” (Atrey 2021, 5 (footnotes omitted))

2. Intersectionality and older persons

An awareness of the relevance of intersectionality:

- Requires us to be alert to the diversity of older persons and that their experiences are the result of many different individual and group characteristics and institutional arrangements and practices
- Challenges us to adopt a nuanced approach when assessing the situation of “the older generation” – we cannot assume that experiences are uniform -- this makes intergenerational comparisons more complex
- A life course approach also is informed by and bolsters an intersectional analysis: how particular groups experience older age reflects at least in part discrimination and deprivation at earlier stages of life.

3. Intergenerational solidarity: concept, slogan, descriptor or normative?

- “social cohesion between generations” (Bengtson), with a range of different dimensions
- addresses both relations within a family or with kin, as well as between cohorts in society (“generations”)
- can take different forms -- social relations between generations can change over time
- does not involve only harmonious and relaxed relationships
- predominantly a descriptive and explanatory concept (?)
- also appealed to as a goal and means to achieve objectives – presumptively a good thing
- some analyses do appear to reflect diversity in their analyses, as well as a life course approach, but intersectionality?

4. Does intergenerational solidarity (necessarily) lead to better protection of human rights?

- Concept that is malleable and indeterminate as a normative concept
- Does not expressly refer to human rights norms though some understandings and practices of intergenerational solidarity might align with human rights standards and values
- For example, a social security or old age pension system funded from current revenue (that is, not contributory) reflects various human rights, eg
 - Right to an adequate standard of living
 - Right to social security
- Does the concept of intergenerational solidarity provide any standard for assessing whether a particular model or form is “fair” or otherwise socially acceptable or justifiable?

5. Do human rights, including intersectional perspectives, offer the potential to inform and promote intergenerational solidarity?

- Addressing the rights and needs of persons as they age and reach older age requires an understanding of the specificities of different groups of older persons – an intersectional approach
- International human rights offers both an analytical tool and a normative and policy framework to identify and address the rights and needs of older persons in a way that is fair and proportionate on a social level
- A life course approach teaches us the lesson that achieving children's rights, women's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities (among others) at all stages of life is an end in itself, but also a way of achieving the rights of older persons and a form of intergenerationally solidarity

6. A new international convention on the human rights of older persons as a means of promoting human rights and intergenerational solidarity

- The existing international human rights framework fails to identify and specify in detail the specific rights and needs of older persons
- A new treaty is needed and could offer a unique and significant boost to improving the lives of older persons (and thereby to intergenerational solidarity)
- It would also embody intersectional perspectives and a life course approach to identifying and protecting the rights and needs of older persons.

References

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