Intersectionality is a critical and necessary concept to develop effective programs to broaden the participation of women and girls in computing. This resource provides a background and overview of the concept, in addition to key readings and resources related to women and girls of color in STEM and computing.

A Brief Timeline of Intersectionality

Mid-late 1800’s
During the first wave of feminism, the discourse and writings of black scholars including Sojourner Truth (ncwit.org/SojournerTruth), Anna Julia Cooper (ncwit.org/AnnaCooper), and Marietta Stewert (ncwit.org/MariettaStewart) call attention to the experiences of black women that were shaped by race, class, and gender and were often different from middle-class white women’s experiences.

1970’s-1980’s
The scholarship and activism of black women and other women of color (bell hooks, Combahee River Collective, Glenda Avrich, and Patricia Hill Collins, for example) start to proliferate academic and community spaces. Their work engages important discussions around privilege, oppression, and identity politics both within and beyond their communities. 

1989
Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (ncwit.org/KimberleCrenshaw) introduces the term intersectionality, advocating for a multidimensional approach to understand black women’s experiences over a “single-axis analysis.”

2000’s-Today
An intersectional approach is an important component of the landscape of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Age, color, sexual identity, religion, ethnicity, and other layers of identity are also examined in addition to race, class, and gender identities.

Related NCWIT Resources on Intersectionality

Modern Figures Podcast
ncwit.org/modernfigures

The Importance of Multiple Approaches to Intersectionality
ncwit.org/ImportanceOfComplexity

Collaborating to Grow the Pathway of Native Americans in STEM
ncwit.org/nativeamericanwhitepaper

Critical Listening Guide
ncwit.org/criticallistening

Latinas & Tecnología de la Información
ncwit.org/LatinasYTecnologia

Intersectionality: How Do We Address Multiple Identities and Biases at Once
ncwit.org/MultipleBiases

Finding Hidden Figures
ncwit.org/hiddenfigures

Black Women and Girls in Computing Roundtable
ncwit.org/BlackWomenRoundtable
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ncwit.org/ncwitnccehowtotakeacomp

Critical Listening Guide
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Intersectionality is a WAY OF THINKING that takes into consideration the perspectives and experiences of individuals from underrepresented groups and marginalized populations.

An intersectional approach recognizes that one’s social location—acontingent standpoints rather than just one singular standpoint—brings multiple, interconnected identities and distinct experiences. Employing an intersectional framework acknowledges that there are social systems in place that create barriers and challenges for some individuals, while simultaneously providing privilege and power for others.

While the idea originated from the scholarship of black women, an intersectional lens is an important tool in Advancing Social Justice for all groups in today’s society.

A Bibliography of Key Readings

For a deeper exploration into the ideas and components of intersectionality, and to learn more about the experiences of women and girls of color in STEM and computing, we recommend the following readings and resources.


**Women and Girls of Color:**

- Women of color are underrepresented in many fields and industries, including, but not limited to: women of African American descent, women of Asian American descent, women of Latina and Laotian descent, and Native American women. For more information on this term, see Refinery29’s Gender Nation Glossary (ncwit.org/GenderGlossary)

**Issues of Race & Gender:**


- ² The concept of intersectionality was developed by Kimberle Crenshaw, a professor at UCLA School of Law. For more information on this term, see Crenshaw, Kimberle (1989). “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8.


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- Collaborating to Grow the Pathway of Native Americans in STEM, White Paper
- ncwit.org/ImportanceOfComplexity
- Critical Listening Guide
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- Latinas & Tecnología de la Información
- ncwit.org/LatinasYTecnologia
- Intersectionality: How Do We Address Multiple Identities and Biases at Once
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A Bibliography of Key Readings

For a deeper exploration into the ideas and components of intersectionality, and to learn more about the experiences of women and girls of color in STEM and computing, we recommend the following readings and resources.

16. Women and STEM: It’s Not Just a Numbers Problem (Essay)....

What is Intersectionality?
Intersectionality is a WAY OF THINKING that takes into consideration the perspectives and experiences of individuals from underrepresented groups and marginalized populations.

An intersectional approach recognizes that one’s social location—whether shaped by race, class, gender and other dimensions of who we are—creates multiple, interconnected identities and distinct experiences.

Employing an intersectional framework acknowledges that there are social systems in place that create BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES for some individuals, while simultaneously providing PRIVILEGE and POWER FOR others.

Women and Girls of Color: Refers to self-identifying women and girls from underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups, and girls from underrepresented social or perspective.

Icelanders, and Native Americans. Refers to self-identifying women and girls from underrepresented groups and marginalized populations.

Essential Terms of Intersectionality

Intersectionality
Is the idea that one’s position in society is made up of multiple intersecting factors. For example, a Black woman may be a member of multiple communities such as Black, female, working class, etc. An intersectional lens is an important tool in understanding those differences is critical to promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Why an Intersectional Lens Matters in Tech

Young women and girls from UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS FACE ADDITIONAL BARRIERS related to their participation and engagement in computing and technology within K-12 as well as higher education.

REFRAMES TECHNOLOGY AS A WAY OF THINKING

Women and girls of color are regular and avid users of technology, but they lag behind in representation and participation at all levels.

Achieving equity in the tech industry must be intersectional: race, class, gender, sexuality, and other key factors of identity shape experiences differently; and, understanding these differences is critical in promoting diversity, inclusion, and change for women, girls, and other underrepresented groups in IT.

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What is Intersectionality?

Intersectionality is a WAY OF THINKING that takes into consideration the perspectives and experiences of individuals from underrepresented groups and marginalized populations.

An intersectional approach recognizes that one’s social location—often shaped by race, class, gender and other dimensions of who we are creates multiple, INTERCONNECTED IDENTITIES AND DISTINCT EXPERIENCES.

Employing an Intersectional Framework acknowledges that there are social systems in place that create BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY.

What an Intersectional Lens Matters in Tech

Young women and girls from UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS FACE ADDITIONAL BARRIERS related to their participation in and engagement in computing technology including the need to have a higher education.

A Bibliography of Key Readings

For a deeper exploration into the ideas and concepts of intersectionality, and to learn more about the experiences of women and girls of color in STEM and computing, we recommend the following readings and resources.

Achieving parity in the tech industry must be intersectional: race, class, gender, sexuality, and other key factors of identity shape experiences differently, and understanding these differences is critical to promoting diversity, inclusion, and change for women, girls, and other underrepresented groups in IT.
Why an Intersectional Lens Matters in Tech

Young women and girls from UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS FACE ADDITIONAL BARRIERS related to their participation and engagement in computing and technology within its academic and higher education life experiences (standpoint).

Intersectivities in a WAY OF THINKING that takes into consideration the perspectives and experiences of individuals from underrepresented groups and marginalized populations.

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A Bibliography of Key Readings

For a deeper exploration into the ideas and components of intersectionality, and to learn more about the experiences of women and girls of color in STEM and computing, we recommend the following readings and resources.

1. Addressing the Intersectionality-Identity Phenomenon through School Counseling.


5. Not Yet, Women! The Promise of STEM Intersections in the Twenty-First Century


7. Women and STEM: It’s not Just a Numbers Problem

8. Intersectionality-Identity Development of Underrepresented Female Students of Color
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Related NCWIT Resources on Intersectionality

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- The Importance of Multiple Approaches to Intersectionality: ncwit.org/ImportanceOfComplexity
- Collaborating to Grow the Pathway of Native Americans in STEM: White Paper: ncwit.org/nativeamericanwhitepaper
- Critical Listening Guide: ncwit.org/criticallistening
- Latinas & Tecnología de la Información: ncwit.org/LatinasYTecnologia
- Intersectionality: How Do We Address Multiple Identities and Biases at Once: ncwit.org/MultipleBiases
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- Black Women and Girls in Computing Roundtable: ncwit.org/BlackWomenRoundtable

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