Intersectional Design Cards

A Design Activity to Create Radically Inclusive Products, Processes, and Paradigms

Gendered Innovations
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Welcome to the Cards!

Our goal was to create a toolkit for design and engineering teams that is responsive to intersectional needs and perspectives.

The Intersectional Design Cards are designed to help teams explore and develop intersectional design solutions.
Each deck includes:

- A Guide Booklet
- Set of 12 Intersectional Factor Definition Cards
- Set of 12 Design Question Cards
- Set of 16 Case Study Cards
Why use these cards?

The cards were designed to help people and teams:

✓ Navigate assumptions and biases to avoid designing to stereotypes.
✓ Integrate intersectional design thinking into your design work - from the beginning.
✓ Course correct.
✓ Identify new markets and business opportunities.
✓ Build an equitable, sustainable, and just society.
This work evolved out of an ongoing collaboration by an interdisciplinary team of researchers, designers, and practitioners, who conduct research, hold workshops, and teach classes at Stanford University’s Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, the d.school.
The cards were prototyped for over a year, and included feedback from fellow educators, students, and industry experts.
Designed for use with designers and non-designers alike, the deck begins with a set of definitions:

What is intersectionality?  
What is design?  
What is intersectional design?
Definition

Intersectionality

In 1989, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality to describe how multiple forms of discrimination intersect in Black women’s lives in ways that are erased when sexism and racism are treated separately. Since then, the term has been expanded to describe intersecting forms of inequity emerging from structural advantages and disadvantages in society.

Intersectional design considers overlapping or “intersecting” factors—including gender, ethnicity, age, geographic location, etc.—that interact to shape a person’s or a group’s experience and social opportunities as a starting point for a more inclusive design approach.
What are intersectional design factors?

Since 1989, intersectionality has broadened from gender and race, to describe multiple intersecting factors emerging from structural advantages and disadvantages in society. Intersecting factors may include age, social and economic status, educational background, geographical location, etc. that interact to shape a person's or a group's experience and social opportunities.

Our design case studies include—but are not limited to—the twelve intersecting factors, listed at left.

Other factors may include appearance, language, political ideology, religion, immigration status, work background, Indigeneity, physical and mental health, and more.
Example of Intersectional Factor Definition Cards
Customization

The deck was created to adapt, with room for organizations and individuals to add factors that are relevant to their work.
What is intersectional design?

Intersectional Design drives innovation while supporting social justice and environmental sustainability. It’s about getting the design right for people across all of society—from the very beginning.
How do we define design?

Today, we recognize that design encompasses many different things. Take, for example, the smart phone. Design might mean the look and feel of the device in your hand; the experience of video chatting or using a virtual assistant; the network of hardware and software that the device connects to; and/or the cultural trends that emerge through using the device in new and unforeseen ways.

01 Form & Function
The look and feel of a design, its physical qualities and characteristics; and the impact of its materials and production on the environment.

02 Experiences & Services
User/customer experience, brand interaction, business models, strategies, and design decision-making.

03 Systems & Infrastructures
Systems thinking, sustainability, interdisciplinarity, networks, and databases.

04 Paradigms & Purpose
Conceptual frameworks, models, worldviews, major cultural themes, archetypes, ideologies, and mindsets.

Question Index Card

There are 4 question cards pertaining to each level.
Example of Question Cards

**Gender**
Refers to cultural attitudes and behaviors that shape products, technologies, environments, and knowledge—and includes: gender norms, gender identity, and gender relations.

Gender is multi-dimensional and may include women, men, transgender, genderqueer, gender-diverse individuals, non-binary, etc.

**Race**
Racial attributes, such as skin tone, may be important to design for developing technologies; e.g., facial recognition or infrared sensors may perform differently on different skin tones. In the U.S., the term race is used. However, terminology may differ across countries.

**Disability**
Refers to different physical or neural divergent conditions that relate to movement, sense, or activities. Disabilities may impact how people interact with a product or service. Some may be visually impaired; others may have limited mobility or dexterity.

**Sustainability**
Refers to environmentally responsible design that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generations. One sustainable design approach is Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA), a methodology for assessing environmental impacts associated with all stages of the life cycle of a product, process, or service.
The deck is organized into three sets:

- **Set 1**: Definitions
- **Set 2**: Questions
- **Set 3**: Case Studies

*Intersectional Design Cards*
01 Form & Function

How might your product be made customizable?

For example, how might you address sex-specific biomechanics, anthropometrics, physiology, and physical strength? Or skin tones, in facial recognition, for example? Are you considering how strength and dexterity differs for young people and elderly people?
02 Experiences & Services

Question 3

Who might be marginalized within your target demographic?

Have you considered intersecting factors that may reveal sub-group differences between people that would otherwise have been obscured? The elderly? The disabled? Men? Women? Cis? Trans? How might you design experiences and services for them?

Virtual Assistants

Key Intersecting Factors: Gender, Ethnicity, Sexuality

Voice Assistants have primarily been gendered as women, which has perpetuated negative stereotypes of female voices. In a group of Danish researchers, the first genderless voice powering the voice was achieved by combining strands of gender-fluid and gender-neutral voices to create a genderless range that is difficult to categorize as either female or male. Voice designers hope to add a viable option for genderless voices to their virtual assistants.

Voice Assistants to avoid bias, they recognize that something about users’ gender, age, race, location, etc. Black English and other accents, for example, may be filtered out and cannot be used to detect rudeness and
03 Systems & Infrastructures

How might your design change as social or environmental relations change in the coming years?

For example, in which ways might your design assume a traditional division of labor? How are you taking into account climate change challenges?

Transportation Planning

Key Intersecting Factors: Family Configuration, Gender

Transportations data by journey purpose to plan additional data categories include, employment, education, and shopping.

Categories capture carework—caring for children and households—even though, categorically, “care-related trips” become a category by trip purpose.

Is there a surplus of caregivers? Caregivers tend to make multiple, short trips that are grouped in one long commute trip. Taking caregivers’ travel patterns allows planners to design systems that work for broader segments of the population.
04 Paradigms & Purpose

What kind of future worlds would you like to see your design working within?

For example, how might your design fit into a genderless world? An intergenerational world? A socially just world? Which will your product, service and/or organization foster?
We purposefully designed the deck to be used in multiple ways.

Each person or team may have a different goal for using the deck.

To get you started, we suggest three ways to use the cards:

1. **Start a conversation**
   - **Activity #1: Definition review**
   - **Directions:**
     1. As a team, read through all of Set 1: Definitions.
     2. Break into small groups and discuss the intersectoral factors definitions.
     3. Consider how the definitions might apply to different situations or contexts. What implications do they have in practice?

2. **Brainstorm ideas**
   - **Activity #2: Creative Combination**
   - **Directions:**
     1. Using Set 1: Definitions, randomly select 2 intersectoral factors cards. Consider how these factors might interact or impact each other.
     2. Creatively combine the cards and brainstorm ideas at the intersection. (E.g. An intergenerational waste management system for students and aging population.)
     3. Record your intersectoral design ideas on post-it notes.
     4. Discuss each idea and explore how it could be implemented in practice.

3. **Critique your work**
   - **Activity #3: Critique questions**
   - **Directions:**
     1. Take out Set 2: Questions.
     2. Select a design level to explore in relation to your design work (e.g., Form & Function, Experiences & Services, Systems & Infrastructure). For example, you might choose to examine how a particular design idea impacts the way people use public spaces.
     3. From Set 2: Questions, draw out the 3 questions relating to the level(s) you chose.
     4. Use the questions to critique your design work. Select a scribe to capture the responses.
The cards are designed to visually connect with one another.

Teams can visualize the intersections between factors and answer questions pertaining to their products and services—or practice by analyzing the case studies.
Cards in Action

The cards, published in November 2021 and distributed by Stanford University Press, have been prototyped with students and start-up teams, presented at several conferences, and reviewed by industry professionals and academics.

Future workshops are planned with the Green Library at Stanford as well as several Silicon Valley tech companies.
Free Access Online

In addition to the physical deck, all of the case studies and questions are available online for free in order to reach as many people, organizations, and institutions as possible.

Accompanying website and digital version of the cards: https://intersectionaldesign.com/
Thank you, Core77!