

## Approaching Intersections in the Classroom

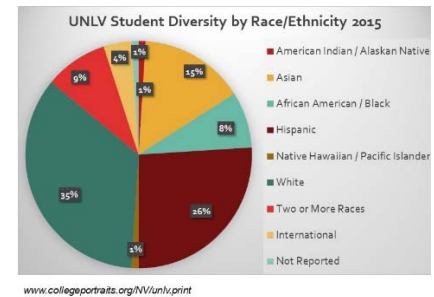
Shelly Volsche, MA

### The teaching practice and the need it addresses:

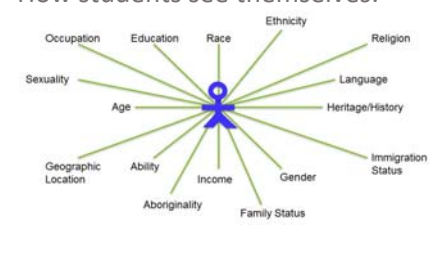
Universities often discuss diversity in terms of demographics. However, students and faculty experience diversity as a mix of identity markers always intersecting to varying degrees based upon context. By approaching the classroom with an intersectional paradigm, faculty can view students as individuals, not demographic groups or student numbers. This facilitates the use of Transparency in Learning (see *Peer Review*, Winter/Spring 2016) to meet students in their current academic “place” while helping them reach their full potential.

This practice grows on the paradigmatic foundations set forth by Intersectional Theory (e.g., Castiello Jones, Misra, & McCurley, 2013) to embrace the idea that diversity is more than an external concept of variation. Instead, these varying identity components also interact with the self, providing each student with a unique set of knowledge and experiences that impact student engagement and success.

#### How we often see students:



#### How students see themselves:



### Evidence this practice benefits students:

By implementing this approach, I have encouraged neither a student-centered nor faculty-centered classroom. Instead, the classroom becomes a community of junior academics and a guide who grow together through questioning and understanding each other. The success of this approach is reflected in student evaluations as well as grading and growth.

### Resources and where to find them:

Few address intersectional theory as a pedagogy in higher education. Examples include:

- Intersectionality & higher education: Theory, research, & praxis. Mitchell, D., Simmons, C., & Greyerbiehl, L. (Eds.) (2014).
- Using mixed methods to study intersectionality in higher education: New directions in institutional research, number 151. Museus, S., & Griffin, K. (2011).

### How other FYE teachers might adopt this practice

Faculty can begin by identifying individual student needs as opposed to educational status by group (i.e., race or gender). Inclusion can also be applied via worksheets and class activities, as well as considering the varying life histories brought to the classroom by students (and faculty).

**COLA 100E – Student Information Sheet**

Section \_\_\_\_\_

Registered Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Daily Name: \_\_\_\_\_

NSHE #: \_\_\_\_\_ Pronoun: \_\_\_\_\_

RebelMail: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Band/Musician: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Book Read: \_\_\_\_\_

What is an academic issue that concerns you? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is a world/cultural issue that concerns you? \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you keep your spirits up in difficult times? \_\_\_\_\_

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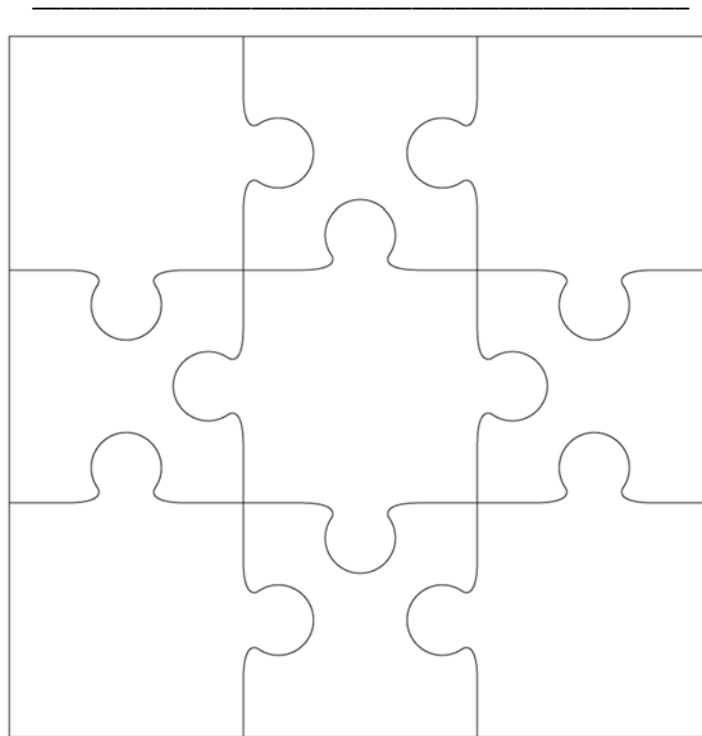
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**Thank you for sharing!**

## Puzzle Pieces of My Self

The purpose of this activity is to begin to think about how different pieces of identity fit together to make the whole person. Like pieces of a puzzle, each identity we embrace takes on a unique shape that locks into other pieces for a total self.

Write your name in the provided line at the top of the puzzle. In each puzzle piece, provide different identities with which you associate. This can include anything: your ethnic heritage, your gender, family roles, country of origin, hobbies, parental status, religion, etc. Think about your broad and narrow identities.



1. Fill in each puzzle piece with one of the many identities you hold.
2. Form groups (2-3) to answer the following questions together:
  1. Which of these identities are you most proud of? Why?
  2. Which of these identities have you ever been ashamed of? Why?
  3. Describe a stereotype associated with one of your identities and explain how that is not consistent with who are you. For example?

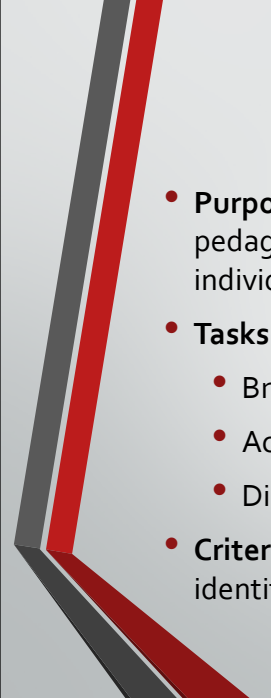
I am (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ but I am NOT (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_.



**Approaching Intersections in the Classroom**

Shelly Volsche, MA  
UNLV Academic Success Center

36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience  
February 13, 2017



## Outline

- **Purpose:** To discuss how the intersectional paradigm can function as a pedagogical lens for faculty and staff of diverse universities to “see” individual students.
- **Tasks:**
  - Brief Lecture
  - Activity
  - Discussion
- **Criteria:** You feel empowered to perceive and communicate the multiple identities at play within your students – and within yourself.

## About UNLV

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Most Diverse Campuses in the Nation  
*U.S. News & World Report, Campus Ethnic Diversity, 1 of 5 colleges*
- MSI & HIS status
- Emerging AANAPISI
- And this is only ethnic diversity!

## About UNLV

UNLV UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

☰ About UNLV

### Student Statistics

Fall 2015

Total Headcount	28,600
Undergraduate	23,801 (83%)
Graduate	4,819 (17%)
Men	12,552 (44%)
Women	16,048 (56%)
Minorities	15,868 (55%)
Resident	24,000 (84%)
Nonresident	4,601 (16%)

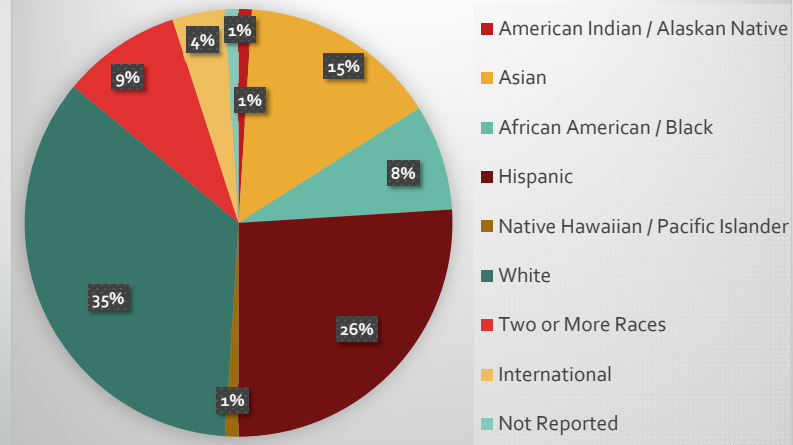
Source: UNLV Analytics Enrollment Census - Official Fall 2015 Preliminary; Office of Decision Support, 05-OCT-2015

## About Me

- Cultural Anthropologist by training
- Family variation to love and marriage, China and back
- FYS Instructor for 2 yrs
- Collector of stories

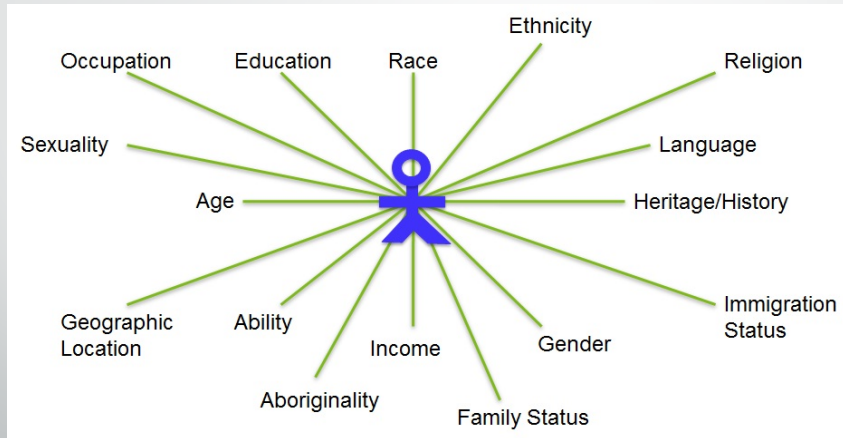
## Diversity by Demographics

UNLV Student Diversity by Race/Ethnicity 2015



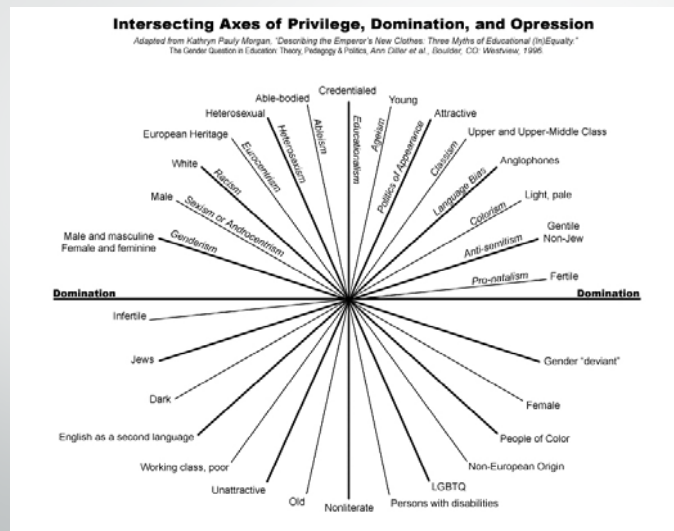
[www.collegeportraits.org/NV/unlv.print](http://www.collegeportraits.org/NV/unlv.print)

# Diversity from the Student Perspective



Source: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

# Intersectionality



## Intersectionality as a Pedagogical Paradigm

- It's a growth mindset<sup>1</sup>
- See individual students, not student #'s
- Enhance community building
- Transparency in Learning<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dweck, C. (2007). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

<sup>2</sup>Winkelmes, M., Bernacki, M., Butler, J., Zochowski, M., Glanics, J., & Harris Weavil, K. (2016) *Peer Review*, 18(1/2).

## Application

### Student Information Sheet

#### COLA 100E – Student Information Sheet

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\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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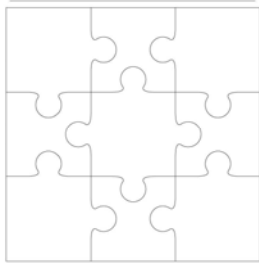
# Application

## Identity Puzzle

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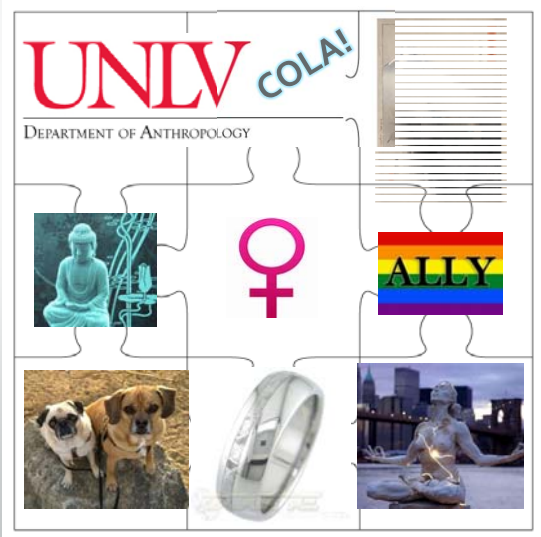
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Volsche 2015

# Identity as a Puzzle

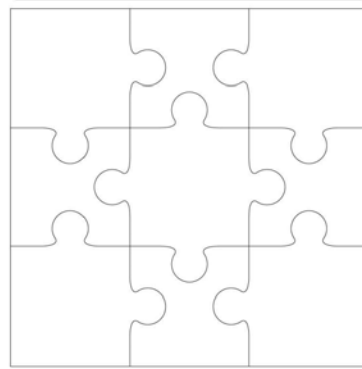
For the Handout!

You are *not required to share beyond your comfort* level, but you are encouraged to share if it adds value and learning to the conversation.



## Your Turn!

### Identity Puzzle



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I am (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ but I am NOT (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_.

## Thank you!

### Questions? Let's talk about it!

- Academic Success Center
  - Dr. McDonough
  - Dr. Gianoutsos
  - Dr. Ervin
  - And the rest of the Academic Transitions team!
- Anthropology Doctoral Advisory Committee
  - Dr. William Jankowiak, chair
  - Dr. Peter Gray
  - Dr. Jiemin Bao
  - Dr. David Dickens, outside member
- Graduate College Teaching Program



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