

Intersectional Mentoring, Solidarity and Advocacy in Higher Education

A Caribbean Perspective



Editor: Talia R. Esnard

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Intersectional Mentoring, Solidarity and Advocacy in Higher Education: A Caribbean Perspective

EDITED BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*For Public Sociology
In memory of Professor Michael Burawoy
June 15, 1947–February 3, 2025*



Picture: American Sociological Association Annual Conference, August 20, 2023.

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About the Editor

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Foreword

Mentoring and Intersectionality: A Call to Action

Intersectional Mentoring, Solidarity and Advocacy in Higher Education: A Caribbean Perspective offers perspectives on mentoring and its role in ameliorating issues of intersectionality in the Caribbean. Each chapter calls us to contemplate how observable and non-observable issues of intersectionality may interact to create experiences of privilege and oppression. The issues highlighted throughout the chapters demonstrate the various ways in which mentoring can be used to respond to and address these issues. The book therefore is timely, relevant and pregnant with possibilities to drive actions.

Importantly, Esnard opens the book with opportunities for historical contemplations by the reader as the book begins with a historical look at intersectionality while connecting this work with mentoring frameworks in the Caribbean. No doubt this will help the reader to critically consider the advancements made in this area and the work yet to be done. The criticality of this historical foundation resonates with the ideologies of Marcus Garvey (2009) who notes that 'history is the landmark by which we are directed into the true course of life' (p. 18). Consequently, any scholarship produced must take into consideration the past while examining the present and charting a path for the future. To this end, this book has done justice to this call to action.

In seeking to further the call to action, the book calls its readers to explore understandings of socially constructed differences and the attending impact on Caribbean identity. In offering this exploration, Esnard in this book is asking us to question and perhaps rethink what we may consider Caribbean identity. Drawing on empirical case studies from Trinidad and Tobago, the book draws the reader's attention to socially constructed issues such as gender, appearance and domestic violence and makes a brave and modest attempt to wrestle with the complexities of these issues within the country context of Trinidad and Tobago. Taking into consideration the post-colonial context of the Caribbean, these issues are steeped in the colonial legacy of the Caribbean. Across and within Caribbean countries, representations of language, appearance and acceptable norms differ, and as such though having a common history of coloniality, vast differences exist. Some will argue that this difference is what makes the Caribbean a rich melting pot of histories, identities and cultures. Given the complexities within this richness, the book opens the door for an expansion of research on these issues within and across Caribbean countries to further understandings of how these issues impact

understanding of self. Such research is crucial for raising consciousness and for communicating that our quest as Caribbean people is not to operate as victims but to find answers that will drive our solutions for resolving issues.

A common and thought-provoking theme within the book is the quest for innovations in intersectional scholarship. Innovations will lead to inquiry for self-understandings. Such inquiry is at the heart of furthering Caribbean ontology and epistemology and developing institutional structures that recognize, support and build co-operation around responding to issues of inequities, domination and oppression. In fact, the book offers intersectionality as a method for achieving such aims.

Through various forms of education, members of Caribbean societies would have internalized constructs of the self that perpetuate oppression, injustice and hierarchical domination. Paradoxically, it is to this education in all its forms that we must return to apply intersectionality in unearthing these issues and responding to them effectively. Furthermore, since higher education research should drive knowledge at the lower levels of the education system and in the wider society, it is crucial for higher education to demonstrate willingness to use teaching, research and mentoring to assist the educative process. But one must be cautious in how higher education aids the process of addressing issues of intersectionality, as [Roofe et al. \(2025\)](#) argue that higher education often perpetuates stereotypical roles. Citing research on cis-gendered norms in a Jamaica higher education institution, one research participant in their study who identified as a male noted that within Jamaica as a patriarchal society individuals see the male voice as influential and uncontested and as such though, he was one of few males in a postgraduate course he often felt the need to enable the female voice. Authors such as [Stewart \(2019\)](#) also note how women struggle in the academy to sustain their work while balancing caring responsibilities and other researchers have noted that though more women are dominating the higher education space they are sometimes treated as intellectual intruders and are asked to play more service roles ([Esnard & Cobb-Roberts, 2018](#); [Hamilton, 2015](#); [Roofe et al., 2025](#)). Additionally, [Thailinger et al. \(2023\)](#) make the argument that there are non-observable characteristics that perpetuate issues of intersectionality. These issues highlighted are linked to cultural issues of patriarchy within the Caribbean. As such, thoughtful, deliberate attention must be given to considerations that are employed in utilizing mentoring to respond to issues of intersectionality. Nonetheless, [Roofe and Miller \(2015\)](#) argue that the positives of mentoring in higher education outweigh the negatives and as such should be facilitated through structures that are unique to each context. Therefore, like [Esnard](#) in this book, there is no doubt that for quality sustainable teaching and scholarship within the Caribbean region to flourish mentoring that caters to the uniqueness of each context is a necessity. Such mentoring must help individuals return to and move forward with a version of self that is built on the valuing of the foundational legacies of the rich histories of those who have started this work.

To further support [Esnard's](#) call to action in this book, I ask us to contemplate the role of the personal curriculum and Caribbean orality in addressing

issues of intersectionality. The personal curriculum, unlike the formal written curriculum, represents the thinking, assumptions, feelings and individualized experiences of people who exist in space or place. As such, it is shaped by an individual's personal and educational experiences over time. Importantly, the personal curriculum is not bounded by time, specific institutional contexts nor institutional imperatives (Billett, 2023). Consequently, addressing issues of intersectionality through the personal curriculum requires intentionally attending to people related activities necessary for changing and shaping minds and culture. This requires patience and is time-consuming, as the process should not be rushed. Time must be spent helping individuals understand, unlearn old ways, learn new ways, and reshape the thinking and habits that would have given them their identities. This essentially is part of the decolonizing project of the personal curriculum. This is a complex undertaking that requires bold advocacy in oral and written ways and through traditional and non-traditional media. This book by Esnard offers a glimpse into how we can foster the solidarity that is needed to do this work.

Within the text, Esnard also calls for fluid, experiential and consciousness raising processes to address intersectional sensitivities. In weighing in on this call, I offer Caribbean orality as an opportunity and a response to addressing intersectional sensitivities. Caribbean orality speaks to the oral curriculum. This oral curriculum focuses on the meanings people attach to the spoken word as ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge and is reflective of the situational frames of the local context (Drabinski, 2016; Roofe, 2022). The meanings people attach to such spoken words may differ based on how words are communicated and who is communicating at a particular time. Addressing intersectional sensitivities then requires giving attention to who is carrying the messaging of change to address the inequalities within the dynamics of the various Caribbean countries and how the messaging of change is being carried. Caribbean orality aligns with Esnard's call for a public pedagogy. Such public pedagogy is critical since a crucial aspect of Caribbean societies is their oral nature. This orality is based on the telling of stories, several repetitions of what is spoken through group introspection and apprenticeship as avenues for remembering (Ong, 1982). These ways of knowing may not necessarily involve formalized language and ideologies nor what is written in canonized text. As such, processes and structures being designed must take this into consideration so that solutions are unique to contextual peculiarities. Additionally, deliberate attention must be given to the 'naturalness' of Caribbean countries and institutions in designing solutions. To this, I would say there is not one size that fits all approach to mentoring and attending to intersectional sensitivity requires both formal, informal and non-formal ways.

This book is therefore an important contribution to the quest to achieve quality education and the development of citizens who are thoughtful and conscious of their actions necessary for advancement. I therefore conclude with a call to imagine, as expressed by Dennis (2021), through research exploring cultural practices as local knowledge systems in Trinidad and Tobago. "Imagine what life would be like if people in the Caribbean shook off the racist ideologies embedded

in their institutions and acknowledge the valuable knowledge that exists in the range of cultural practices in the region” (Dennis, 2021, p. 254).

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Preface

As I write this preface, I have now learnt of the tragic accident and loss of Michael Burawoy, whose work has inspired this volume.

As I heard this news, I could not help but reflect on the momentous occasion where I met both Michael Burawoy and Patricia Hill Collins at the American Sociological Association (ASA) Conference, Philadelphia, in 2023. In that year, ASA centered on the *Educative Power of Sociology* to capture some of the practices that enhance and help sustain our discipline and can address some of the more complex problems within the broader society.

At that conference, both Michael Burawoy and Patricia Hill Collins were featured speakers within a Presidential Panel on the “Sociological Thought and the Transformative Vision of Paulo Freire.” Their engagement in Paulo Freire’s work and disclosure of their own thoughts and practices communicated to me the importance of scholarship and activism, but more importantly, of the commitment and solidarity that are needed to do transformative work.

As I listened to the panelists, I reflected not just on the calls for action and praxis within and beyond the academy but also on the possibilities for infusing aspects of critical pedagogy within such efforts. I actively processed the importance of converting this kind of advocacy work into tangible outcomes that positively impact the lives and futures of those who are part of our communities of practice and care. I located then, my own engagement of intersectionality over the last few years, my knowledge of the structural, cultural and relational impediments within institutional change, but also, my own conviction around the importance of using these acumens to drive collective action.

This book is a testament of that influence and commitment. Through this work, I demonstrate the possibilities within intersectional advocacy and solidarity. I deploy the use of public pedagogy, as a purposeful teaching approach and mentoring strategy, and to bridge the gap between intersectionality, mentoring and public sociology. This fusing of critical schemas and practice represents here an attempt to advance the process and outcomes of working with, what Michael Burawoy has referred to as our first publics. I extend the potential for public sociology but within explorations of intersectional mentoring and solidarity. These are collectively reflected on, in this volume, to speak to the power and potential for decolonizing intersectionality, mentoring, solidarity and activism.

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Acknowledgments

This work is premised on the potential for intersectional solidarity and public sociology. I am therefore grateful for the pioneering scholarship of Michael Burawoy and Patricia Hill Collins whose work has inspired this volume.

I am particularly appreciative of Michael Burawoy, who, before his unfortunate passing, stood more than willing to read this work. I stand immensely thankful for the optimism and spiritedness that he communicated during our in-person and email exchanges. He has left many signposts and imprints that provide direction and inspiration.

I am also thankful to the doctoral students who also moved within and through this type of mentoring work. Thank you all for trusting the process, of its intent and future possibilities. Thank you for staying on the course and for working through pathways of solidarity. Your journeys serve as testaments of grit, purpose and intersectional mentorship!

Thank you!

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Chapter 1

Intersectional Travels, Applications and Directions

Talia R. Esnard

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Abstract

This chapter sets the background and scope of the book. The aims are twofold. First, the chapter delves into the origin and development of intersectional scholarship with explorations of diverse subject areas and geographies where this framework has been applied. In this review, the chapter maps the methodological frameworks, disciplines, questions, philosophical underpinnings and assumptions that have guided the advancements and contentions around intersectional work. The chapter ends a discussion on the framing of intersectional mentoring and solidarity as needed areas for explorations within this field.

Keywords: Intersectionality; travels; Caribbean; movements; mentoring; solidarity; classroom; transformation

Introduction

While intersectionality as a framework has traveled across geographies and disciplines (Carbado et al., 2013), there are many questions that surface about its applicability and directionality (Paxton et al., 2007; Tripp, 2000). These critiques draw on the still limited global, transhistorical and contextual explorations that make visible the dialogs across differences, hierarchies and context (Carbado et al., 2013; Knapp, 2005). Similar questions surface around the actionability of existing applications, with calls for deeper explorations of intersectionality as knowledge projects and as praxis (Collins, 2015; Collins et al., 2021). The chapter

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maps out these travels with a critical engagement of the leanings, achievements and contentions. The chapter also takes these conversations forward, with a focus on intersectional mentoring and solidarity, as a way to bridge the gap between intersectional sensibility and applicability.

But What of Intersectional Leanings?

Intersectionality presents a specific analytical perspective, tool and strategic approach to social justice, but with diverse intellectual, political and practical leanings. On a general level, intersectionality has been captured as a concept (Knapp, 2005), buzzword (Davis, 2008), a metaphor (Acker, 2011; Collins, 2015), an epistemological perspective or research paradigm (Dhamoon, 2011; Hancock, 2007a; McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008), a justice oriented analytic framework (Hancock, 2013), as matrix, a heuristic device and as a knowledge project (Collins, 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2016). On a more operational level, “intersectionality ... [has been consistently acknowledged as part of an] idea that various forms of oppression [and privilege] interact with one another in multiple complex ways” (Garry, 2011, p. 826). Lykke (2010, pp. 50–51) elucidated that:

Intersectionality [is] considered as a theoretical and methodological tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or containing normativities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed socio-cultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, intra-act and in so doing produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations Depending on the theoretical framework, they [the societal mechanisms] can be theorized as dominance/subordination, in/exclusion, recognition/misrecognition, power/disempowerment, possession/dispossession, privilege/lack of privilege, majoritizing/minoritizing and so on.

The key aspect of intersectional thought is that of questioning and addressing the ways in which oppression and privilege remain intricately nested within multiple or interconnected axes of power. Key considerations are for the ways in which power structures differently shape and impact complex systems of dominations and inequalities. Inherent, but divergent foci have been on: (i) moving beyond essentialist or preconceived notions of difference (Carbado & Harris, 2019; Hancock, 2007b), (ii) advancing intersectional axes and standpoints (Carastathis, 2014; Hancock, 2011; Nair & Vollhardt, 2020) as well as (iii) capturing and resisting systems of oppression and privilege (Carastathis, 2008; Collins, 1990; DiAngelo, 2022; Garry, 2011). The push is also for the interpretation of these sensibilities and subjectivities within the structural and cultural framings that exists (Esnard & Cobb-Roberts, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2017).

Intersectionality however must be understood within the parameters of its intellectual and political origins (see Carastathis, 2016; Hancock, 2016). Understanding these complexities in some way require that we: (i) situate the history and origins of intersectional analysis to recognize the foundations and roots within feminist and Black feminist scholarship, (ii) extend knowledge on the variability of women's experiences (in particular, the voices and experiences of women of color) and (iii) develop political strategies and policies to reflect this variability. Davis (2008, p. 73) for instance highlighted, the significance of 1970s for locating attention to the multiple identities and sources of oppression for women of color. Such concerns for its genealogy have led to a recognition of Black American feminists and activists within the 1970s and 1980s, who have differently engaged in the complexities of race and gender intersections. To that extent, we see the many writings of Angela Davis (1982) with *Women, Race and Class*, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga (1984), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, Combahee River Collective (1982), *A Black Feminist Statement*, Audre Lorde (1984), *Sister Outsider* and Hull, Scott, and Smith (1982), *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* as critical to the scholarly and activist agendas of this historical period.

The late 1980s however has been described as a watershed moment for intersectional scholarship. In that period, the work of Kimberle Crenshaw, a legal theorist/scholar who examined why Black women's particular experiences were not accounted for within legal judgments, has been credited with coining of the neologism "intersectionality." For Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality was intended to serve as an analytical tool that both captures the experiences and addresses the struggles for women of color who fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Crenshaw argued for considerations that take "both gender and race on board and [that] show how they interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 68). She aptly demonstrated how intersectional subordination ... [emerged as a] consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1249). Through her use and engagement of several court cases, she disrupted the dismissal or rejected of cases in court where Black women claimed compensation for both racial and gendered discriminations within employment.

Patricia Hill Collins' framing of Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and matrix of domination deepened intersectional framings. Collins (1990) underscored, like Crenshaw, the exclusion of Black women's experiences and perspectives from mainstream feminist and by extension, sociological thought. Her work on BFT speaks on the "interlocking nature of oppression" (Collins, 1986, p. 19) as a recurring theme within explorations of Black feminism. Collins (2009, p. 320) however introduced the concept, the "matrix of domination" to underscore

the overall organization of hierarchical power relations for any society ... [with] 1) a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression, e.g. race, social class, gender, sexuality,

citizenship status, ethnicity and age; and 2) a particular organization of its domains of power, e.g., structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal.

These explorations stressed on the need for Black women's standpoints and epistemologies that are grounded within the celebration and legitimization of their experiences, dialogue and ethics of care (Collins, 1990, 2015). This type of work represents a critical aspect of social justice activism which calls into question, "the content of what currently passes as truth ... and ... the process of arriving at that truth" (Collins, 2003, p. 66).

Intersectional Today

Intersectionality has been described as the "most important contribution that women's studies have made so far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771), with explorations of multidimensional and complex forms of social division and identity (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). To date, intersectionality has gone beyond the transformation of women, gender, critical and black studies, to extended scholarship across the social sciences, humanities and education. This framework has been well explored for instance to capture the experiences of diverse women in areas of: (i) queer feminism or movements (see Chan & Howard, 2020; Evans & Lépinard, 2019; Mehrotra, 2023), (ii) LGBTQ microaggressions (Sadika et al., 2020; Vaccaro & Koob, 2019), (iii) criminal justice system in relation to domestic violence or civil protective order process (Day & Gill, 2020; Durfee, 2021) and (iv) disabilities studies (De Beco, 2020; Moodley & Graham, 2015), to name a few. There are also recent areas of exploration that capture some of the structural aspects of policing (Christiani, 2020; Gaynor & Blessett, 2022), labor market experiences (Misra, 2021) and immigration policies (Rahimi, 2023; Tummala-Narra, 2020).

Geographical reach. Intersectionality has also been applied across geographies, *albeit*, with still visible concentrations in North America and Europe. North American scholars lead within these explorations, with inputs and contributions that have well advanced discussions of class/race/gender privilege and its impact on Black women. Such intersectional framings have also been used to capture acts of violence, colonization and resistance for other groups such as, e.g., Puerto Ricans (e.g., Casillas-Martínez et al., 2024; Womack, 2020), Pacific Islanders, Asian Americans (see e.g., Azhar et al., 2021; Zhang & Chang, 2024) and Chicana/o and Latina/o (Anzaldúa, 1987). This work has also been widely applied within Europe to capture the meanings and experiences of interlocking oppressions, as well as the global and transhistorical and contextual relations of power in which these are located. Within such travels, the central axis has on the issue of class but with examinations of how these social divisions interact with gender and ethnicity (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Brah, 1996; Burke, 2009). Knapp (2005) in particular has pushed for considerations of the diverse meanings of race/class/gender for European feminists and for the significance of historical specificities within the understanding of current inequalities.

Context-specific framings emerge as key considerations within intersectional framings (see Erel et al., 2010; Lewis, 2013; Mohanty, 1991). We see for instance the development of Dalit feminist thought (see e.g., Omvedt, 1994; Rege, 1998) and gendered-caste analysis (Chakraborty, 2003) that advance South Asian intersectional scholarship. In Latin America, we see the work of scholars who demonstrate for instance how gender remains tied to colonial and modern relations of power that produce patterns of systemic violence and abuse (see Lugones, 2007). Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) also challenged both colonial and neo-liberal feminist frames to correct through affirmative practice, the depoliticization and decontextualization of the concepts and expositions of relational forces and cultural factors within existing theorizations. Similar critiques of Western feminist theorizations also emerge within the work of Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyèwùmí (1997), Patricia McFadden (2005) and Amina Mama (2002), all of whom challenge Western gender discourses and push for knowledge production within localized cultural systems.

These contextual explorations also surface within explorations of Caribbean diasporic research, with examinations of issues related to mental health (Changoor, 2018; Edge, 2013; Jackson-Best, 2016), workplace positionality (Clerge, 2023; Healy et al., 2011; Thomas & Lightman, 2022) and self-employed experiences, to name a few (Forson, 2007; Knight, 2016). While there is substantive work speaking to complex systems of marginalization in the Caribbean (a matter which will be discussed in Chapter 2), there are longstanding scholarship that captures intersectional analysis and that pushes for Caribbean-centric theorizations (Barriteau, 2006; Mohammed, 1998). They are few studies as well that directly engage the use of intersectionality. Such is the case of Tracy Robinson (2013) whose pivotal work on conjugal hierarchies (marriage, common-law and visiting relationships), post-colonial law reforms, population policies and culture capture the complexity of citizenship and belonging. These factors are positioned as indicative of regulatory regimes with specialized vocabulary that has historically framed citizens as properties to be managed. Other more recent explorations include the focus on the underrepresentation of Black Caribbean women in leadership (Gilfillan-Farrell, 2020) and the comparative analyses of Black women and their experiences with the tenure and promotion process across the United States and the Caribbean (see Esnard & Cobb-Roberts, 2018).

Intersectionality as praxis and social justice. Intersectionality has also been deployed to address and transgress the sociopolitical systems that (re)produce systemic oppression. The framing of the collectivist or activist agendas within such contexts reflect the political dimensions of intersectionality with the centering of a “social justice analytic framework for examining socio-political problems that emerge from race, gender, class, sexual orientation and other socio-political fissures as interlocking processes-driven categories of difference” (Hancock, 2013, p. 282). These explorations center “intersectional work to shape legal & policy advocacy that remedy gender & racial discrimination” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 786) and the relevance of “collective action ... [as key to] meaningful contestation” (May, 2015, p. 48). Such applications extend for instance to examinations of

privilege, difference, solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination legislative reforms and social movement politics (Cho et al., 2013).

These applied directions are clear in scholarship, public engagement and grassroots initiatives (Heaney, 2020). Such is the case of Black Lives Matter, indigenous rights activism, Black activist, feminist and grass movements. The emphasis here is on the collective and radical approaches that are required to build coalition among and across different groups and to negotiate power asymmetries and to impact social justice activism (Daniel & Dolan, 2020; Tormos, 2017; Wiley & Bikmen, 2012). This democratized and political strength therefore is captured in the “politics of the not-yet” and the complexities within these efforts (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 204). The challenges therefore become those of centering activist knowledge within intersectional studies (Broad, 2017), for using these knowledge points across diverse platforms and spaces.

Addressing the Contestations

While there is widespread application of intersectionality, there are some apprehensions. Of note is the concern for its outgrowth, with a loss of its racial habitus, decontextualization of its historiography and relevance of praxis (Davis, 2008; Salem, 2018). The global application of intersectionality beyond the North American contexts, with applications in Europe and within other geographical contexts, has been part of the controversies around this. The perceived risk notably has been for more diverse interpretations and framings, but, with the potential for the displacement of its racial roots, and with the de-politization of the specificity that emerged within the US context. Such can potentially be the case within the intersectionality scholarship, where class emerged, as a central organizing principle (Bilge, 2013; Carbado et al., 2013), and in the case of the Caribbean, where gender centers within the axes of power that unfolded within such analyses (see Esnard & Cobb-Roberts, 2018; Gregory, 2006).

Reframing intersectionality. There are also calls for broadening, contextualizing and reframing of intersectionality (Luft & Ward, 2009) to address some of the “politics of canonicity” (Bilge, 2013, p. 412). These concerns rest on the universalization of black women’s experiences, hierarchization or prioritization of social axes, and framing of black women as only victims (Barriteau, 2006; Luft & Ward, 2009). Such criticisms have fueled growing decolonial extensions (Atehortúa, 2020; Thomas, 2020) with the push for the use of transnational (Bezhanova, 2021; Falcón & Nash, 2015), post-colonial frameworks (Bartels et al., 2019) that capture global and racialized experiences of women with considerations of historical, ideological and geopolitical factors that feed into social divides, inequalities and erasures (Cho et al., 2013; Luft & Ward, 2009). More explorations are needed therefore to move forward the potential for situated framings of theory and practice (Esnard, 2023; Esnard & Cobb-Roberts, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2017).

Building theory. While generally applied as an analytical tool, the theoretical grounding of intersectionality therefore remains unresolved (Collins, 2019;

Collins et al., 2021; Davis, 2008). Davis (2008, p. 68) questioned whether “intersectionality should be limited to understanding individual experiences, to theorizing identity, or whether it should be taken as a property of social structures and cultural discourses.” Nash (2008, p. 10) also casted some doubt on whether “intersectionality is a theory of marginalized subjectivity or a generalized theory of identity.” Other questions also emerge around practices of essentialism and exclusivism within intersectional framing. Scholars have therefore pushed for greater theoretical elasticity (with more diverse explorations of, e.g., post-structuralist, post-colonial, transnational and decolonial perspectives) that can address matters related to the politics of translation (see Collins et al., 2021; Yuval-Davis, 2017).

A push has been for building intersectionality as a critical framework with central tenets that advance social thought and practice (Collins et al., 2021; Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005; Moradi, 2017; Singh, 2022). Collins (2019, p. 4) admits to intersectionality being at a critical juncture, a crossroads, noting that while intersectionality has been characterized as a theory, this has been done, without “critical analysis of what that means [which] is both premature and problematic.” Collins reminds us that while the foundations have already been set, there is a need for some more fundamental questions and analyses within its applicability. Her charge therefore is that

it’s no longer sufficient to change intersectionality advances cutting edge critical analysis ... [scholars] must begin to specify terms of its own practice, not defensively in response to critics, but [to do so] affirmatively, via sustained self-reflection about paradigmatic premises and methodological practices. (Collins, 2019, p. 15)

This requires some ongoing reflection on the “intersectionality’s objectives, analyses, and practices ... [with some engagement of] what it is, what it should be doing, and why it should be doing it” (p. 4). Collins (2019) suggested therefore, a focus on social context, inequality, problems, order, relations and justice. Critical theorizing, intellectual resistance and praxis are positioned as three core pillars within such explorations.

Methodological refinements. There are many questions around the methodological rigor and credibility of intersectional analysis. These concerns hinge on questions over the type or unit of analysis, the centrality of its focus and on the specific methodologies that align within these explorations. Of note is the debate over what is meant by intersectionality (how it is operationalized or defined to be explored across contexts), the ambiguous nature of the research paradigm and its applicability (see Choo & Ferree, 2010; Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). McCall (2005) noted for instance questioned the utility and limitations of its various metaphors, including those related to: intersections, matrix, multiple jeopardies and interlocking oppressions. The historical centrality of American Black women and Black feminism as subjects of intersectionality theory emerges as part of these contentions (Cho et al., 2013; Garry, 2011; Nash, 2008). These apprehensions also bring discontents over the continuous listing and additions to diverse forms of difference, without some intentional unpacking of the differential

weightings and meanings that have been applied within specific contexts (Erel et al., 2010). What emerges, *inter alia*, are questions for example of whether race or gender remains at the center of this analysis (Erel et al. 2010; Lykke, 2010) and whether situated genealogies within ongoing refinements help resolve these questions (May, 2015; Parra, 2022; Salem, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2017). These concerns are also reflected to a thinking that intersectional orientations float over explorations of various layers or levels of analysis (Acker, 2011; Anthias, 2013; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991; Winker & Degele, 2011). The questions therefore of how it can be applied, where, at what level (individual/collective), with what theoretical lenses and with what focus (identity, social structures, cultural discourses), all represents critical aspects of its own development and refinement process within the science of research and scholarship.

Intersectionality as praxis remains central to its transformative potential. The praxis aspect which connects the promise of transformative change to intersectional framing (see Collins, 2015), with the potential to operationalize intersectionality within social movements or institutional change (Luft & Ward, 2009), represents an opportunity to expound on this aspect of this framework. This deployment requires that we not only explore possible ways of institutionalizing diverse framing and analysis of structures, cultures and identities, but also, that we explore how these lenses can be advanced to shape intersectional action. More is needed however, not only on “how organizations achieve progressive forms of structural change, but also, on what institutionalization can do for intersectionality” (Luft & Ward, 2009, p. 24). This following section speaks to this latter issue, and in particular, the exploration of intersectionality as practice or within the mentoring framework. This work therefore allows for a demonstration of how this can be expressed with the storying of that experience for a mentor, mentees and the outcomes of this in relation to how public sociology becomes enacted beyond the start point of the analysis and the findings of research. This book addresses these gaps.

Intersectional Mentoring and Solidarity

Intersectionality has been presented as an epistemological resource that not only focuses on subjugated experience and knowledge but that also captures the pedagogical resource that also captures the potential for transformational change (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). The promise however is also for the deployment of intersectional framings within acts of intersectional activism or interventions (Collins, 2015; Luft & Ward, 2009). These expectations for action and change have been presented therefore as a normative goal of intersectionality that can be explored through institutional effort and experiences. “Advocacy, analysis, policy development, theorizing, and education” are all positioned to enact this goal (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 12).

Pedagogically, intersectionality offers an opportunity to understand and address some of the socially and historically constituted nodes of differences (such as gender, race, sexuality) that intersect to shape subjective experience (Goodman & Jackson III, 2012). The use of intersectionality as a transformative pedagogical