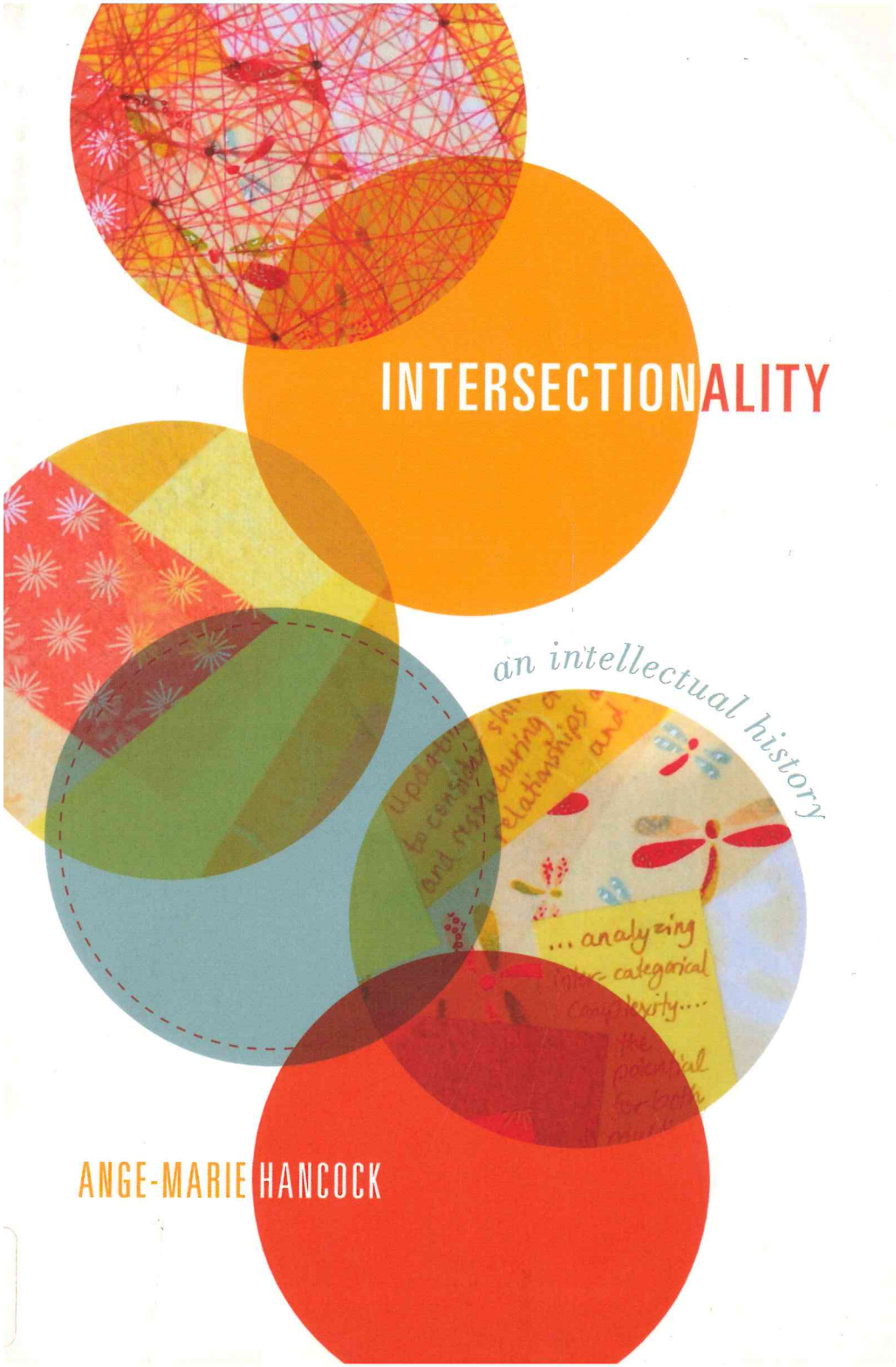
INTERSECTIONALITY
an intellectual history
... analyzing
ANGE-MARIE HANCOCK

# INTERSECTIONALITY

## *An Intellectual History*

ANGE-MARIE HANCOCK

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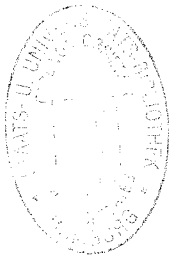

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*This book is dedicated to*
*My father, Dr. Charles R. Hancock (1940–2012)*

*and*

*My mentor, Dr. Michael B. Preston (1933–2014),*
*the best academics and fathers to daughters*
*I've ever known.*

# CONTENTS

# THE ACTIVIST ROOTS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Any white woman's group that does not have an anti-imperialist and antiracist ideology has absolutely nothing in common with the Black woman's struggle.

—FRANCES M. BEALE (*In Morgan 1970, 350*)

The accepted practice of wife burning in India, the epidemic of wife beatings and murders in Brazil, the maiming and murder of children in the Angolan war for independence, the wholesale prostitution of women and children in the Philippines as a means of familial economic survival, the bombings of reproductive health clinics in the United States, and the failure to develop coalitions that address the needs of women of color all continue to reflect the belief that violence against women is culturally acceptable, and therefore not a human rights abuse. Our struggle must be a collective struggle . . . in order to have any formidable impact on violence in the lives of women.

—CARRAWAY (*1993, 1308*)

It has been very important to me to have an international perspective on women's liberation. It is only when we understand the connections and uncover how women around the world have been used and pitted against each other that we can begin to stand in solidarity and stand up for each other.

—TAN (*In Shah 1997, 210*)

> I do feel very strongly that I would not have been given this, the physical disability, the learning disability, being Jewish and Arab, being a lesbian, and dealing with that whole coming out and sexuality stuff. That is a gift, I think, for me and I know that I am supposed to do something with that, not to further myself, but to be a bridge.
>
> ACTIVIST LISA WEINER-MAHFUZ, *quoted in Doetsch-Kidder (2012, 27)*

FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE nineteenth century, activists have offered important insights into the twin intellectual projects of intersectionality—the visibility project and the project of reconceptualizing categorical relationships. Specifically, their experimentation with integrating instead of compartmentalizing their diverse experiences offered new ways of thinking about power and transformed what it means to organize with others to advocate for policy change. One specific transformative change involved understanding power as simultaneously pervasive and startlingly specific. In 1979, Audre Lorde's open letter alluded to this historical legacy for the present: "The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those boundaries. Nor do the reservoirs of our ancient power know these boundaries, either. To deal with one without even alluding to the other is to distort our commonality as well as our difference" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa [1979] 1983, 97). Twelve years later, G. Chezia Carraway concurred; the epigraph clearly denotes violence against women as one of those sites of oppression (1993, 1308), uniquely positioning it for an intersectional analysis. Evidence persists regarding the pervasiveness of violence against women: even countries that otherwise score highly on objective measures of gender equality (like the nations of northern Europe) still face serious problems of violence against women (Montoya 2013, 7).



Moreover, the vast diversity of the practices within the problem presents a significant challenge for those who would eradicate violence against women. Exploring both the pervasiveness and specificity is thus critical to understanding the historical development of intersectionality-like thinking. In addition to the countries Carraway lists, Mexico, South Africa, Italy, Australia, Japan, and Iceland are also members of a long list of states contending with the complex reality of violence. The efforts of advocates and like-minded policy makers focus on protection, prosecution, and prevention (Montoya 2013, 8), but there remains a tension between the responsiveness of government in terms of new laws and policy initiatives and the on-the-ground effectiveness of such efforts (Weldon 2002; Montoya, 2013).

The broad goals of the movement to combat violence against women are "to transform power structures that perpetuate violence against women and to build power among women" (Annanya Bhattacharjee, in Shah 1997, 43). Activism is defined broadly in this chapter to include most forms of public advocacy, including but not limited to protest, community organizing, direct service provision, and legal advocacy. Contemporary intersectionality scholars have defined intersectional activism in different ways. Doetsch-Kidder defines it as "activism that addresses more than one structure of oppression or form of discrimination (racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, nationalism, etc.)" (2012, 3; see also Isoke 2013). Intersectional activism, however, is related to but distinct from making "explicitly intersectional demands" (Townsend-Bell, in Wilson 2013, 43), because such demands needn't come from a stereotypically intersectional identified activist. Finally, those who engage in intersectional activism are not solely women of color (Doetsch-Kidder 2012; Wilson 2013).

While intersectionality-like thinking has emerged from a dispersed engagement of activists' focus on a vast number of policy issues (Hankivsky 2014), in this chapter I trace its emergence from

the multiple and overlapping movements to end violence against women, particularly over the last forty years. This thematic trend facilitates the inclusion of a vast range of international and interdisciplinary considerations. In a book dedicated solely to the social movements pushing to eradicate violence against women, each segment of an advocacy landscape (NGOs, service providers, government agencies, and international organizations) would deserve a chapter in its own right. However, for the purposes of this intellectual history of intersectionality I focus instead on the common intersectionality-like threads across these different sectors so as to glean their role in the evolution of intersectionality as a paradigm. I first trace the impact on the visibility and categorical reconceptualization dimensions of intersectionality's overall intellectual project, which I defined in chapter 1. Then I introduce several additional contributions that emerge distinctly from the activism domain, including a reconceptualization of power in response to what are often called "particular" or "unique" experiences with marginalization.[1] Annanya Bhattacharjee offers one illustration of this perspective: "Women of color have added to this perspective by introducing the particular ways they are oppressed, and their goal is to build power among women of color. The special powerlessness created by the economic servitude of women also leads to a recognition of the need to build power among poor, working class women" (in Shah 1997, 43). All four intellectual contributions to intersectionality have been shapers of and reciprocally informed by the strategies activists have chosen to use over time in their advocacy against violence, broadly defined.

## DEMANDS TO BE SEEN THROUGH VISIONARY EYES

Naming violence carries its own particular history of overcoming invisibility. Though she critiqued slavery in broad terms,



nineteenth-century orator Maria Stewart made the moral wrong of sexual violence during slavery explicitly political thirty years before the better-known Harriet Jacobs published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), one of the few slave narratives written by women. It is Stewart who links the desire for liberty to the "whoredoms" imposed upon and endured by Black women (in Richardson 1987, 39). "[B]ut we will tell you that our souls are fired with the same love of liberty and independence with which your souls are fired. We will tell you that too much of your blood flows in our veins, too much of your color in our skins, for us not to possess your spirits" (40). Stewart's public condemnation of her group's struggle with visibility contains several seeds of future claims among a wide variety of activists and their projects discussed in this chapter. Maria Stewart also became part of the intellectual history of Third World feminism, as she was mentioned in Hattie Gossett's poem submission for *This Bridge Called My Back*, a poem that was written in 1980. Despite another mention in 1995's *Words of Fire* anthology, somehow she fell out of conversations about women of color and intersectionality, a phenomenon that has befallen several aspects of intersectionality-like thought as well.

The political implications of rape in the slavery economy Stewart alludes to presages later interventions like Incite! Women of Color Against Violence—who explicitly link "domestic violence" against women within communities and "state-sponsored or -sanctioned" violence directed against communities that include women of color (2006, 1–2)—and the National Federation of Dalit Women (see Brueck 2012, 226). Specifically, for activists in the anti-violence against women movement the visibility project of intersectionality featured three elements. First, it sought to remedy the invisibility of the diversity within communities struggling for justice. At the same time these activists recognized that both the invisibility and their responses were part of a larger

narrative about marginalized groups full of distortions, both in the mainstream and in marginalized communities themselves. Thus the second element of the visibility project involved crafting arguments that walked a narrow line between holding perpetrators of violence accountable and not inviting the state to further oppress their communities. The interaction between these two political challenges produced the third element of the visibility project: the strategic use of both visibility and invisibility to fight for systemic change.

Dill and Zambrana (2009) identify the project of addressing diversity within groups as a "hallmark" of intersectional analysis (cited in Montoya 2013, 13).[2] Despite vastly different histories and engagements with imperialism, the fight for visibility of the struggle against state-sponsored violence against women persisted across several populations in a variety of ways. Acknowledging this diversity of engagement with the state can provide an important corrective to the kind of organizing needed to simultaneously eradicate state-sponsored and interpersonal violence against women (Smith, in Incite! 2006, 67).

Activism against state-sponsored and state-sanctioned violence has long been a concern for women of color, from Ida B. Wells in the 1890s to a young Japanese American woman who "stood up to contest the constitutionality of the Evacuation Order of 1942" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 71). This activism persists today in the context of the #blacklivesmatter movement, cofounded by three queer women of color in 2014 to address rampant police violence and the murders of Blacks in the United States. This larger history of activism and critique of state-sponsored violence has retained, however, aspects of invisibility regarding women of color as the targets of such violence. Writing in the early 1970s, Elizabeth Martínez, the Black Women's Liberation Group, and Mirta Vidal each connected the lack of visibility and attention to such violence as an additional assertion of power that had to be revealed and addressed.



The frame of these state actions as problematic were not simply racial nor simply gendered; they were constructed as race-gendered, a key antecedent of intersectionality-like thought.

For Martínez and the Black Women's Liberation Group, respectively, violence was a cross-border phenomenon facing women, but their conceptualization of the connections preserved meaningful differences rather than erased them. Recovering a history of sexual violence situates twentieth-century racist and sexual oppression in a context of state-sanctioned violence:

> Our roots lie in the act of rape: the rape of the women, the rape of an entire continent and its people. . . . Inside the borders of the United States the women of La Raza lived first under Spanish rule, then Mexican rule, and beginning in 1848 under U.S. imperialist rule. That year the process of rape was resumed. The Chicana was raped by the invading gringo both in the literal, physical sense as well as in the sense of those forms of oppression imposed on all our people, both men and women. (Martínez 1970; in García 1997, 32)

Here the structure at stake is the state, but the impact included physical acts of rape by "invading gringo[s]" as well as the political oppressions of all those living in the territory "won" with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo in 1848. An open letter by the Black Women's Liberation Group, published in the 1970 anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful*, takes on motherhood as part of the antiviolence struggle: "For us, birth control is the freedom to fight genocide of black women and children. Like the Vietnamese have decided to fight genocide, the South American poor are beginning to fight back, and the African poor will fight back, too. Poor black women in the United States have to fight back too" (in Morgan 1970, 360–361).

Both the Black Women's Liberation Group and Mirta Vidal (1971, in García, 1997) linked the struggle to intragroup

gender politics, suggesting that visibility is more than mere sight; instead it is a matter of being seen in a way that also understands, as the Black Women's Liberation Group argues: "But we don't think you're going to understand us because you are a bunch of little middle-class people and we are poor black women. The middle class never understands the poor because they always need to use them as you want to use poor black women's children to gain power for yourself" (in Morgan 1970, 361).[3] Mirta Vidal suggested a similar struggle among Chicanas and their brothers in the struggle. Even as they shared a common commitment to economic justice, sexism persisted. She reports two examples from Sacramento, California, and Castroville, Texas. In Sacramento, women voted to become the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional and adopted a resolution that read: "The effort of Chicana/Mexican women in the Chicano movement is generally obscured because women are not accepted as community leaders by the Chicano movement or by the Anglo establishment" (Vidal 1971; in García 1997, 22). In Castroville, the women's caucus of the Castroville United Farm Workers (UFW) warned their male labor organizer counterparts about the divisive impact of sexist invisibility on the struggle for justice (22). This attention to economic justice continued into the 1980s, as Moraga built out the generative aspects of difference, and connected them to a larger history of violence due to slavery and colonialism, as well as current immigration status and economic privilege (in Moraga and Anzaldúa [1981] 1983, 105). Sandoval (1991, 2000) also attends to the matter of economic justice in her critiques of capitalism. While more recent intersectionality scholarship has been criticized for neglecting class, the more complicated history of intersectionality suggests that it has instead fallen out of the discussion of intersectionality among the interpretive community, a different dilemma worth wrangling with on its own terms.



In addition to debates among scholars regarding strategies to end state-sponsored and sanctioned acts of violence, the state itself often plays a role in adjudicating among acts of interpersonal violence. In this context the warped visibility of women of color victims crosses borders. Southall Black[4] Sisters in Britain, a group of activists committed to freeing two South Asian women convicted of murdering their abusive partners in 1989 and 1993, respectively, found that differential outcomes in shortening their respective sentences on appeal were attributable to the dynamic interaction between the women's different class statuses and the primary narratives about South Asian women in Britain. The woman with the most desirable outcome was not simply middle class, but fit into a narrative of "rescuing" South Asian women with roots in British imperialism that produced a "squeaky clean" representation for judges and juries. Unfortunately the ability to fit into this narrative, an exercise in strategic visibility, is available to precious few women caught up in the criminal justice system: "The majority of women who come into conflict with the law are not 'squeaky clean,' yet they too have a history of violence and abuse that in some way contributed to their incarceration" (Sudbury, in Incite! 2006, 19).[5]

Southall Black Sisters' efforts in Britain were paralleled by SAKHI, a US-based South Asian anti-domestic-violence group founded in 1989. SAKHI also refused to accept invisibility: "We [Asian American anti-domestic-violence organizations] have asserted the existence of Asian women and refused to be statistically invisible" (Bhattacharjee, in Shah 1997, 37). Asian American women have been organizing around violence against women in the United States since the early 1980s (Zia, in Shah 1997, 64; see also Chun, Lipsitz, and Shin 2013). SAKHI's concomitant commitment to expanding the definition of immigrants and people of color to include Asians also brings different strategies from India and China that may be worthy of

consideration in the United States if not for their invisibility, a theme I address directly in the last sections of this chapter.[6]

The claims of activists that I've reviewed so far are consistent with Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's widely cited article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color" (1991), which chronicles the perils of ignoring within-group differences in the violence against women of color advocacy space. It is also important to situate this landmark article in a broader intellectual context that includes Sandoval's publication of "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World" (1991), although it is not explicitly focused on violence against women. Crenshaw notes how feminist advocates against domestic violence have pushed for changes that limit the ability of policy makers and law enforcement to appropriately address domestic violence in solidarity with women of color at both the federal level with the Immigration and Nationality Act (1991, 359, 364) and locally in Los Angeles and New York (360, 365–366). Bhattacharjee offers an example of this phenomenon from the 1990s: the time-honored strategy of survivor confidentiality creates a barrier to wider collective action, which again leaves certain collective tactics off the table for any population, when they might be effective in some communities (in Shah 1997, 36). More to the point, survivor confidentiality creates an overdependence on the legal system and law enforcement, about which Bhattacharjee concurs with Crenshaw: "[the U.S. legal system and law enforcement] have been known to be sexist, racist, anti-immigrant, and anti-poor. The fight comes down to having a good lawyer. Along with this strategy comes a fear of reprisals from the legal system if one engages in unconventional strategies . . . the idea that this is a fight in which strategies must be developed to counter precisely those fears which keep in place oppressive power-wielders is rarely entertained" (36). That



said, it's not clear every legal system must function in this way; Sharon Doetsch-Kidder's interview with Sarah Reed suggests that tribal governments in the United States are not obligated to a Western framework, which opens up a variety of policy options.[7] Whether conceptualized by activists or theorists (and recognizing that boundary as permeable), diversity within is an important element in the shift in logic intersectionality represents because it can also open space for creative solutions to persistent and pervasive problems.

Sudbury (in Incite! 2006) and Sandoval (2000) alert readers to the ongoing challenges of invisibility in a more global context. For Sudbury, mainstream activism against violence against women has progressed beyond Crenshaw's articulation of rendering women of color's experiences invisible to outright complicity in a "law and order" agenda that has criminalized poor communities of color and created "a transnational prison industrial complex" (in Incite! 2006, 19). Sandoval more generally attributes reproductions of invisibility against people of color and queer people in the 1990s to late capitalist conditions of the twentieth century (1991, 2000). The connection to capitalism, an axis that divides the Global North and the Global South, was also an underlying factor in accusations of "dominating attitudes displayed by U.S. African American activists at the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR)" (Falcon 2008, 15; see also Crooms 2003). Falcon's 2008 interviews with Afro-Peruvian activists revealed a fissure grounded in the refusal of US Black activists to see any connection between capitalism and racism: "For example, a North American Black can't even imagine the reality of life for an Afro-Peruvian community in Yapatera, who has to sustain constant aggression" (Falcon 2008, 16). Thus the thread of invisibility, of not being seen at all as a racialized, gendered, and classed person embedded in domestic and transnational politics, emerges out of women of color activism in a particular way that

contributes to intersectionality-like thinking. Specifically, these works illustrate how relative visibility or invisibility influences the conceptualizations of the policy problem and which policies are considered legitimate options, up to and including charges of complicity and cooptation among mainstream women's groups fighting violence against women that receive state funding and advocate for specific reformist policy options in response.

If we take seriously the idea that visibility is more than mere sight; instead it is a matter of being seen in a way that also substantively attends to what comes into view, we must contend with the reality of occlusions due to within-group power dynamics that distort the reality of women of color's lives and demand their silence as a price for racial and ethnic loyalty. As with the quest for acknowledgment of diversity within, contending with distortion also has a significant history prior to Crenshaw's 1991 article. In a 1976 issue of *Caracol*, Anna Nieto-Gómez connects invisibility of issues to distortions of Chicanas. In her discussion of the case of Inez García, she states:

> For the last year there have been issues of [rape] in which women have defended themselves. These were Third World women—for example, Inéz García, who suffered from rape and who retaliated. Who supported her? She was sent to jail. Where was the Chicano movement? There were people in the Chicano movement who said that Inéz García deserved it, that everybody knows that women really want to be raped, that she can enjoy it, and that rape doesn't justify the taking of human life. This is an example of a confusion in our community response to an important issue. . . . Rape is an act of violent aggression, and it's something we have the right to defend ourselves against. (in García 1997, 56)[8]

Nieto-Gómez's illustration of distortion of women themselves complements another distortion uncovered by activists



using intersectionality-like thinking to combat violence against women. This second distortion could be characterized as one of intersectional privilege in a larger context of disadvantage. Antiracism activists have given so much attention to the narrative of Black men being falsely accused that it has completely crowded out any attention to women of color as victims of domestic violence and rape, even among women of color themselves (Crenshaw 1991, 371; see also Incite! 2006, 1). The distorted weight of these narratives of both false accusations and police interventions produce a "more generalized community ethic against public intervention" (Crenshaw 1991, 362). The material effects of such invisibility include lower levels of reporting, prosecution, and conviction of those accused of domestic violence and rape when the person attacked is a woman of color (374; see also 375). In a 1997 conversation with her fellow Asian American women activists, Helen Zia notes similar community loyalty's impact on the visibility project:

> We have nothing to gain from being silent, from keeping a culture of invisibility. That includes the generational issue of keeping our communities' problems to ourselves. Something that I've heard many times over is that when sexual harassment occurs to Asian women by Asian men, Asian women feel like they cannot come forward. The community pressure is so great—it would look like they were trying to betray the community. Asian American women are being asked to sacrifice and not seek justice. Those are things that we need to bring some light to [*sic*]. (Zia, in Shah 1997, 66)

Contestations of distorted narratives also travel across continents as part of the visibility project for intersectionality-like thinking. The inability to "imagine the reality of life," as Falcon's Afro-Peruvian informant Monica puts it, is not limited to international conferences or spaces of like-minded activists.

A routine trip to pay the water bill in 2001 for one of Falcon's other informants, Sofia, turns into a confrontation with the "stupidities" still carried around in Peruvian men's heads, when a customer service representative of the water company alludes to Afro-Peruvian women's "distinct" sexual nature: "Sofia knows . . . that he is referring to Black female sexuality. . . . She sees this view as a relic from the colonial period when enslaved Black women had no choice but to be raped at the discretion of their owners/masters" (Falcon 2008, 8).[9] In both contexts—among activists who claim to pursue similar agendas and in the tasks of daily life—women of color are subjected to dominating behavior based on intersectional axes of power. The distortion Sofia experiences—the inability or refusal of the service representative to see Sofia as who she truly is—is a third part of intersectionality's visibility project.[10] Writing in 1990, Patricia Hill Collins notes that "U.S. Black women's experiences as well as those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge" (201). At almost exactly the same time in history, Crenshaw also identifies such narrative distortions as problematic with regard to the issue of violence against women: "Tokenistic, objectifying, voyeuristic inclusion is at least as disempowering as complete exclusion. The effort to politicize violence against women will do little to address Black and other minority women if their images are retained simply to magnify the problem rather than to humanize their experiences. Similarly, the antiracist agenda will not be advanced significantly by forcibly suppressing the reality of battering in minority communities" (1991, 364).

Similar struggles with dominant cultural narratives reflect not simply what it means to be first- or second-generation Indian American but what it means to be active in addressing violence against women. Purvi Shah recalled the controversy over participation in the 1995 India Day parade in New York City and the exclusions of both SAKHI and the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA) by the Federation of Indian Association (FIA), because the groups did not represent traditional Indian values (quoted in Shah 1997, 47).[11] When SAKHI was allowed to participate in the Pakistan Day Parade a week later,[12] it was publicly announced as a group that performs "social work," rather than as an anti-domestic-violence advocacy or activist group (50). This distortion of SAKHI's purpose was virtually a price paid for inclusion. It is also, as Rita Dhamoon argues separately in an analysis of Canadian multiculturalism's failings, an assertion of power (2009, 12).[13] In a 1990s' context of difference, where Islamophobia shapes Indian American and Pakistani American responses to how SAKHI presents itself, there are two distortions: the distortion of SAKHI and the distortion of the cultural communities as free from female oppression via domestic violence (see P. Shah, in Shah 1997, 48 and 54).



This struggle with visibility should not be taken to imply that women of color contending with controlling images or distortions were powerless. In an earlier era (the 1970s and early 1980s), Nawal El Sadaawi emerged as an international example of what one might call strategic visibility, particularly but not exclusively along the North-South axis of difference. El Sadaawi, an Egyptian medical doctor and activist, held a number of prominent positions with the United Nations (Amirah 2000, 218–219). In a context of limited Western access to activists of Arab descent, the widespread availability of English-language interviews of El Sadaawi led to English translations of her books, which were also reviewed in media outlets like the *New York Times* (218–219). El Sadaawi used this platform to great effect in publicizing the needs of Arab and African women around the world, particularly following the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979. Amal Amirah characterizes El Sadaawi as navigating Western interpretations of her work in both accommodating and resistant ways (219), based

on her own political calculus. In particular, El Sadaawi struggled with Western feminists' tendency to reduce her activism against female genital mutilation (FGM) to a singular example of barbaric gender oppression, and to abstract her overall critique from the economic implications of Western imperialism's impact (230–231).[14]

During the same decade of the 1970s in the United States, Latinas were also organizing and strategically stepping out for visibility. Virdal notes the women of Crystal City, Texas, who, fed up with the creation by the exclusively male decision-making body Ciudadanos Unidos (United Citizens) of a women's auxiliary named Ciudadanas Unidas, stormed the male meeting and demanded to be recognized as members on an equal basis, winning by a close vote (Virdal 1971, in García 1997, 22).

As the El Sadaawi and Ciudadanas Unidas cases suggest, although the challenge of invisibility was significant and multifaceted, it also brought tremendous benefit: "These constantly speaking differences stand at the crux of another, mutant unity, for this unity does not occur in the name of all 'women,' nor in the name of race, class, culture, or 'humanity' in general. Instead, as many U.S. third world feminists have pointed out, it is unity mobilized in a location heretofore unrecognized" (Sandoval 1991, 17; see also Lorde 1982, in Byrd, Cole and Guy-Sheftall 2009). Later in the 1990s, Elaine H. Kim reminds us that despite the distorted portrayals of SAKHI and other groups, Asian American women took some of the formation of women's auxiliaries and "transformed that auxiliary stuff into very cutting-edge social movements. For example, the drive against homophobia in Asian American communities has really been led by Asian American women. Women have redefined violence to be more encompassing and are paying attention to social class, as in the various efforts to organize workers" (Kim, in Shah 1997, 65). These are particular engagements with experience among "Third World feminists" in a manner distinct



from the many debates about "experience" that were common in the 1980s and 1990s.[15]

Myths like "the model minority" among Asian Americans similarly perpetuated the invisibility of economic disparities (Nowrojee and Silliman, in Shah 1997, 73), producing intra-community debates about "respectable" Indian American identity in ways that facilitate continued violence against women. The founders of SNEHA, a Hindi word for "loving relationship," stated it this way:

> Our model of activism transcends the racial, ethnic and class dichotomies that appear to affect many other organizations. Our presence is a reminder that not all women of color share the experience of economic marginality. We share black feminists' ambivalence about making public the issues of the community, because there is real ongoing concern that these dysfunctional images will be used to describe the normal life of the entire group. . . . Our presence testifies to the need for a more nuanced understanding of political activism. (Purkayashta, Raman, and Bhide, in Shah 1997, 106–107)

In so doing, SNEHA connected three visibility challenges: diversity within communities, distortions in the mainstream culture that require debunking, and political activism geared in the direction of systemic change. The complexity of invisibility is materially reflected in the presumed (in)validity of women of color's survival narratives and their impact on legal outcomes in particular. As noted in the case of British activists Southall Black Sisters, the ability to successfully claim self-defense is one area of difference among women that persists across decades.[16] Nieto-Gómez linked such struggles across racial groups in the 1970s, noting: "Chai Lao's an Asian woman; she was arrested by a police officer. He said, 'I'll tell you what. I won't take you in if you submit to me.' She said no. He raped

her; she killed him. Joanne Little is the most nationally publicized example of this. She was a woman, a prisoner. The guard said, 'Do me a little favor, honey, and I might do one for you.' She said no. He raped her; she killed him" (1976, in García 1997, 56). Black lesbian feminist Barbara Smith concurred in the 1980s: "Black women who are battered and who physically defend themselves are treated differently than white women by the courts. It's seen differently by the courts when a white middle class woman murders her husband. Then it's so-called self-defense. I was just reading a case involving a Black woman in Michigan where the Black woman was sold down the river obviously because she was Black. A negative image of Black men and women got her fate delivered" (Smith and Smith 1980, in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 122). Thus even when crimes are reported—when women of color take the risk of reporting—the outcomes are substantively similar to or worse than remaining silent.

Thus a significant part of activists' contribution to the visibility project is threefold: making the needs of women experiencing violence salient (or public) in a way that attracts resources and public support for meaningful remedies; debunking distortions that seek to discredit the claims of women of color enduring the violence; and transforming a justice system that is simultaneously willing to overlook women of color as victims and see young men of color as all-too-easy prey for incarceration. In the twenty-first century, activism surrounding violence committed against transgender people also focuses on increased visibility. Vietnamese American trans activist Irena Bui credits a significant part of her own courage to transition to "seeing that others seemed comfortable," which led to the realization that she too "could be comfortable in her multiple identities and choices" (Doetsch-Kidder 2012, 58). For Latina trans activist Ruby Corrado, the need for a "trans presence" was catalyzed by her increasing awareness of the disrespectful treatment trans people experiencing violence received from police, and by the death



of her friend Bella Evangelista (55). In response, she decided to organize trans women to attend any proceeding or event where a Latina trans presence was important. The demand for visibility in this context became an important demand for political inclusion and participation.

Speaking out remains important, as Leti and Avelynn, LGBT activists, articulate in different ways. It's equally important, however to recognize that the dialogue is not predetermined. It won't necessarily proceed according to rational and dispassionate standards of democratic deliberation, even when everyone shares one or more identities and political commitments, as Leti discovered in her work on the National Lesbian Conference: " 'This is all lesbians, right? And having the working class lesbians say, "Why do you think that you could speak for me? And why do you think I can't do it?" ' Leti realized that 'This is the first opportunity, even though it's amongst lesbians, to have a voice and be heard, and sometimes when that happens, the pain comes out. Someone's willing to listen to you, and the pain comes out or the anger' " (Doetsch-Kidder 2012, 115). Avelynn notes the critical importance of dialogue: "in the beginning the desire to make us visible or to be political was there, but you can't have a movement unless people are talking to each other, unless there's dialogue. . . . Queer Asian women just need to talk about their experiences or how they feel or who they are . . . in a language that they're familiar with" (99). While a classical liberalism approach from the situation that Leti faced would produce the conclusion that humans are all different, and identity should be eschewed in favor of another mode of belonging, intersectionality instead operates from distinct premises that foregrounds power relationships and their transformation in response to the situation in a way that accepts and incorporates more nuanced politics of visibility and identities. I discuss this kind of logic in chapter 3.

Finally, attention to visibility and inclusion requires a brief notation regarding categories often cited in meta-critiques and analyses of intersectionality. Examining the documents of the 1970s and 1980s along with a more global reach enables us to reveal that critiques of capitalism and imperialism have previously been part of intersectionality-like thought, but these critiques have *dropped out* in important ways, as opposed to having been missing in the first place. Importantly, this ebb and flow of attention to certain kinds of categories is generally unaccounted for by scholars who make this critique,[17] perhaps because of the absence of significant attention to the intellectual history of intersectionality (see Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013). Frances Beale (in Morgan 1970, 345–346), Anna Nieto-Gómez (1976, in García 1997, 57), and Chela Sandoval (1991, 2000) all produce incisive critiques of capitalism, and El Sadaawi (1980) fuses critiques of capitalism with anticolonial rhetoric that gets explicitly subsumed as part of anti-FGM activism focused solely on gender.

## ACTING FROM A MULTIPLY IDENTIFIED CENTER

The title of this section is a play on the contemporary activist practice of "acting from center" and signifies the shift from language featuring margins and centers toward metaphors of intersections. Activists who recognized or experienced invisibility or marginality also understood that false unity under a single category of difference suppressed the material needs of women of color; specifically women of color navigating violence committed against them. The marginalization perpetrated by purveyors of racial or ethnic solidarity, sisterhood, or the rise of the proletariat continues as a thread throughout



the twentieth century, creating an impetus and opportunity for activists to engage in intersectionality-like critique. The visual language of obscurity reveals ongoing aspects of intersectionality-like thinking—the need to render the invisible visible. While this particular commitment to addressing invisibility is unique to intersectionality, it is not unique to a single interlocutor or group involved in shaping intersectionality into what it is today.

Maria Stewart's "Farewell Address to Her Friends in the City of Boston" was far more direct in its accusations and lamentations about the failures of unity based on a single identity. Using both the Bible and "Sketches of the Fair Sex" as her references, Stewart chronicles the consistently visible role of women in history, confronting the issue of sexism in the Black community:

> What if such women as are here described should rise among our sable race? And it is not impossible. For it is not the color of the skin that makes the man or the woman, but the principle formed in the soul.
>
> . . .
>
> I find it is no use for me as an individual to try to make myself useful among my color in this city. . . . Had experience more plainly shown me that it was the nature of man to crush his fellow, I should not have thought it so hard . . . let us no longer talk of prejudice, till prejudice becomes extinct at home. Let us no longer talk of opposition, till we cease to oppose our own. (In Richardson 1987, 70–71)

Stewart's understanding here that sexism is simultaneously a threat as racism and, as importantly, a threat to the cause of "racial uplift" in terms of Black progress is a hallmark of intersectionality's second intellectual project.

Writing in 1977, the Combahee River Collective begins its famous statement with the genesis of its Black feminism

in a way that fundamentally challenges the notion of a single margin-center metaphor:

> Black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in the feminist movement from its start, but both outside reactionary forces and racism and elitism within the movement itself have served to obscure our participation. . . . It was our experience and disillusionment within these [Black] liberation movements, as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left that led to the need to develop a politics that was antiracist, unlike those of white women, and antisexist, unlike those of Black and white men. ([1977] 1993, 14)

Just three years later, collective member Beverly Smith directly critiqued the concept of ontological primacy for one category, and specifically framed it in activist terms: "Some separatists believe that although women are racist, when men disappear and no longer rule, racism will not be a problem. It's very analogous to people who are Marxists who say 'Well, when class oppression and racism end, definitely the oppression of women and lesbians will end.' What lesbian separatists are saying is that when we get rid of men, sexism and racism will end too" (Beverly Smith 1980, in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 122–123).[18]

As has been true elsewhere in this chapter, the critique of a unitary margin-center understanding of power is not limited to the United States context. Senegalese activist Awa Thiam's 1978 publication *Black Sisters Speak Out!* raises the question often asked of women of color activists: which group solidarity is more important? Thiam frames her rhetorical question in a way that makes clear the two analytical categories share ontological primacy: "Therefore she is exploited not only as a Black, but also because she is a woman. But which of these come first?" (1978, 116).[19] Thiam's question suggests a desire for a context in which this question is no longer applicable. We can gain a



sense of what that would look like from Cherríe Moraga, who describes a particular panel on racism in San Francisco, and how both her participation in the conversation and the presence of five sister Latinas heartened her: "For once, I didn't have to choose between being a lesbian and being Chicana; between being a feminist and having family" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, xvii–xviii).

The second ramification that emerges from this reshaping of ontological relationships consists of the mutually constitutive relationships between categories. Nieto-Gómez uses a rhetorical or literary strategy of combining and recombining sexism and racism, alternating between the terms "sexistracism" and "racistsexism" in her 1974 article "La Feminista" (in García 1997). Cheryl Clarke extended this logic in her article "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance": "While the black man may consider racism his primary oppression, he is hard-put to recognize that sexism is inextricably bound up with the racism the black woman must suffer, nor can he see that no women (or men for that matter) will be liberated from the original 'master-slave' relationship, viz. that between men and women, until we are all liberated from the false premise of heterosexual superiority" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 132).[20]

Drawing on these Third World feminists and others, Sandoval brings a process-oriented lens to the multiple categories of difference analyses that are the hallmark of intersectionality in 1990–1991. Writing in the journal *Genders*, Sandoval creates a topography that suggests "no [categorical] enactment is privileged over any other, and the recognition that each [categorical] site is as potentially effective in opposition as any other makes possible another mode of consciousness which is particularly effective under late capitalist and post-modern cultural conditions in the United States. I call this mode of consciousness 'differential'—it is the ideological mode enacted by U.S. third world feminists over the last thirty years" (1991, 12).

The consciousness is produced through a process of self-conscious recognition by the inhabitants of certain social locations in a way that transforms these social locations into sites of resistance to the current organization of power (11). Sandoval terms an overview of these locations a "topography," consistent with the usage of spatial metaphors, and argues that it can be attentive to historical contingency while remaining distinct from historical determinism.

What is more interesting, however, is the way in which Sandoval forces an ontological equality of gender, race/ethnicity, and class rather than subordinate positions for one or more of them, which is attributable to US feminists of color activism from 1968 to 1990: "Differential consciousness represents a strategy ... [whose] powers can be thought of as mobile—not nomadic, but rather cinematographic; a kinetic motion that maneuvers politically transfigures, and orchestrates while demanding alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners" (Sandoval 2000, 44; see also Sandoval 1991, 12). The shift forced social movements to rethink their previous notions of oppositional group consciousness. This ontological shift that emanates from activists' unwillingness to subsume their contestation of multiple oppressions under a single axis of marginalization—and a more expansive list of said categories—has a very specific ramification for intersectionality. The attention to a more holistic understanding of how oppression (not simply identity, but oppression) functions leads some authors to push back against the dominant notion of zero-sum politics,[21] which will eventually become (and remains) one of the central insights of intersectionality theory. Frances Beale offers an early comment in this vein:

> it is a gross distortion of fact to state that black women have oppressed black men. ...



> It must also be pointed out at this time, that black women are not resentful of the rise to power of black men. We welcome it. We see in it the eventual liberation of all black people from this oppressive System of capitalism. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you have to negate one for the other. This kind of thinking is a product of miseducation; that it's either *X* or it's *Y*. It is fallacious reasoning that in order for the black man to be strong, the black woman has to be weak.
>
> Those who are exerting their "manhood" by telling black women to step back into a submissive role are assuming a counterrevolutionary position. (In Morgan 1970, 343–344)

Together, Beale and Sandoval form a multidisciplinary, multiracial historical foundation for the second intellectual project of intersectionality: reshaping the ontological relationships between analytical categories of difference. Intersectionality here represents a much more fundamental shift in understanding how the world works, a point I take up in greater detail in chapter 3.

During the two decades prior to Crenshaw's and Collins's watershed publications, a tremendous amount of activist work was invested in reshaping the fundamental quality of the relationships between social movements and the oppressions they sought to resolve. One of the key distinctions that emerged in later decades between women of color feminism and intersectionality occurred within the context of this intellectual project. As arguments for "both/and" formulations took shape, an uninterrogated set of claims emerged that took divergent paths. However, this mutually constitutive understanding of between-category relationships coexisted in this era with a both/and formulation of conceptually distinct categories. The latter formulation led to an additive logic in practice that produced competitions among differently situated activists for the role of "most oppressed"[22] based on a high number of marginalized

identities or experiences of multiple oppressions. I explore this ambivalence in greater depth in chapters 3, 4, and 5, but note its presence here among activists, not simply intersectionality scholars. Ultimately the idea connects to whether or not there is conceptual space for a race-only (or gender-only) kind of understanding of how categories of difference relate. Activist contributors to anthologies like *This Bridge* equivocated by referring to racial violence as its own unique conceptual logic:

> I spent a part of my childhood feeling great sadness and helplessness about how it seemed that Indians were open game for the white people, to kill, maim, beat up, insult, rape, cheat, or whatever atrocity the white people wanted to play with. There was also a rage and frustration that has not died. . . . Death was so common on the reservation that I did not understand the implications of the high death rate until after I moved away and was surprised to learn that I've seen more dead bodies than my friends will probably ever see in their lifetime.
>
> Because of experiencing racial violence, I sometimes panic when I'm the only non-white in a roomful of whites, even if they are my closest friends; I wonder if I'll leave the room alive. (Barbara Cameron, in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 47)

The location of Cameron's visceral racialized pain in a context of near eradication of Indian peoples in the United States is conceptually distinct from Moraga, Nieto-Gómez, and a host of others who were creating a small space for race-gender analysis that became, eventually, intersectionality-like thought. Many contributors to *This Bridge Called My Back, Home Girls, Chicana Feminist Thought*, and *Sisterhood is Powerful* refused to engage in political analysis without attention to multiple categories while the lack of full incorporation of racism into feminist theory or practice produced powerful protests by women of color (cf. Sargent, 1981, quoted in Sandoval 1991, 7),



Together these two moments—Cameron's pain and Moraga's reconceptualization—preserved a different space for scholars trained in positivist social science research to use intersectionality as a testable explanation (fitting intersectionality into a set of existing assumptions rather than taking intersectionality fully into account and changing, as I noted above, how the very problems are conceptualized in the first place). As I noted in chapter 1, this practice remains a matter of debate in the field even through the time of publication.[23] It is most important for our purposes to note that this ambivalence about precisely how far to carry the reshaping of ontological relationships exists in the founding narratives of intersectionality studies, and is not simply the product of contemporary scholars' sloppy engagement with these works.

## RESPONSES TO POWER

Activists from the nineteenth century forward have struggled across axes of difference to collaborate effectively for positive social change. Despite their optimism that the world can and should look different from the way it does in the political moment, power hierarchies remain a part of everyone's reality and must be confronted. How has this fact of everyone's reality shaped the twin intellectual projects of intersectionality?

Multiple strategies from activists in the anti-violence against women community have emerged for confronting and reconceptualizing power in a more complex way. Their experience with the vagaries of political activism—specifically when solidarity (whether presumed by virtue of shared identity or forged through politics) fails—creates a dilemma: how does one address both the problematic action as well as the power relations that contributed to the failure in the first place?

Though pessimistic about the possibility of gaining visibility and recognition from white Americans (in Richardson 1987, 61), Maria Stewart doggedly points out the power differentials among women on the basis of racial disparities and Blacks on the basis of gender disparities (37). While confronting nineteenth-century power in Boston might be more daunting than a progressive political protest in twenty-first-century San Francisco, Stewart illustrates the failure of solidarity among Black and non-Black women: "I have asked several individuals of my sex, who transact business for themselves, if providing our girls were to give them the most satisfactory references, they would not be willing to grant them an equal opportunity with others? Their reply has been—for their own part, they had no objection; but as it was not the custom, were they to take them into their employ, they would be in danger of losing the public patronage" (45).[24] One hundred and fifty years later, Moraga illustrates the exact same dynamics as an illustration of failed solidarity between Third World and white middle class women in the United States:

> As Third World Women we clearly have a different relationship to racism than white women, but all of us are born into an environment where racism exists. . . .
>
> Racism is societal and institutional. It implies the power to implement racist ideology. Women of color do not have such power, but white women are born with it and the greater their economic privilege, the greater their power. This is how white middle class women emerge among feminist ranks as the greatest propagators of racism in the movement. Rather than using the privilege they have to crumble the institutions that house the source of their own oppression—sexism, along with racism—they oftentimes deny their privilege in the form of "downward mobility," or keep it intact in the form of guilt. Guilt is *not* a feeling. It is an intellectual mask to a feeling. Fear is a feeling—fear of losing one's power, fear of being accused, fear of a loss of status, control, knowledge. Fear is real. Possibly this is the emotional, non-theoretical place from which serious anti-racist work among white feminists can begin. (In Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 62; emphasis in original).



These rejections of gender-based solidarity, combined with the aforementioned rejection of a racial solidarity in reporting domestic violence, leaves women like Stewart and Moraga in a quandary: with whom can we build a base of political power that can be trusted?

Consistent with the idea that activism is motivated by a deep sense that something is wrong in the world and needs to be set right, responses to failed solidarity in the anti-violence against women space involve rethinking and reengagement rather than disengagement and withdrawal. Moraga suggests activists are obligated to confront the difficult questions if only to create a space where others can also be challenged: "We do not experience racism, whether directed at ourselves or others, theoretically. . . . How does one then emotionally come to terms with racism? None of us in this book can challenge others to confront questions that we ourselves have not confronted" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 62). These experiences with failed solidarity actually spark Moraga's rethinking of the liberal notion of hyperindividualistic, atomized power:

> If we could make this connection in our heart of hearts, that if we are serious about a revolution—better—if we seriously believe there should be joy in our lives (real joy, not just "good times"), then we need one another. We women need each other. Because my/your solitary, self-asserting "go-for-the-throat-of-fear" power is not enough. The real power, as you and I well know, is collective. I can't afford to be afraid of you, nor you of me. If it takes head-on collisions, let's do it: this polite timidity is killing us. (In Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 34).

While these painful instances of solidarity help us rethink power as collective and reveal power systems as complex in terms of both their (in)visibility and mutual construction, it is clear the pain remains. But, as Doetsch-Kidder (2012) notes, activism can emerge as a productive response to such pain when combined with love as a multidimensional motivation. I turn next to an analysis of organizing in this space.

## ORGANIZING THE INTERSECTIONAL WAY: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE ANTI-VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN MOVEMENT

Bhattacharjee offers a helpful articulation of organizing as a specific form of political activism: "Organizing exploited and powerless peoples ... more accurately means developing a sense of power among these peoples ... organizing of exploited peoples does not simply mean achieving their presence in an organization in any capacity. Organizing is successful when the leadership is drawn from exploited people, who then make decisions for themselves and the organization" (in Shah 1997, 43). This definition is no longer unique to the anti-violence against women sector, if in fact it ever was. That said, the concepts and strategies generated by intersectional activism, particularly in the international arena, were grounded in work done by women of color as "women's issues" that eventually highlighted even greater opportunities for bottom-up empowerment.

The shift from a model of international development, for example, to one of "empowerment," is an important illustration of this phenomenon. Doetsch-Kidder defines empowerment as "an activist strategy [which] recognizes that meaningful social change relies on people's beliefs about what is possible and seeks to expand these beliefs" (2012, 83). Elaine Kim gives an example of this from the 1990s: "What is interesting ... many Asian American women work on transnational issues, like the maquiladoras over the San Diego Tijuana border. It is interesting to see that although their organizing efforts might have started out as something some of the men would dismiss as 'just' women's issues or women's causes, women have transformed them into the most pressing issues" (in Shah 1997, 65). This definition of empowerment, however, is distinct from transversal politics discussed by Nira Yuval-Davis in *Gender and Nation*. For Yuval-Davis, empowerment remains locked into assumptions of the homogeneity and essentialist constructions of groups, and building on Collins, Barkley Brown, and Italian feminist activists, she proposes transversal politics as a mode of praxis that embraces universality in diversity (1997, 125).

While intersectionality and transversal politics share an interest in engaging and contending with difference in meaningful ways, intersectionality-like thought has a different understanding of contingency and complexity from transversal politics that is complementary rather than competitive. Thus the tactics discussed below are reflective of intersectionality-like thinking and based on an understanding of empowerment with Yuval-Davis's critiques in mind. In the implementation of organizing strategies that centered empowerment, two ways of executing tactics emerged from an "organizing toolbox" for intersectional activists: self-care that integrates pain as motivation and contingent participation in coalition politics. Both are important extensions of the strategic use of visibility and invisibility discussed above.

Intersectionality-like thinking in the anti-violence against women space provides a useful tactic of self-care: the *integration* of rather than the denial or eradication of profound pain. Across a span of twenty years, intersectional activists Chezia

Carraway and Shiva illustrate specifically how the integration of their pain transforms their organizing. For both women, survivor status produces a specific kind of engagement with anti-violence against women work. Writing in 1993, Carraway suggested integrating her pain as a shared spiritual practice:

> As an incest survivor, I am very aware that the earlier the onset of violence, the greater the impact on the spirit. We must acknowledge our own personal herstories and collective experiences. We must identify the violence perpetrated against us. We must learn to practice spiritual healing with the same diligence as we do physical healing. Consistent spiritual cleansings are an essential part of good mental health. Our psyches are being attacked every day, and we must always be on guard and aware. The burden is bearable only if we bear it together. (Carraway 1993, 1308–1309)

Shiva (a South Asian American queer feminist activist), on the other hand, is far less spiritual in her language but cues a very similar concept:

> Reflecting on her mother's death and the sexual abuse Shiva suffered at the hands of her grandfather, she says,
>
> It was very painful for me that [my mother] died when I was twenty-two, but on the other hand it helped me grow and become who I am today, right? . . . My life would have been easier if my grandfather hadn't existed. But on the other hand, I do believe in that old saying that pain hollows you out, and hopefully if you understand the role of pain, it allows you to hold more. (In Doetsch-Kidder 2012, 36)

These two practitioners of integrative self-care are directly from the anti-violence against women movement who engage in intersectional activism. However the roots of the practice are grounded in a broader understanding of vulnerability as a pathway to strength articulated by both Gloria Anzaldúa and Luisa Teish in the 1980s. Anzaldúa articulates it in the following way: "Words are not enough. We must perform visible and public acts that may make us more vulnerable to the very oppressions we are fighting against. But, our vulnerability *can* be the source of our power—**if we use it**" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 195; emphasis in original). Self-care in general has emerged among activists who embrace transformative organizing in response to the many cases of serious illness, burnout, and even early death they observed.[25]



Sandoval identifies a second organizing tactic used by Third World feminists that speaks to a strategic use of visibility/invisibility: contingent coalition politics. Amirah's presentation of El Sadaawi suggests she was a practitioner of this tactic.[26] The changes El Sadaawi makes in terms of her accessibility and visibility are incredibly important for both representation of agency and as an acknowledgment of multiple audiences to collaborate with. Typical analyses of coalition politics frame contingency as a matter of agreement or disagreement regarding the issue at hand. But Sandoval suggests a different formulation of contingency: a "dropping in/dropping out" practice that may not always reflect the spectrum of consensus:

> U.S. feminists of color, insofar as they involved themselves with the 1970s white women's liberation movement, were also enacting one or more of the ideological positionings [*sic*] just outlined, but rarely for long, and rarely adopting the kind of fervid belief systems and identity politics that tend to accompany their construction under hegemonic understanding. This unusual affiliation with the movement was variously interpreted as disloyalty, betrayal, absence, or lack. . . . They were the mobile (yet ever present in their "absence") members of this particular liberation movement. It is precisely the significance of this mobility which most inventories of oppositional ideology cannot register. (Sandoval 1991, 13–14)

Sandoval uses the metaphor of an automobile's clutch and its attendant gear shifts based on driving conditions to explain how contingent coalition politics function (1991, 14). In later work she links "this process of taking and using whatever is necessary and available in order to negotiate, confront, or speak to power—and then moving on to new forms, expressions, and ethos when necessary" as a method for survival (2000, 29).

Throughout this chapter I have highlighted how intersectionality-like thinking has reciprocal roots in political activism. Not only were several key figures writing in the late twentieth century as intellectuals and activists, the emphasis they placed on complex understandings of visibility and invisibility, along with complex categorical relationships, is evident. Visibility in the most unlikely places need not look like traditional activism (Doetsch-Kidder 2012, 124).[27] As well, strategic visibility is not just for issues of personal interest to the organizer, it can also work as a practice of solidarity. Beale (1970) illustrates the importance of a global understanding in the examples of reproductive violence she highlights, connecting men in India with women in Puerto Rico.[28] Recent examples of such solidarity include DREAM activists in California, who used their successful push to gain rights for undocumented young people through the California State Senate to advocate for a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights that was vetoed by the governor (see Hancock 2014). These young adult advocates also explicitly refer to intersectionality as a motivation for their political organizing. This different approach to solidarity and to the coalition politics that emerge from it is part of what to expect from attention to the diversity within and between groups[29] that is a hallmark of intersectionality-like thought for both the decades immediately prior to and after the 1989–1990 interventions of Crenshaw and Collins in the US context.



Equally if not more important (given its prior hidden status), the shaping of intersectionality by activists against violence against women during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries includes significant attention to the second intellectual project of intersectionality, "ontological complexity." The idea that analytical categories like "race," "gender," "class," and the hegemonic practices associated with them (racism, sexism, classism, to which imperialism and homophobia certainly could be added) are mutually constitutive, not conceptually distinct, is one that has yet to receive as much scholarly attention as the visibility project of intersectionality. Yet despite the hegemony of "single-axis" thinking (May 2015, 80), activists in the 1830s as well as the 1990s understood that the construction of such categories as mutually exclusive fundamentally distorted both their lived experience and the reality of the world as it exists.

This shift from a unitary standpoint grounded in material experiences to one that is not simply multiple but intersectional is deeply imbricated with this second intellectual project. Intersectionality-like thought and transversal politics share a common interest in engaging difference without reproducing homogeneity and a theoretical foundation in standpoint theory. Intersectionality's complicated relationship with standpoint theory is explored in the next chapter, as I set out ontological and epistemological tenets for intersectionality that are grounded in a detailed history of intersectionality-like thought that continues to be attentive to interdisciplinarity, global trends, and literacy stewardship.

## Chapter 2

1. I examine the role of "experience" in greater depth in chapter 4.
2. Bonnie Thornton Dill, one of the earliest sociologists to explicitly talk about intersections of race, gender, and class, discusses the historical evidence from the women's suffrage era: "The movement's early emphasis upon the oppression of women within the institution of marriage and the family, and upon educational and professional discrimination, reflected the concerns of middle-class white women . . . The statements of early women's rights groups do not reflect these concerns, and 'as a rigorous consummation of the consciousness of white middle-class women's dilemma, the (Seneca Falls) Declaration all but ignored the predicament of white working-class women, as it ignored the condition of Black women in the South and North alike' " (Dill [1983] 2009, 29).
3. Perhaps ironically, the letter was signed by an economically diverse group: two welfare recipients, two housewives, a domestic worker, a grandmother and a psychotherapist (Morgan 1970, 361).
4. "In Britain, the term 'Black' was adopted by the antiracist movement in the 1960s as a political designation for people of African, Asian and Caribbean descent. The term pointed to shared experiences of racism and common histories of anti-colonial struggle" (Sudbury, in Incite! 2006, 270). I preserve the distinction throughout the book: when referring to Britain, "Black" carries this precise definition; when referring to the United States, "Black" refers to any self-identified person who is a part of the African diaspora: African American, African (and any nation of the continent), Caribbean/West Indian, Afro-Latino, and people of mixed descent.
5. I return briefly to this case study in chapter 5 as a site ripe for what Crenshaw calls "representational intersectionality analysis."
6. In India, the connection between spousal abuse and alcoholism and general strike strategies proved successful during struggles against landlord injustices and performed collectively by wives facilitated communal community-based activism.

> In the U.S. we emphasize immediate separation from the violence itself. . . . The second thing we emphasize is confidentiality. . . . In China . . . they did not think that shelters were a solution . . . they were emphasizing public condemnation. . . . When a woman called the crisis line, they had the authority to call the police and to then call the block leader where the family lived. They had the authority to call for a block meeting, a neighborhood meeting, a meeting in a person's trade union . . . to confront him . . . Some of his vacation time might be taken away from him . . . Ultimately what they decided to do was to organize what they called "model husband award competition" . . . wives would nominate based on the good behavior of their spouses . . . They went through a seven-step process of interviewing in-laws, children, separate from the man himself. They got quite a bit of publicity, and the man would get an equivalent of a day's pay. (Bhattacharjee, in Shah 1997, 40)

7. Sarah Reed offers the example of finding alternatives to incarceration for native perpetrators:

> Traditionally, if somebody behaved in a way that hurt women and children, they were basically excluded from the community, sometimes permanently, sometimes for a period of years or months. Some folks are reinstating that. That's a way to not imprison more native men but to hold them accountable for their behavior and to make a statement as a community about what's tolerated and what's not.
>
> . . .
>
> The prison system doesn't seem to solve a lot of violence against women issues. And native people, there's no evidence any anthropologist or archaeologist has ever been able to find that there was anything like jails on this continent prior to Europeans coming, so there were ways that these problems were dealt with, and it's a matter of trying to bring those back or re-create them or think about those in a new but old way.
>
> Aware of the histories of harmful external intervention in tribes, Sarah offers support and ideas that can address tribal problems but she leaves it to the tribes to craft workable solutions. She specifically connects this need for tribes to do-it-themselves with their need for empowerment, even stronger after so many years of being told what they cannot do. (Doetsch-Kidder 2012, 105–106)



In reference to another tribe she enjoys working with, " 'you don't have the constraints of the Western legal framework,' which enables more creative solutions to women's problems" (138).

8. In a similar vein, Elizabeth Martínez, in a 1971 issue of *El Grito del Norte*, contends that it is the anachronistic view of women as solely mothers and wives that is out of date:

> The fact is, nothing could be more truly Chicana than the Chicana who wants to be more than a wife, mother, housekeeper. That limited concept of women did not exist under our Indian ancestors for whom the woman was a creative person in the broadest sense and central to the cultural life of the tribe. Later in Mexican history, we find that the woman has played every possible role—including that of fighter on the front lines. Any people who live close to the land, who are subject to nature's forces, know that survival is impossible without both sexes working at it in every possible way. That is the true Raza tradition, a communal tradition. . . . So revolution means new ideas about relations between men and women, too. (in García 1997, 80–81)

9. Falcon quotes Sofia directly: "They don't analyze the colonial period when we were part of the property of the owner. And whenever the owner wanted, we had no voice, no vote [about being with him]. We were his property. And that resulted in many consequences. Many killed themselves. Many had abortions so that their children would not have the same fate" (2008, 8). Falcon classifies this experience as an instance of Du Boisian "double consciousness" (8).
10. Changing such experiences also involves sweeping cultural changes, which I address in chapter 5.
11. It is important to note that SAKHI had been permitted to march each of the previous five years; SALGA had never been permitted before 1995 (Purvi Shah, in Shah 1997, 48).
12. According to Shah, SALGA was banned from both parades in 1995.

13. Dhamoon traces twenty-first-century examples of these distortions in the Canadian context by noting that racialized gendering processes are relational and interactive and serve to politicize differences between groups of indigenous women as well as between Muslim women and non-Muslim women (2009, 128 and 136). I cover this in greater detail in chapter 5.
14. Amirah notes:

> What might appear as inconsistency in her work is in fact an expression of the dual project of the post-1967 Arab cultural critic, whose long-term goal was "to subvert simultaneously the existing social and political (neo) patriarchal system and the West's cultural hegemony" . . . In *Al-Wajh al-'ari lil-mar'a al-'arabiyyah* [the original Arabic version of *The Hidden Face of Eve*, which directly translates as "The Naked Face of the Arab Woman"] (1977) in particular, El Sadaawi carries out this subversive project by confronting head-on issues such as "the place and meaning of cultural heritage (*turath*); the relation of historicity, the question of religion, identity, and modernity." (Amirah 2000, 230–231)

15. I explore these differences in chapter 4.
16. One infamous contemporary case in the United States is that of Marisa Alexander, whose utilization of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" justification for self-defense failed as she sought to defend herself from an abusive partner. As of 2015 she is awaiting a new trial following a set aside conviction for attempted murder.
17. Arguments in this vein include Wadsworth (2011) and Patil (2013). I take this up directly in chapter 6.
18. There are often more examples that can be included in the text; in those situations I attempt to provide additional examples in the footnotes, like this brief statement from Elaine H. Kim: "Koreans in the 1980s, when protest movements were so strong, would say, 'well, feminist concerns need to be taken care of after we take care of reunification' " (in Shah 1997, 65).
19. Thiam's book was published in French in 1978 and translated into English in 1986.
20. Mitsuye Yamada gives another equally compelling statement in this vein: "The two are not at war with one another; we shouldn't have to sign a 'loyalty oath' favoring one over the other. However, women of color are often made to feel that we must make a choice between the two. . . . I have thought of myself as a feminist first, but my ethnicity cannot be separated from my feminism" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 73).



21. May (2015) refers to a similar notion as "the hegemony of single-axis thinking," but the contention here is more comprehensive, as I elaborate in chapter 3.
22. The social location of "most oppressed" is also consistent with the reproduction of zero-sum logic, as linguistically "most" implies that there can only be one most oppressed person, group, or country.
23. Barbara Smith gives an example of this proposed severability: "the one thing about racism is that it doesn't play favorites. Look at the history of lynching in this country. And also look at how Black women have experienced violence that is definitely racial. When you read about Black women being lynched, they aren't thinking of us as females. The horrors that we have experienced have absolutely everything to do with them *not even viewing us as women*" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 122; emphasis in original). Carbado and Gulati (2013), Hancock (2013), and May (2015) all critique this kind of formulation, when done in the twenty-first century, as *not* intersectional; yet there is clear historical evidence of two frames of intercategorical ontological relationships that require engagement by intersectionality's contemporary interpretive community.
24. See also Stewart's request of "American" women: "O woman, woman! Upon you I call; for upon your exertions almost entirely depends whether the rising generation shall be anything more than we have been or not. O woman, woman! Your example is powerful, your influence great; it extends over your husbands and your children, and throughout the circle of your acquaintance. Then let me exhort you to cultivate among yourselves a spirit of Christian love and unity, having charity one for another" (Richardson 1987, 55).
25. Organizers of domestic workers (National Domestic Workers Alliance in the United States) and African American organizers across a range of sectors have also adopted somatic practices in recent years as well in recognition of both self-care's growing

presence among organizers as well the monumental breadth and size of social transformation that continues to be necessary.

26. Moreover, while she rejects Islamic obscurantism and the use of religion as a tool of oppression, she also fights against the Western (mis)understanding of Islam [*sic*].

    See note 14 for further information.

27. [Sarah Reed] offers the story of an Upiq Eskimo woman who started a shelter in her village in 1984 as one that gives her hope and sustains her in her work. The shelter is respected in the village as a "sacred" place, so that, even though there are no police in this village and everyone knows its location, the shelter has never had problems with batterers trying to harm people there. Sarah connects the shelter's safety with the personal power and effectiveness of the woman who runs it, saying, "she's the most traditional kind of conservative, very quiet woman and yet she has this sense of complete empowerment and strength, and I get to be part of her world." (Doetsch-Kidder 2012, 124)

28. Beale writes:

> The United States has been sponsoring sterilization clinics in non-white countries, especially in India where already some three million young men and boys in and around New Delhi have been sterilized in makeshift operating rooms set up by the American Peace Corps workers. Under these circumstances, it is understandable why certain countries view the Peace Corps not as a benevolent project, not as evidence of America's concern for underdeveloped areas, but rather as a threat to their very existence. This program could more aptly be named the "Death Corps."
>
> The vasectomy, which is performed on males and takes only six or seven minutes, is a relatively simple operation. The sterilization of a woman, on the other hand, is admittedly major surgery. . . . This method of "birth control" [tubal ligation] is a common procedure in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has long been used by the colonialist exploiter, the United States, as a huge experimental laboratory for medical research before allowing certain practices to be imported and used here. When the birth-control pill was first being perfected, it was tried out on Puerto Rican women and selected black women (poor), as if they were guinea pigs to see what its effect would be and how efficient the Pill was.
>
> The salpingectomy has now become the commonest operation in Puerto Rico . . . It is so widespread that it is referred to simply as *la operación. On the Island, 20 percent of the women between the ages of fifteen and forty-five have already been sterilized.*
>
> . . .
>
> It is the poor black and Puerto Rican woman who is at the mercy of the local [abortion] butcher. . . . Nearly half of the child-bearing deaths in New York City are attributed to abortion alone and out of these, 79 percent are among non-whites and Puerto Rican women.
>
> We are not saying that black women should not practice birth control. . . . It is also her right and responsibility to determine when it is in *her own best interests* to have children, how many she will have, and how far apart. (In Morgan 1970, 347–348; emphasis in original)

29. As noted above, this can also be called "universality in diversity" (Yuval-Davis 1997, 125) and serves as the constitutive element of transversal politics.

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