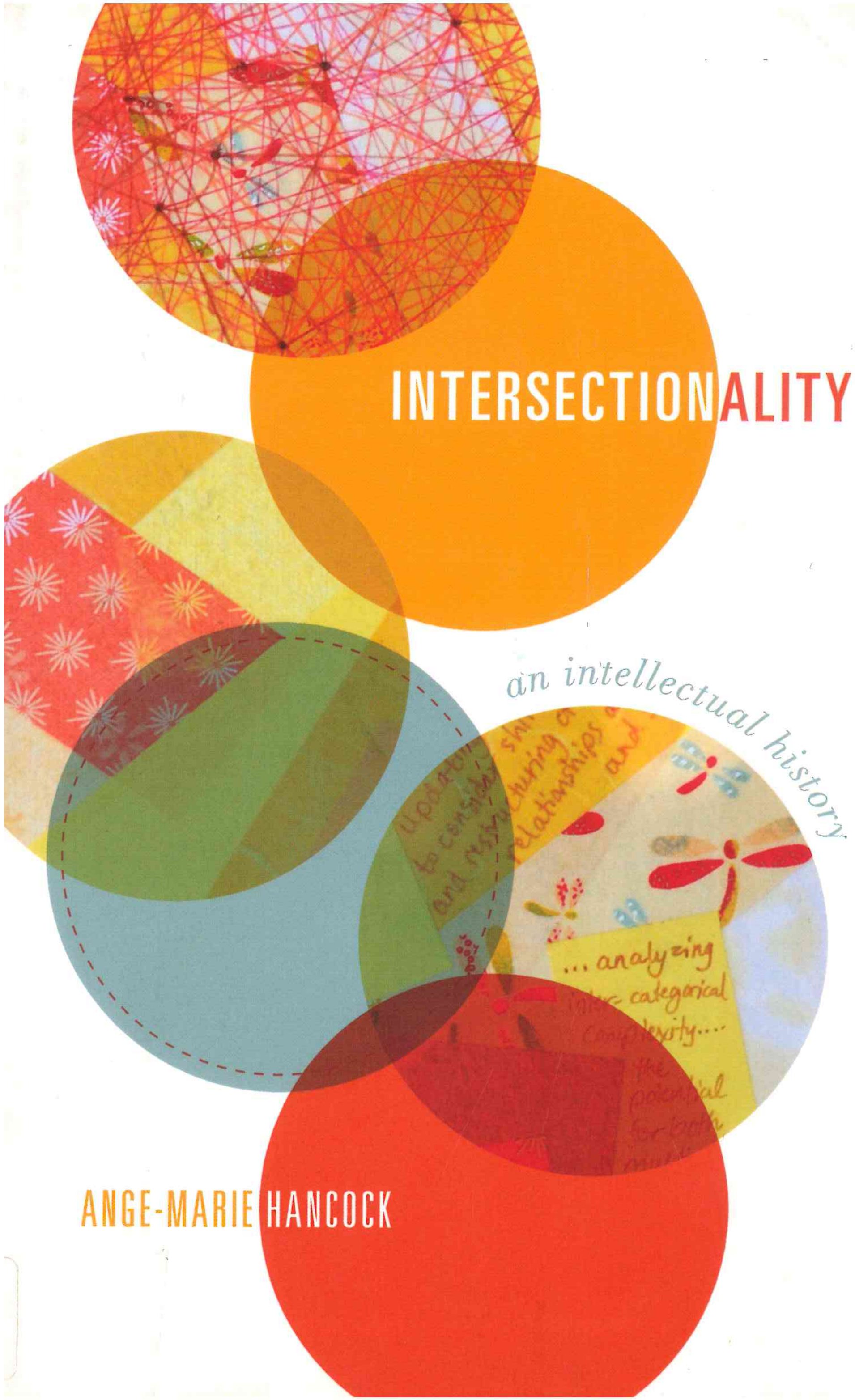

INTERSECTIONALITY

an intellectual history

ANGE-MARIE HANCOCK

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OXFORD
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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

Cataloging-in-Publication data is on file at the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-0-19-937036-8 (hbk.); 978-0-19-937037-5 (pbk.)

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

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

3

THE MULTICULTURAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF INTERSECTIONALITY

O, America, America! Thou land of my birth! I love and admire thy virtues as much as I abhor and detest thy vices; and I am in hopes that thy stains will soon be wiped away, and thy cruelties forgotten.

—MARIA MILLER STEWART, *"Cause for Encouragement" (1832)*

She is no longer the silent one
Because she has cast off the shawl of the past to show her face

—ANA MONTES, *"La Nueva Chicana" (1971)*

The theme echoing throughout most of these stories is our refusal of the easy explanation to the conditions we live in.

—CHERRÍE MORAGA (*in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 23)*

IN *WORDS OF FIRE: AN Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, editor Beverly Guy-Sheftall contends that the erasure of Black women from histories of abolition and women's suffrage movements was readily apparent in the nineteenth century to Black women themselves (1995, 24), including Maria Miller Stewart and Anna Julia Cooper. Stewart, who lectured in public twelve years before Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech and published

in William Garrison's *The Liberator* newspaper ten years before Frederick Douglass, specifically called upon the "Daughters of Africa" to "Awake! Arise! No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties" (Richardson 1987, 30). Stewart's calls for greater visibility of Black women in Boston's activist community were met with attempts by Black ministers to remove her from the public sphere, which contributed to her departure from Boston and from public life. Like many who are cited in this book, Maria Stewart remains largely invisible to this day to many scholars more familiar with Truth or Douglass. In this chapter I uncover a multicultural epistemology for intersectionality by tracing a diverse set of intersectionality-like theoretical arguments for greater visibility and the concomitant analytical shifts in the relationships among categories of difference that logically follow.

A protégé of the far better-known David Walker, whose *Appeal* has long been part of the canon of African American political thought, Maria Stewart was a widow whose public career lasted three short years. Stewart exhorted her fellow Black women through the time-honored rhetorical strategy of the Jeremiad.[1] Stewart's manuscripts suggest that her invisibility as part of intersectionality's intellectual history was as complicated in the nineteenth century as it is today. Though she was published several times in early editions of *The Liberator*, Stewart's highly political tracts were relegated to the "Ladies' Department" of the paper. This location, though customary for all women's writing in the nineteenth century, makes Stewart's brief public career all the more likely to be invisible unless one specifically studies Black women or Black Feminist thought. We must look with the intention of finding her.

Over a century later, Chicana poet Ana Montes exhorts us to see with intentionality as well; to not to forget the "Bareheaded girl fighting for equality," reminding us that "Wherever you turn /

Wherever you look / You'll see her" (1971, in García 1997, 19). Who or what do we see if we look with intentionality in the directions Montes urges?

For some theorists the call for visibility is a straightforward response to decades or centuries of invisibility. Here I am alluding to the kind of invisibility analogous to that which occurs behind what W. E. B. Du Bois might call "the veil of race," where an entire people lives their lives in plain sight. In this vein the theorists discussed here seek to remedy multiple kinds of invisibility—that of mainstream societies and of the subaltern communities they are simultaneously located within. In an effort to make such a case among Chicano nationalists, Adelaida del Castillo explains the reason for an academic journal dedicated to Chicanas in a 1974 issue of *La Gente*:[2] "[*Encuentro Femenil*] is the first Chicana feminist journal ever published. . . . You can't obtain this kind of information anywhere else because nobody has bothered to organize and publish material dealing with the Chicana. . . . If we don't have journals which delineate the problems of Chicana women, how are people going to know that Chicana women have problems?" (in García 1997, 45–46). Without specific attention to multiply identified populations in Britain, concurred British and Israeli scholars Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, "Sisterhood can be misleading" (1983, 62). We can connect these earlier kinds of arguments for visibility with that of Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, who developed the metaphor of intersecting streets that is most commonly connected with the commitment to visibility: "Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling" (Crenshaw 1991, 1242).[3] Del Castillo, Anthias, Yuval-Davis, and Crenshaw all ground their theoretical arguments in applied or activist contexts, some of which were covered in chapter 2.

On both sides of the Atlantic, across race, nationality, and class lines, the recognition that visibility is an important part of the work to be done also fits within common understandings of twentieth-century feminist theories like standpoint theory, multicultural feminist thought, and intersectionality. In her now famous 1984 article "Under Western Eyes," Chandra Talpade Mohanty details the ways in which universalizing analytical tendencies enacted by Western feminists—specifically the impact of the shibboleth "women's oppression is a global phenomenon"—result in decontextualized, monolithic images and understandings of "third world women" (in Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991, 349).[4] The impact of these universalizing tendencies obligates us, Uma Narayan argues, to account for them in our epistemology: "Feminist epistemology, like these other enterprises, must attempt to balance the assertion of the value of a different culture or experience against the dangers of romanticizing it to the extent that the limitations and oppressions it confers on its subjects are ignored" (1989, 257). This brief survey of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveals one response to invisibility that is a hallmark of intersectionality-like thinking.

However, the political understanding of what it means to render the invisible visible gets far more complicated in light of a more comprehensive intellectual history. Consider Winnifred Eaton, a Eurasian novelist of Chinese and British descent in the early twentieth century. Under the Japanese pen name Onoto Watanna, Eaton created characters that appeared to display surface traits of Asian female stereotypes while in fact they subverted those stereotypes (Ling 1989, 317). Her novels *The Honorable Miss Moonlight* (1912) and *Cattle* (1924) provide ample evidence that the author "worked to sabotage the foundations of [marginalization] from within" (318).

Eaton's older sister, Elizabeth, took a different literary path, under the Cantonese pen name Sui Sin Far. Elizabeth's 1912 story collection *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* uses irony to subtly critique the implications of a white female friend's invitation to a presentation entitled "America the Protector of China" and her Chinese husband's opinion on equality between the sexes, as this thinly veiled letter Mrs. Fragrance sends to her husband demonstrates:

> It was most exhilarating, and the effect of so much expression of benevolence leads me to beg of you to forget to remember that the barber charges you one dollar for a shave while he humbly submits to the American man a bill of fifteen cents. And murmur no more because your honored elder brother, on a visit to this country, is detained under the roof-tree of this great Government instead of under your own humble roof. Console him with the reflection that he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty. What is the loss of ten hundred years or ten thousand times ten dollars compared with the happiness of knowing oneself so securely sheltered? All of this I have learned from Mrs. Samuel Smith, who is as brilliant and great of mind as one of your own superior sex. (Far 1912; quoted in Ling 1989, 315)

For Elizabeth Eaton, the casual racism of Mrs. Fragrance's friend and the casual sexism of her husband both merit decorous derision. Ling situates the author against a genre of white contemporaries, contending that Eaton provides multidimensional Chinese and white characters instead of cardboard missionary stories of whites saving Chinese people or whites in need of protection from a nefarious "Yellow Peril" (Ling 1989, 315–316). What are we to make of these early twentieth-century efforts to identify the twin evils of racism and sexism through literary devices that involve reappropriating racist and sexist beliefs?

Moreover, these two sisters embrace very different strategies to reveal the invisible. Winnifred disappears into an

arguably "more acceptable" Asian identity (before the Second World War) by adopting a Japanese pen name, while Elizabeth remains outspokenly critical of racism and sexism by directing even greater attention to her Chinese female heritage. How authors and activists make political choices about visibility and invisibility is often overlooked in scholarly engagements with intersectionality; enhanced visibility is presumed to be salutary under any and all conditions.[5] Speaking in an entirely different context, poet and activist Audre Lorde also attests to the complexity of visibility in her keynote speech to the National Third World Gay and Lesbian Conference in 1979:

> Some are absent because they cannot be here because of external constraints and for our sisters and brothers in prison, in mental institutions, in the grip of incapacitating handicaps and illnesses, I ask your attention and concern, which is another word for love.
>
> But others are not here because they have lived a life so full of fear and isolation that they are no longer even able to reach out. They have lost their vision, they have lost their hope. And for every one of us here tonight, as we all know, there are many lesbians and gay men trapped by their fear into silence and invisibility and they exist in a dim valley of terror wearing nooses of conformity. And for them, also, I ask your understanding. For as we know, conformity is seductive as it is destructive, and can also be a terrible and painful prison. (In Byrd, Cole, and Guy-Sheftall [1979] 2009, 208)

While the closet is indeed a site of invisibility, like Winnifred's adoption of a Japanese pen name, the closet is more complex than mere false consciousness or internalized oppression, as Barvosa notes in *Wealth of Selves* (2008). Lorde is most often celebrated for her 1978 paper "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," which includes most famously the sentence: "Your silence will not protect you."[6] A more comprehensive intellectual history of intersectionality, which includes authors from diverse racial or ethnic boundaries, geographic boundaries, and intellectual disciplines, calls into question the notion that intersectionality is committed to a singular vision of rendering the invisible visible, as some authors might suggest (see Alexander-Floyd 2012). The notion that the pursuit of visibility is a fraught process that can include the (perhaps tortured) choice of strategic (in)visibility, as I mentioned in chapter 2 regarding Nawal El Sadaawi, illustrates the value of reading more broadly within the oeuvre of authors traditionally included as contributors to intersectionality (like Lorde) as well.[7]

Moreover, reading more broadly also allows for connections between the visibility project and questions of epistemology. For example, Lorde again marshals the visual in her speech "When Will the Ignorance End?" by connecting it to action and knowledge: "The ignorance will end when each one of us begins to seek out and trust the knowledge deep inside of us, when we dare to go into that chaos which exists before understanding and come back with new tools for action and for change. For it is from within that deep knowledge that our visions are fueled, and it is our vision which lays the groundwork for our actions, and for our future" (Byrd, Cole, and Guy-Sheftall [1979] 2009, 207). For Lorde, visibility also includes two new acts of sight: (1) seeing difference and diversity as creative and not divisive, and (2) seeing those who insist on remaining invisible on some level with compassion.[8]

While Lorde spoke specifically about sexuality, other axes of difference might also benefit from more light than dark, like gender presentation and so-called hidden disabilities. Canadian intersectionality theorist Rita Dhamoon, however, suggests that the benefits of visibility for Canadians who are deaf turns on a

distinction that to hear is "normal" and to be deaf is "abnormal" (2009, 94). Thus, additional visibility gains deaf communities little relief from the erasure of deaf ways of being (2009, 96), unless the "intricate links between racialized experiences of European colonialism and Eurocentric constructions of Deaf cultures as immature and uncivilized" are part of the analysis in a way that is "precise about when and how oralist meanings are constituted through discourses of racialization" (95).

What makes these particular manuscripts early contributions to "intersectionality-like" thought? Certainly their emphasis on making the needs of the invisible visible and recognizing where there has been passing or "covering"[9] on the part of others is one key element of their place in the intellectual history of intersectionality. But their contributions go beyond this need to see things previously left hidden or deliberately obscured. Consistent with my contention that intersectionality has a two-pronged intellectual project, theorists analyzed in this chapter came to understand intersectionality as more than an argument for inclusion of previously excluded agenda items or target populations.

Among her speeches, Maria Stewart spoke of both structural and individual racism, as well as structural and individual sexism. Writing in 1972, Elizabeth Martínez similarly addressed multiple oppression, demanding simultaneous ontological roles for all of them: "For the Chicana, all three types of oppression cannot be separated. They are all a part of the same system, they are three faces of the same enemy. They must all be fought with all our courage and strength" (in García 1997, 34). Thus, like many of the theorists we encounter in this chapter, these authors articulated an early version of a race-gender-class analysis[10] one can identify as "intersectionality-like" thinking. Both Guy-Sheftall (1995) and García (1997, 5) suggest that the core elements of mid-twentieth-century Black and Chicana Feminist thought conceptualized the struggle as multivalent: against racism in the larger society and against sexism in the civil rights and Chicano movements, respectively. Although intersectionality has emerged as an interpretive framework that reconstitutes how we analyze puzzles of injustice, epistemological distinctions between intersectionality, multicultural feminist thought, and standpoint theory are rarely examined. This intellectual history allows us to foreground the ontological and epistemological claims that start to reconceptualize the analytical relationships between categories of difference.

As codeveloping frameworks, standpoint theory, multicultural feminist thought, and intersectionality all claim to provide space for group-level analysis of difference. Here we will trace how standpoint theory, multicultural feminist thought, and intersectionality emerge from similar origins and then diverge into conceptually distinct intellectual projects, largely based on distinctions regarding the analytical relationships between categories of difference. As I discussed in chapter 1, this divergence is the subject of wide debate and anxiety as to its ramifications. Nevertheless, the divergence itself can no longer be ignored.

RETHINKING THE BINARY BETWEEN OPPRESSOR AND OPPRESSED

Scholar and educator Anna Julia Cooper was certainly no stranger to the kinds of invisibility discussed thus far. Several historians claim that scholar activist W. E. B. Du Bois appropriated Cooper's ideas and presented them without attribution. Specifically, Du Bois's idea of a psychological wage of whiteness, chronicled in *Black Reconstruction* (1935), is anticipated by Cooper's 1902 article "The Ethics of the Negro Question" (May 2007, 55).

Sixty years after Maria Stewart alerted the Daughters of Africa to the economic dimensions of racism and sexism, Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South* (1892) articulated a particular standpoint for Black women in the United States. Cooper's analysis continued to assert visibility in a context of invisibility: "The colored woman of today occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country. In a period of itself transitional and unsettled, her status seems one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all the forces which make for our civilization. She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both" ([1892] 1988, 134). Cooper, a philosopher as well as an educator, demystified "widely accepted philosophical norms to show how racism and sexism infiltrate ostensibly neutral knowledge practices" (May 2007, 6).[11] Her analyses continue to be a largely overlooked contribution to feminist epistemology and standpoint theory.

For mid-twentieth-century feminists of color in the United States, the idea of enhanced "visibility" included two claims. First, their social location, "the margins," was invisible to the naked eyes of both their subaltern communities and to mainstream society. Such invisibility had legal (Crenshaw 1989, 1991) as well as other material ramifications. Consistent with the visibility theme, the ethnic feminist accounts I examine reveal that identifying "the oppressor" is more complicated than a single category analysis can handle. Rather than a single margin-center metaphor, feminists of color initially suggest a framework of multiple margins and centers. In her analysis of novelist Toni Cade Bambara, bell hooks[12] notes "Sexist role patterning was as much the norm in black communities as in any other American community. It was an accepted fact among black people that the leaders who were most revered and respected were men" (1981, 4–5). Similarly, cultural constructions of Chicanas were predicated upon the valuation of "silent strength" as a virtue that could extend to complete sheltering of young Latinas (Sanchez 1977, in García 1997, 66).

One of the first breaks between mainstream feminist standpoint theorists and intersectionality theorists was a dissatisfaction with the conceptual arrangement of margins versus centers. This break produced a conceptual marker of distinction between feminist standpoint theory, women of color feminist thought, and intersectionality: a shift in the analytical framework of categories from one of centers and margins to a conceptualization of "interlocking" (or "interacting") categories of difference. This more complicated view of oppression and privilege represents an ontological shift that remains an important part of intersectionality's intellectual history.

The second claim extends the implications of living in the intersections (Combahee River Collective 1977; Crenshaw 1989).[13] Specifically, if we shift from a reality of one or more margin-center frameworks to a frame of intersections, we must also shift how analytical relationships between and within categories are conceptualized. Conceptualizing reality in a way that takes the politics of subaltern communities as seriously as the politics of mainstream society means that one can no longer self-locate as *either* on a margin *or* in a center. More to the point, one is neither purely an oppressor nor purely oppressed. Both *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981; 2nd ed. 1983) and *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983) specifically take up this dilemma of internalized oppression and learned bias. I explore these personal narratives more fully in chapters 4 and 5.

Conceptually shifting in this way includes moving away from additive models of inequality and injustice, which is not without its tradeoffs or difficulties. Indeed, as we will see in this chapter, those who seek to make the transition to intersectionality-like thinking display contradictions and

ambivalences about walking away from zero-sum language and thought. This section will focus on the transition in metaphors and the divergent epistemological paths standpoint and women of color feminist theories took. The late 1960s to the 1980s was a period of intellectual ferment that featured numerous attempts to theorize what has historically been considered a specific set of women's experiences (e.g., the "particular" experiences of African American or South Asian women).

For "traditional" feminist standpoint theorists, the idea that all knowledge is situated and located fosters a visionary capacity that reveals "the perversions of both life and thought" (Hartsock [1983] 1997, 466).[14] One of the classic articulations of feminist standpoint theory, Nancy Hartsock's "The Feminist Standpoint" (1983), sought to challenge Marx's inattention to "the woman question" by taking his "fruitful strategy" of binary opposition and applying it to the matter of gender equality ([1983] 1997, 228). Specifically, Hartsock drew upon Marx's historical materialism to contend that the sexual division of labor affords women a particularly necessary standpoint, which must be revealed as substantively relevant and worthy of visibility, even to one like Marx himself: "While on the one hand Marx remarked that the very first division of labor occurred in sexual intercourse, he argues that the division of labor only becomes 'truly such' when the division of mental and manual labor appears. Thus, he dismisses the sexual division of labor as of no analytic importance" (467). Hartsock continued by suggesting that the engaged vision produced by a specifically feminist standpoint analysis can lead to a liberatory reality (466–467).

The idea of a revelatory "objective account" is premised upon the idea that one can conceptually distinguish between the account of the oppressors and the account of the oppressed. Building on Lukács and Sandra Harding, Hartsock relies on "strong objectivity" as a standard for claim-making, which is predicated upon ideas of forming more general conclusions:[15]

> A standpoint is not an empiricist appeal to or by the oppressed but a cognitive, psychological and political tool for more adequate knowledge judged by the nonessentialist, historically contingent, situated standards of strong objectivity. Such a standpoint is the always fraught but necessary fruit of the practice of oppositional and differential consciousness. A feminist standpoint is a practical technology rooted in yearning, not an abstract philosophical foundation. ([1983] 1997, 236)

Hartsock's 1983 definition of a standpoint is premised upon the identification of a binary that divides a monolithic oppressor from a monolithic oppressed group. While Hartsock herself admits to overlooking diversity in "The Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited" (1997), her revisions preserve the relationship between different categories of difference: race or ethnicity remains ontologically subordinate to gender as the primary axis of oppression.[16] Such moves are perfectly suited to a worldview where gender inequality is considered the primary axis of oppression experienced by individuals and structured by daily life. Indeed such practices persist in Nina Lykke's *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing*, where her primary focus is "how to theorize intersections between gender/sex and other power differentials based on class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, geopolitical positioning, age, disability and so on" (2011, 9).

Hartsock's approach to a standpoint accurately replicates Marx's but is distinct ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically from multicultural feminists and later intersectionality theorists. According to Hartsock herself, her idea of creating a feminist standpoint theory emerged in 1978 (1997, 227). It emerged, however, in isolation from the challenges to the margin-center framework put forth by the authors discussed

above, from earlier in the twentieth century up to and including the 1970s. It is thus important to note that Hartsock's theoretical intervention occurred *after* the publication of works by Cooper, Nieto-Gómez, Martínez, and others, who characterized the pursuit of justice as one that must involve multiple centers, multiple margins, and later interlocking or intersecting axes of power. Hartsock's theoretical response—to add diversity through minimal strategic citation—mirrors 1980s and 1990s Western activists who sought to reshape the center to become more diverse through selective embraces of "diverse" women. As I noted in chapter 2, this navigation reproduced invisibility of women of color rather than empowering them.

Hartsock's approach to revising standpoint theory thus accurately replicates Marx's approach but has two limitations. First, it does not necessarily eradicate the existence of a margin or periphery. Second, and more importantly for our purposes, it illustrates the boundaries of standpoint theory, where the most conceptual stretching that can occur is the addition of "diversity" to a preexisting center that does nothing to eradicate the center-margin binary or fundamentally reconstitute it. Diversification of the center is ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically distinct from the theoretical turns made by intersectionality theorists.

Women of color feminists writing in the 1970s instead apply Marxian insights differently to focus on the specificity of their social location. Chicana feminist Mirta Vidal draws upon the history of groups like Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc in a 1971 article in the *International Socialist Review* that also seeks to apply Marxist methodologies to the specific struggles of Chicana/Mexican women [*sic*]: "They are denying . . . Raza women, who are triply oppressed, the right to struggle around their specific, real, and immediate needs. . . . Opposition to the struggles of women to break the chains of their oppression is not in the interests of the oppressed only but only in the interest of the oppressor. And that is the logic of the arguments of those who say that Chicanas do not want to or need to be liberated" (in García 1997, 23–24). Six years later, the Combahee River Collective's theoretical engagement with Marx suggested that Black women were not adequately represented by his analysis in a manner consistent with feminist standpoint theory as articulated by Hartsock: "Although we are in essential agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that this analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women" (Combahee River Collective [1977] 1993, 17). Like Virdal's Chicana feminist analysis, the collective's Black Feminist approach similarly implies that a specific Black women's standpoint would reveal liberatory information and a more truthful account. Unlike Hartsock, the collective does not seek to merely replicate Marx's methodology on another question (gender equality) or population (Black women), because they seek not to *replace* a class analysis with a race or a gender analysis, but instead to *reformulate* the analysis itself (13; emphasis mine), a point I return to in greater detail below to illustrate the limits or incompatibility of standpoint theory with intersectionality's ontological position.

The analysis of feminist standpoint theory here suggests two different approaches to analyzing gender. For Hartsock, feminist standpoint theory reconsiders or reappropriates Marx's analysis for gender, and suggests a "pluralization" of gender to "include" race or ethnicity as a shaper of gendered experiences in particular. It preserves the bright line between oppressed and oppressor. This approach, as Lorde articulates in 1979, has clear flaws:

> To read this program is to assume that lesbian and black women have nothing to say to existentialism, the erotic, women's culture and silence, developing feminist theory, or heterosexuality and power. And what does it mean in personal and political terms when even the two black women who did present here were literally found at the last hour? What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable. (In Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 98)

The second approach, embraced by Black Feminists, Chicana feminists, and feminists not based in the United States, uses historical materialism pioneered by Marx in conjunction with consciousness raising and other methods to reconceptualize the relationship between the "oppressed" and "oppressor" as multivalent and contingent. I elaborate on the multidirectionality of this oppression relation in chapter 4.

Although some of the theorists cited so far have been previously "invisible" in the history of intersectionality, even later, more prominent theorists echoed these sentiments regarding specificity. Cherríe Moraga's words in *This Bridge Called My Back* continue to resonate as part of a larger pushback against objectivity in the 1990s as part and parcel of false universalism: "The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression" (quoted in García 1997, 7). The trend toward greater specificity thus varies among women of color feminists and standpoint theorists.

That said, both kinds of feminist engagements with standpoint theory still suggest a more accessible truth following the process of standpoint discovery or revelation.[17] The Combahee River Collective (CRC) suggests explicitly that it expects to engage in reflection and perhaps change its mind, though it expects such a move will occur under conditions of progress only: "We are committed to a continual examination of our politics as they develop through criticism and self-criticism as an essential aspect of our practice" ([1977] 1993, 21–22). Moraga concurs: "And, I am involved in this book [*This Bridge Called My Back*] because more than anything else I need to feel enlivened again in a movement that can, as my friend Amber Hollibaugh states, finally ask the right questions and admit to not having all the answers" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, xiv–xv). This "reflexivity" is key to Sandra Harding's concept of strong objectivity in 1993.[18] Their point is well worth consideration as we shape an epistemology for intersectionality, particularly as it connects to the contingency understanding of evidence and knowledge.

Two challenges to the margin-center metaphor have thus emerged so far. First was the metaphor's use in a singular form. Another equally important problem with its conceptualization was its binary understanding of "oppressed" versus "oppressor." The next section briefly connects various women of color epistemologies to larger epistemological debates. The final section of this chapter then develops a specifically intersectional epistemology grounded in presupposition theory and postpositivism.

RECONCEPTUALIZING POWER

> Now that I am 26, I find that I've gone as far into my exploration of the white world as I want. It doesn't mean that I'm going to run off to live in a tipi. It simply means that I'm not interested in pursuing a society that uses analysis, research, and experimentation to concretize their vision of cruel destinies for those who are not bastards of the Pilgrims; a society with arrogance rising, moon in oppression, and sun in destruction.
>
> —BARBARA CAMERON (*in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 48–49)*

Lakota author Barbara Cameron specifically rejects the purpose, as much as the process, by which white Western knowledge validation occurs, suggesting a broader recognition that such knowledge practices are rife with hierarchical power relations. Rethinking the binary between oppressed and

oppressor obligates us to reconceptualize power more broadly. Another resounding distinction between the inclusion or additive approach[19] proposed by Hartsock and others was a revised understanding of power. As I noted earlier, Elizabeth Martínez's 1972 article suggested three connected "faces of the same enemy" (in García 1997, 34), as did Chicana lesbian feminist Cherríe Moraga in 1981: "My lesbianism is the avenue through which I have learned the most about silence and oppression. . . . In this country, lesbianism is a poverty—as is being brown, as is being a woman, as is just being plain poor" (1972, in García 1997, 7). These struggles for recognition of a three- and four-faced enemy was a claim distinct from the production of a more "objectively truthful" account.[20] Writing in very distinct contexts at approximately the same time, Uma Narayan (1989) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990) illustrate how power relations function in ways that not only complicate our understanding of oppressor and oppressed but shift our epistemology as well.

Patricia Hill Collins defines epistemology as "the study of the philosophical problems in concepts of knowledge and truth" (1990, 202). Following partially in the footsteps of the theorists discussed in the previous section, Collins dedicated an entire chapter of *Black Feminist Thought*[21] to elucidating a specific Black Feminist epistemology predicated upon the convergence of both Afrocentric and feminist epistemologies in a way uniquely suited to Black women. In a similar vein, Indian scholar Uma Narayan drew a parallel between feminist epistemology and recovery attempts made by "third world writers and historians to document the wealth and complexity of local economic and social structures that existed prior to colonialism" (1989, 257). Narayan and Collins both depend on feminist philosopher Sandra Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986) as a grounding for their arguments about power and how it operates in epistemological frameworks, connecting to standpoint theory while simultaneously providing a foundation for an intersectional epistemology.

One of the primary points of departure for feminist epistemology has been a fundamental reconstitution of what counts as knowledge and how it is defined (Hawkesworth 2006). This reconstitution emerged out of an unmet need. As a result, two different approaches emerge, both from multicultural feminist thought. In an article entitled "Race, Class and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood," sociologist Bonnie Thornton Dill proposes an approach that is closer to what we might call intersectional than Hartsock's, though both articles were published in 1983: "I would ask: How might these frameworks be revised if they took full account of black women's position in the home, family, and marketplace at various historical moments? In other words, the analysis of the interaction of race, gender, and class must not be stretched to fit the proscrustean [*sic*] bed of any other burgeoning set of theories" ([1983] 2009, 31; see also Collins 2000, 252–253). Narayan concurs in explaining feminist epistemology's contribution: "Feminist epistemology suggests that integrating women's contribution into the domain of science and knowledge . . . will not merely widen the canvas but result in a shift of perspective enabling us to see a very different picture . . . it will change the very nature of these activities and their self-understanding" (1989, 256). For both Dill and Narayan, the vision project of feminist epistemology provides more than an increasingly comprehensive picture, as Hartsock had sought, and more than the pursuit of making the invisible visible, as Crenshaw had sought. Like the Chicana feminists and CRC of the 1970s, they sought a reconstitution of the analysis itself.

Similarly, a specific social location that grounds a potential standpoint remains a crucial dimension of knowledge for Dill, Narayan, and Collins alike. This line of multicultural feminist thought follows in the longer tradition of Anna Julia Cooper's

long-forgotten but now famous words: "Only the Black woman can say when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood." That is, they remain connected to the 1970s' and early 1980s' understanding of a Marxian standpoint. Collins specifically details her quest in terms of an ongoing unmet need:

> Investigating the subjugated knowledge of subordinate groups—in this case a Black women's standpoint and Black feminist thought—requires more ingenuity than that needed to examine the standpoints and thought of dominant groups. I found my training as a social scientist inadequate to the task of studying the subjugated knowledge of a Black women's standpoint. This is because subordinate groups have long had to use alternative ways to create independent self-definitions and self-valuations and to rearticulate them through their own specialists. Like other subordinate groups, African-American women have not only developed a distinctive Black women's standpoint, but have done so by using alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge. (Collins 1990, 202)[22]

As Montes urges us in her poem quoted in the epigraph, we need to see differently, with intentionality. This intentionality of sight has two implications. First, such visibility emerges from a different methodology than Hartsock's mapping of Marxist method onto gender questions (see Collins 1990, 202; 2000, 254). Karin Aguilar-San Juan makes a similar point regarding Asian American feminism, attributing specifically Asian American cultural and political reference points: "This paradigm should not be referred to as an 'addendum' to Asian American politics or as a 'variant' of white feminism because those terms force Asian American feminism into the margins of other political frameworks. A point that bears repeating is that Asian American feminism, like other movements initiated by women of color, does not depend on a mechanical process of adding up oppressions" (in Shah 1997, x). Though Narayan and Collins appear to concur about the reconstitutive vision project of feminist epistemology, Narayan is suspicious enough of the logical ends of standpoint theory to caution against an additive understanding of oppression, which she calls "double vision." Specifically, Narayan questions whether inhabiting "two contexts critically" (1989, 266) confers relative epistemic advantage for those whose social location is at the intersection of multiple oppressions: "Feminist theory must be temperate in the use it makes of this doctrine of 'double vision'—the claim that oppressed groups have an epistemic advantage and access to greater critical conceptual space" (267).[23] This caution is worthy of ongoing attention from intersectionality's interpretive community.

Narayan's concern about epistemic advantage also appears to be consistent with Anthias and Yuval-Davis's concerns regarding analyses of British feminist contexts: "The relation between the two contexts the individual inhabits may not be simple or straightforward. The individual subject is seldom in a position to carry out a perfect 'dialectical synthesis' that preserves all the advantages of both contexts and transcends all their problems. There may be a number of different 'syntheses,' each of which avoids a different subset of the problems and preserves a different subset of the benefits" (Narayan 1989, 267). As sociologists, Anthias and Yuval-Davis struggled with how to pragmatically address "various political and theoretical inadequacies in feminist and social analyses" which persist (1983, 62). In doing so, however, they offer a cautionary response to US Black Feminists' ideas of the interrelationship between race, gender, and class: to reinforce a de facto binary between Black/non-Black perpetuates the invisibility problem they and Hartsock have attributed to Marxist analyses (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, 63; see also Hartsock [1983] 1997, 467). Narayan helps us understand this

may be an artifact of the complexity of the ontological challenge as well as an assertion of power.

Beyond methodology, this expressed vision of women's reality suggests an ontological shift in the conceptualization of what can be known and under what conditions because power is at stake. Although power is also an important part of standpoint theory in the 1970s and 1980s, multicultural feminists take it up in a different way. For example, Collins acknowledges epistemology and ontology themselves are sites of power struggles:

> Given that the general culture shaping the taken-for-granted knowledge of the community of experts is permeated by widespread notions of Black and female inferiority, new knowledge clams that seem to violate these fundamental assumptions are likely to be viewed as anomalies . . . . Moreover, specialized thoughts challenging notions of Black and female inferiority is unlikely to be generated from within a white-controlled academic community because both the kinds of questions that could be asked and the explanations that would be found satisfying would necessarily reflect a basic lack of familiarity with Black women's reality. (1990, 203)[24]

That said, in a manner more similar to Hartsock's replication of Marx's analysis, Anthias and Yuval-Davis claim the phrase "ethnic divisions" instead of "black/white division" can "provide for a more comprehensive conceptual category" (1983, 63). These kinds of moves are precisely the ones that give Alexander-Floyd, Jordan-Zachery, and Bilge tremendous pause, as I discussed in greater detail in chapter 1. Their mobilization of the phrase "ethnic divisions" provides us with one way to explore the question of citation politics and ambivalence about the primacy of certain "original trios" of categories, especially race. Anthias and Yuval-Davis are not alone in this era of feminist analysis. Puah's later critique of Black women's hegemonic hold over intersectionality also finds supportive evidence. For example, what does it mean in the quest for visibility when the CRC asserts: "As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that *all women of color face*" (Combahee River Collective 1977, 13; emphasis mine), while they reserve the entire focus of the statement to themselves as specifically Black women?[25] For all of these authors, feminist epistemology extends beyond a literalist engagement with Marx or their individual experiences with oppression. That commonality, however, does not supplant the complexity of the visibility project or the mixed evidence regarding mutually constitutive ontological relationships among categories of difference.

Earlier I discussed the idea that Hartsock's doctrinaire standpoint theory, like Marx's historical materialism before it, focused on a single oppressor-oppressed axis and women of color feminist theorists' identification of the need to attend to multiple margins and centers. Intersectionality is often characterized as shifting from a single-category analysis to a multiple-category analysis and little else, when it is much more. Chapter 2 focused on activists' contribution to reshaping conceptualizations of the political reality; in this chapter we see that the orientation toward the simultaneity of race, gender, and class oppression in a specific formulation breaks with both conventional standpoint theory and twentieth-century multicultural feminist thought. Here my focus is less on the number of categories of difference (and which categories, something I've addressed elsewhere[26]) that are included and more on the often unseen distinction between multicultural feminist thought and intersectionality-like thinking.

This chapter reveals an additional, equally important ontological shift in understanding reality—multiple categories' equal but not identical status as shapers of life outcomes in twentieth-century multicultural feminist thought. This reformulation,

rather than inclusion or diversification approach, persisted among women of color. However, the knotty process of divestiture from the zero-sum, additive model of reality was a case of two steps forward and two steps back, and persists today. The idea that there can be an "objective" reality connected epistemologically to truth grounded in a single binary of proletariat/bourgeoisie *or* man/woman serves to privilege that binary (and the concomitant homogeneity on either side of that divide, which logically extends from its assertion) is contested by both these ethnic feminist and intersectionality theory accounts.[27] The next section explores two key ambivalences about intersectionality's visibility project and suggests an epistemological break between multicultural feminist thought and intersectionality. This break has roots in the 1980s, but emerges more clearly post-2000.

VEXED VISIONS: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCES IN WOMEN OF COLOR FEMINIST THOUGHT

What might disagreements about the ontological status of multiple categories mean for the trajectory of intersectionality-like thought in the 183 years since Maria Stewart's publications and the thirty since Hartsock's? Feminist of color accounts allude to an understanding of power that cannot so easily distinguish between oppressor and oppressed. The vexed relationship between these two understandings of how power is organized and the ontological ramifications of moving from margin(s)-center(s) metaphors to interlocking, analytically equal but not identical roles for oppressive power relations like racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism persisted into the 1990s, as feminists of color theory diverged from standpoint theory (as we have already discussed) but remained in an uneasy, largely unexplored relationship with intersectionality-like thinking.

Hewing closely to doctrinaire Marxist theory, Chicana feminist theorists in the 1970s and the CRC alike signaled the start of a transition to the language of multiple relationships of power. Among Chicana feminists in particular, the revelatory account could produce a radicalized consciousness and enhanced visibility that was distinct from Chicanos or white women. Elena García connected radicalized consciousness to Chicano recognition in a 1973 edited volume published in Mexico: "Chicana consciousness is an integral part of the new breed, the Chicano movement, chicanismo. Chicana consciousness defined is not a white woman's liberation movement nor a [Chicano nationalist] ladies' auxiliary. . . . Chicanas: Actualize your potential. Chicanos: Recognize and respect this potential for the betterment of us all" (García in García 1997, 39–40). Further, Chicana feminists writing in magazines like *Regeneracíon*, a Chicano nationalist publication, also articulated a more complicated view of oppression and privilege and their relevance to political analysis. Anna Nieto-Gómez's 1974 article "La Feminista" echoes Maria Stewart's critiques of multiple movements by repositioning multiple oppressions linguistically: "These feministas are speaking out against the sexual racist oppression that they as Chicana women must contend with [*sic*]. . . . It is perpetuated by nationalists who demand that women must always be traditional and maintain the culture, in spite of their socio-economically oppressive conditions. Sexist racism is [also] manifested by those who consider and recognize only the needs of the single, Anglo, and middle class women" (Nieto-Gómez, in García 1997, 86–87). With the term "sexist racism," she positioned sexism and racism as equally relevant to the lives of Chicanas.

While the CRC appears to echo Nieto-Gómez in particular, the manifesto itself tacks back and forth between

intersectionality-like thinking and an additive approach: "We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (Combahee River Collective 1977, 13). They goes on later in the same manifesto to suggest a different understanding: "The sanctions in the Black and white communities against Black women thinkers are comparatively much higher than those against white women, particularly ones from the educated middle and upper classes" (17). This kind of claim appears to be consistent with the additive notion associated with having multiple centers of power that marginalize them. It turns on the notion that the greatest analytical value of oppression is in its revelation, or, to use the language of this book, its visibility, without concomitant attention to the doctrine of double vision's susceptibility to reification (Narayan 1989, 268). This is precisely the conversation rejected by Dill ([1983] 2009), Narayan (1989), and Collins (1990). Audre Lorde calls this kind of logic the "hierarchy of oppressions" (1982) and Elizabeth Martínez (1993) later terms it the "Oppression Olympics."

This ambivalence was also clear in 1980, when Moraga and Anzaldúa sent interview questions to sisters and fellow activists Barbara and Beverly Smith. In response to the question "How do race and class *intersect* in the women's movement?" (emphasis mine) both women articulate a conceptualization of the relationships between categories that, as Sandoval (1991) later suggests, includes a radical shift to ontological equality among the axes of difference. Two pages later, however, each sister urges a privileged uniqueness for race and class ("poverty"), respectively:

> BAR[BARA]: Another thing when you talk about experiencing racial oppression and class oppression from the very beginning, if indeed you are a recipient

of those oppressions what is happening to you is from moderately bad to horrible. In other words, being Black in this country there is very little about it that is mild. The oppression is extreme. Probably the only Black people where oppression is somewhat mitigated are those who have class privilege and that is certainly not the majority of Black people here. Likewise if you are a recipient of class oppression, that means that you are poor, you are working class and therefore day to day survival is almost the only thing you can focus on. The thing that's different about women's oppression is that you can be white and middle class and female and live a so-called "nice" life up until a certain point, then you begin to notice these "clicks," but I think the quality of life for the upper or middle class white woman is so far ahead of the quality of life for the Black person, the Black child, the working class child or the poor child.

BEV[ERLY]: I want to attempt to make comparisons between different types of oppressions. When I think of poverty, I think of constant physical and material oppression. You know, you aren't poor one day and well-to-do the next. If you're poor it's a constant thing, everyday, everyday. In some ways it's almost more constant than race because, say you're middle class and you're a Black person who is of course subject to racism, you don't necessarily experience it every single day in the same intensity, or to the same degree. Whereas, poverty is just something you experience constantly. So what I was trying to come up with is—Is there any oppression that women experience that is that total, in other words literally affects their physical well-being on a day to day basis?

BAR[BARA]: Can I make a joke, Bev?

BEV[ERLY]: What?

BAR[BARA]: Heterosexuality. Well, moving right along . . . (Smith and Smith, in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 115)

These theoretical tensions continue to emerge among other women of color feminists as well. Though it was published in 1997, well after Crenshaw's 1988 intersecting streets intervention, as well as Nieto-Gómez's 1974 coining of the term "sexist racism," Sonia Shah's edited volume *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* also features this tension. In the introduction, Shah makes largely the same two moves that the CRC made in 1977, claiming an ontological primacy for race and a sense that racism, sexism, and US imperialism are ontologically on a par with each other. In a discussion of whiteness, Shah contends, "*More than their shared language, ethnic heritage or class*, their whiteness determines who they live with, who they go to school with, what kind of jobs they get, how much money they make and with whom they start families" (1997, xii; emphasis mine). The implication that race privilege drives white social location and access is clear—and allows a theoretical space for the possibility that under some circumstances race trumps everything else. Yet later on the same page, Shah argues that race, gender, and imperialism simultaneously shape Asian American women's life experiences: Asian American women see a set of unified experiences

> because we all share the same rung on the racial hierarchy and the gender hierarchy. It is not that our lives are so similar in substance but that our lives are all monumentally shaped by three major

> driving forces in US society: racism and patriarchy *most immediately, and ultimately,* imperial aggression against Asia as well. As long as those systems of distributing and exercising power continue to exist, it will continue to make sense to talk about Asian American women as a group (as well as other racial and gender groups). (1997, xii; emphasis mine)

Even as she discusses "three major driving forces," Shah's undoubtedly feminist argument again allows us to draw a distinction between multicultural feminist thought and intersectionality-like thinking that is apparent throughout much of the 1970s through the1990s.

On the one hand, Shah's claims appear to replicate the tension we saw in the CRC manifesto. On the other, it's important to acknowledge that Shah seems to be describing two distinct ontological realities—one for whites and one for Asian American women. One telling distinction between multicultural feminist thought and intersectional thought by the 1990s was the complete shift to an ontological equality for multiple categories of difference among intersectionality theorists[28] in a way that did not emerge from an additive approach (e.g., white women have one marginalized category, while Asian American women have three marginalized categories) to oppression. For these reasons, Shah's work appears to hew more closely to multicultural feminism than it does to intersectionality.

Interpretation of additive arguments as intersectional arguments has been roundly rejected by theorists (Carbado and Gulati 2013; Hancock 2013; Crenshaw, Fine, and Yuval-Davis, in Berger and Guidroz 2009). Part of why additive organizations of power are incompletely intersectionality-like thinking is because they retain an idea of the severability of race from gender and from other categories of difference. However, an examination of the intellectual history suggests a second ambivalence

within multicultural feminist thought and the emergence of two distinct interpretations of those ambivalences.

Earlier sections of this chapter have alluded to the "both/and" idea's roots as far back as the 1830s in the United States and, as we will see in the final section, perhaps even earlier in other communities. In her 1979 dissertation, Bonnie Thornton Dill talks about "intersecting structures of race, gender and class," a phrase she repeats in her [1983] 2009 *Feminist Studies* article. Crenshaw's famous "both/and" metaphor of intersecting streets to explain the lack of legal remedies for women of color, despite decades of antidiscrimination policies and case law, was first presented at the Chicago Legal Symposium in 1988 and published in 1989. Collins later calls such both/and experiences "convergences" in her 1990 *Black Feminist Thought*, and perhaps unsurprisingly following the reception of her work uses the word "intersections" more frequently in the second edition (Collins 2000). Karin Aguilar-San Juan also reinforces the idea of a "both/and" existence in her introduction to Shah's *Dragon Ladies*: "Instead, Asian American feminism is an articulation of the necessary *overlap* of many social and historical process of hierarchy and injustice. This *overlap* is necessary in the sense that Asian American feminists must think, write and act from their particular gendered and racialized contexts. . . . Although in theory we can isolate one dimension of social life . . . from another . . . in fact such a one-dimensional moment never exists" (in Shah 1997, x–xi; emphasis mine).

Though all of these authors make different semantic choices, they are referring to the life experiences of women of color at specific marginalized social locations conditioned by both race and gender (among other categories). Most of the prior debate among feminist theorists regarding the more prominent ethnic feminist accounts I engage here have focused on charges of essentialism, in the spirit of interventions like Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes" (Mohanty 1991).[29] Here my focus is different; it explores the multiple interpretations that have emerged due to distinct epistemological orientations of the interlocutors.

First, if one is grounded in binary modes of thought like early standpoint theory, one common way to approach intersections or convergences is to think of them as oppositional sites. In this regard, the "fact" of a both/and construction logically dictates the possibility of a "neither/nor" oppositional location. While many feminist scholars have embraced the replacement of a margin-center metaphor with intersections, convergences, overlaps, and so on, the binary orientation hasn't been fully jettisoned. The impact of this incomplete embrace of what it means to engage in intersectional thought has been widespread and varied.

For our purposes in this chapter, the combination of a new metaphor with old binary cognitive frameworks produces an ambiguity about the analytical severability of gender, race, class, and sexuality as distinct categories of difference or vectors of power. *Black Feminist Thought* provides support for such a possibility stemming from the analytical distinctions between race and gender: "Because U.S. Black women have access to the experiences that accrue to being both Black and female, an alternative epistemology used to rearticulate a Black women's standpoint should reflect the convergence of both sets of experiences. *Race and gender may be analytically distinct*, but in Black women's everyday lives, they work together" (Collins 2000, 268–269; emphasis mine). Like the ambivalence between those wedded to an additive versus those embracing an ontological shift in modes of thought, there are divergent trajectories here that allow us to distinguish between what in the 1980s and 1990s was called "Race-Gender-Class" studies and intersectionality-like thinking.

Among feminist empiricists working in more positivist approaches, one particularly popular understanding of this ambivalence is mired in positivist epistemology. This approach underestimates the ontological, epistemological, and methodological changes required to conduct intersectionality-driven research studies. For example, feminist empiricists like Laurel Weldon (2008) and Leslie McCall (2005) read this literature from the perspective of positivist epistemology. In seeking to render intersectionality more compatible with empirical work, both scholars contend that at least three possible arrangements of power are logically possible in a given context. According to Weldon, it is empirically possible that social locations are not structured by race or gender (or class, sexuality, etc.). This would be the null finding, which corresponds to the "neither/nor" option above.

The second possible organization of power suggested separately by McCall and Weldon is that diversity of social location could exist within a particular category of difference. This option builds on Hartsock's revised standpoint theory (1997), which asserts a vision of tremendous diversity within the gender binary of male oppressor and female oppressed. While this decidedly feminist possibility can account for other categories like sexuality, class, and race, it does not shift out of a binary framework, which has two ramifications. First, it is located on the additive side of the first ambivalence I identified above because the binary in question, gender (for Hartsock, McCall, Weldon), retains ontological primacy in framing the entire discourse. Second, the ontological primacy afforded by the binary reinforces the notion of analytical severability among sexuality, gender, class, and race. Both ramifications make these positivistic approaches more feminist than intersectional.

The broader intellectual history in this book recognizes a larger ontological shift that extends past the assertion that race, class, or sexuality is subsumable into gender (or vice versa), which is essentially the account of reality put forth by this understanding of diversity within as a quasi-intersectional arrangement of power. Equating intersectionality with the inclusionary strategy of diversity within a more ontologically compelling category—the racial diversity within gender or the class diversity within race, for example, essentially avoids incorporating changes in the ontological relationship between categories. As Narayan so helpfully alluded to earlier, this move is fraught with problematic epistemological ramifications.

The third possible arrangement of power—complexity between categories—identified by Martínez, Nieto-Gómez, Crenshaw, Collins, and Shah—is labeled "intersecting vectors" by Weldon and "inter-categorical complexity" by McCall. That this is located as one possible reality relegitimizes the null possibility as equally viable, if not equally likely (in the most charitable formulation of the implications of this arrangement). Traditionally, this possibility of reality has only been applicable to the multiply marginalized and not applied equally to the multiply privileged (see Choo and Ferree 2010). Further, the constellation of power arrangements offered here as empirical (or quasi-empirical) possibilities position intersectionality as a testable hypothesis.

The incomplete movement from margins-centers metaphors to a full enactment of intersectionality theory includes ambivalences about additive models of thought that produce hierarchies of oppression combinations and about the analytical value of the severability of categories. These two key ambivalences in multicultural feminist thought mark an area of divergence between standpoint theories or multicultural feminist thought and intersectionality theory. It may be the case that severability is a mere artifact of our common disciplinary socializations, much of which emerged from silo forms of activism that rendered more intersectional activism invisible, like the movements that institutionalized academic departments for African American, Asian American, Chicano, Caribbean, Latino, Native American, queer, and women's or gender studies.[30] It is also entirely possible that severability may be too strategically or instrumentally valuable, based on its embeddedness in bureaucratic structures that provide academic legitimacy and high proportions of funding.

But if we are to be transparent in the history we must recognize retention of analytical severability within intersectionality's interpretive community to be a choice that is distinct from the full embrace of intersectionality theory.

Another possibility is that intersectionality has received precious little systematic ontological engagement as it has gained currency as a so-called buzzword. In other words, there is much style and cachet to dropping it into the title of a course or a publication, but little thorough engagement (see Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; May 2015). The retention of severability and additive models in this context would be less a strategic choice and more a function of "doing what we've always done given how we were trained." The next section attempts to address both possibilities by laying out a formal set of intersectional ontological and epistemological premises.

INTERSECTIONALITY: ONTOLOGICAL TENETS

Consider the following occurrence in the early 2000s. One of the most highly regarded Black female quantitative methodologists, a full professor in her mid-thirties with tenure at the most elite institution in the United States, gives a presentation at the second most elite institution in the United States. Her intellectual interests have turned from voting behavior to understanding patterns of race-based housing discrimination. Following what everyone agrees is a compelling and well-documented talk, a similarly situated (same age, tenure status, discipline) white male professor politely raises his hand and thanks her for her talk. His comment? "In order for any of your account to be true, don't you have to *assume* that racism exists?" (emphasis mine).[31]

This real-world situation and the question posed can help us to understand how and why intersectionality is more than one of three possible versions of complexity, or a testable hypothesis in the mode of whether sunlight and rain together, as opposed to sunlight alone or rain alone, will help plants grow. Intersectionality possesses a distinct account of reality (a.k.a. "ontology") and thus it requires its own epistemological tenets to adjudicate among knowledge claims. In this section I sketch the ontological and epistemological aspects of intersectionality, in an attempt to provide a path forward from the ambivalences outlined in the previous section.

As we noted above, the ambivalences about both the conceptual severability of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other categories, as well as the equal-but-not-identical orientation of between-category relationships suggest sympathetic but distinct worldviews that have significant ramifications for how we (1) conceptualize reality, and (2) seek to obtain and assess knowledge of reality (such as it is possible). If we define ontology as an account of reality (Hawkesworth 2006, 22),[32] then feminists of color (and those who study "race-gender-class") differ in important ways from intersectionality theorists regarding their accounts of reality, despite many similar origins and political commitments. I attempt to draw some clarity from the ambivalences outlined in the previous section. Here I focus on making distinctions I read between women of color feminist thought and intersectionality theory, both of which emerge from the "ethnic feminist" accounts I've explored so far, along with several contemporary interlocutors.

Intersectionality's First-Order Question

The ontological suppositions of intersectionality shift significantly from other forms of inquiry. The first element of this ontology emerges from the project of feminist epistemology

but involves what philosophers of social science might call "changing the first-order question." As we saw in the exchange between the two high-powered professors, each had a different account of reality and subsequent understandings of how to explore it. Our Black female professor's account of reality starts from a premise that racism exists, while our white male professor's account of reality starts from a premise that racism is an exception. By changing the first-order question, intersectional ontology deexceptionalizes the processes and structures of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, imperialism, nativism, ableism, and a host of other stratifications.[33] In this vein it is consistent with feminist inquiry's characterization of these phenomena as "constitutive of human relationships and relations between individuals and institutions," challenging "the Cartesian idea of 'evident knowledge,' which strategically uses doubt with the effect that practices that are hallmarks of various biases/categories of difference in use and or millennia in the making continue to be treated as anomalies" (Hawkesworth 2006, 30; see also Crenshaw et al. 1995; Wing 1997).

Intersectional Conceptions of Power

Returning to our unfailingly polite professors, the situation our faculty presenter found herself in is not unique to the twenty-first century. The account of intersectional reality suggests that relational power structures lived experiences, the shape of social locations within which people function and interact, and the discursive norms that shape how they understand and interpret the stimuli they encounter. Both Narayan and Collins allude to just such occurrences. Unlike other theories of relational power like doctrinaire standpoint theory and multicultural feminist theory, intersectionality jettisons zero-sum conceptualizations of power in an attempt to resolve the two ambivalences discussed in the previous section—analytical severability of categories of difference and additive models that rank order oppressions, whether implicitly or explicitly enacted.

Intersectional ontology emerges from a distinctly feminist understanding of power and its connection to knowledge. In her critique of Habermasian "ideal speech situations," Narayan notes that academe is but one space of interaction where procedural and structural norms of equality and rationality fail to overcome condescending treatment of female academics by their male colleagues (1989, 261). Collins concurs, but suggests epistemological differences also serve as justification for ignoring knowledge produced by and about Black women (1990, 204; 2000, 254; see also Jordan-Zachery 2013; Alexander-Floyd 2012). Ultimately, these justifications represent assertions of power, as Collins notes: "Two political criteria influence knowledge validation processes. First, knowledge claims are evaluated by a group of experts whose members bring with them a host of sedimented experiences that reflect their group location in intersecting oppressions. *No scholar can avoid cultural ideas and his or her placement in the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality and nation*" (2000, 253; emphasis mine).

If we take Collins's words seriously, we cannot simply reserve them as related to epistemology without evaluating them for their ontological implications. If no scholar (and presumably, no individual) can avoid their placement in what she elsewhere calls the "matrix of domination," then the account of reality demanded by such an impossibility of extrication must also shift, not simply how we know what we know about an otherwise binary-oriented, standpoint theory framed world.

More recently, the popular book *Presumed Innocent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2013) collected over forty accounts of women of color faculty, continuing the standard visibility project of intersectionality.[34] To Narayan's and Collins's points, the revealing texts engage with micro and macro aggressions that routinely occur—confrontations with condescension, de jure neutrality that produces de facto disparate outcomes, and so on. Our liberal white male professor might, in the standard story of the social sciences, accept the accounts in *Presumed Innocent* as legitimate claims but, through the kinds of procedural and structural understandings of (academic) reality, consider them exceptional reports that require reformist forms of documentation and redress. If we frame intersectionality as one possible explanation, as Weldon, McCall, or others might have us do,[35] these women authors could be faced with two possible questions. Is forty really a representative sample? Can you ever really be sure this is sexist racism, to use Nieto-Gómez's term?

That is certainly the impasse that Du Bois chronicles in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), in consideration of the failure of his positivistic, social scientific efforts to mitigate racial prejudice by empirically demonstrating Black humanity and equality. Moreover, Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism* leaves us with the same kind of dilemma. In the "Gender and Science" chapter, Harding ably debunks the notion that the scientific methods deployed in physics as a "natural science" should somehow be the generalized standard for scientific exploration. Harding specifically debunks the following claim made by scientists: if feminists can't prove that Newton's law of gravity or Einstein's theory of relativity is gendered, then nothing else can possibly be gendered in physics. Of course we know this isn't true under any circumstances. But Du Bois's articulated experience remains instructive: the earnest effort to take scientists on their own terms and the calm destruction of each one of their reasons why gender isn't relevant ignores the notion of power. In other words, what is to keep these scientists from either (1) continuing to stonewall, or (2) simply agreeing that the point is true but then moving the goalposts in terms of the standard of proof?

I think the two questions are both ontological and epistemological. If we think about power as a relational commodity, the first question isn't simply how you know what you know, but presumes an idea of reality where "it's definitively sexist racism" is understood as being A, and where "it's not sexist racism" is understood as being Not A. This frame of the debate fundamentally looks at the sexist racism as an intervention that occurs episodically rather than being woven into the very logic of how the world is organized.[36] The danger in this logic, one might argue, is that everything is indistinguishable from everything else. How can we jettison the A/Not A formulation for intersectional sexist racism, or other combinations? Won't we simply be saying the entire world is sexist racist? In a word, *yes*, we would. But it does not follow that distinctions are impossible. The third and final ontological tenet of intersectionality is contingency.

Contingency

> These are not settled issues. That is why this work feels so risky to me. It continues to be discovery. It has brought me into contact with women who invariably know a hell of a lot more than I do about racism, as experienced in the flesh, as revealed in the flesh of their writing.
>
> —CHERRÍE MORAGA, *in Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983, 34)*

While much of feminist theory has engaged in decades of fraught conversations about the role of identity and experiences grounded in identity, intersectionality theory instead relies on situational contingency to acknowledge and incorporate the permeability of the binary between oppressed and oppressor. Intersectional contingency is distinct from the notion both that "context matters" and that individual identity is all that matters. Using the situation as a lens does not reify personal experience,

for individuals can experience a situation in question in very different ways. Nor does it reify the structural aspects that shape such situations, assisting in holding individuals responsible for their actions in a situation.

Uma Narayan (1989), Karin Aguilar-San Juan (in Shah 1997), and Edwina Barvosa (2008) all help us understand the notion of situational contingency. Narayan posits a complex relation between liberalism and positivism that can vary situationally:

> Nonwestern feminists may find themselves in a curious bind when confronting the interrelations between positivism and political liberalism. As colonized people, we are well aware of the facts that many political concepts of liberalism are both suspicious and confused and that the practice of liberalism in the colonies was marked by brutalities unaccounted for by its theory. However, as feminists, we often find some of its concepts, such as individual rights, very useful in our attempts to fight problems rooted in our traditional cultures. (Narayan 1989, 260)

For Narayan, the embrace of liberalism and its potential utility in postcolonial contexts cannot be supplanted by Western feminist epistemology or activism grounded in what Dhamoon (2009) and others refer to as a "settler colonialism" context of North America. This usage of contingency closely resembles the contingent coalition politics I discussed in chapter 2.

If we were to focus on the shared multiple identities of Narayan, a first-generation Indian American, and Karin Aguilar-San Juan, a second-generation Filipina, we might assume that their understanding of imperialism and postcolonial contexts might converge, given their shared identities and shared feminist politics. A traditional feminist engagement with the incomplete incorporation of intersectionality might focus on the commonality of experiences the two had, declaring intersectionality to be "absent" if no commonalities were found. Yet while Aguilar-San Juan shares the feminist understanding of empire and colonialism that Narayan discusses, situationally, the case of Asian American women's struggles is distinct from that of the fight against problems rooted in traditional cultures: "As America's perpetual foreigner, Asian Americans have a complicated relationship to the idea of 'home,' particularly to the extent that home indicates nationhood or nationality. . . . For Asian Americans, the inscription of gender on the body is prefigured by the colonial relationship of the Orient to the West. Protecting women's bodies in this scenario cannot be fully accomplished by an appeal to personal control over one's health or desires" (in Shah 1997, xi). My point here is that the contingency of the situation (not the identity of Asian American women in the United States or women living in postcolonial contexts nor the experiences of the interlocutor) is what the different utility of liberalism and its positivist premises turn on.[37]

If we were to stop there, we would be left with the assertion that "context matters." Intersectionality, however, does not end there. Barvosa notes the role of agency in contexts of so-called identity conflict, where multiply identified individuals face choices about how to confront demands that they cover or pass for straight in situations where an important aspect of their personal identity is demeaned: "the project of linking together identities that have been socially constructed as mutually exclusive is very much a part of the project of self-integration of multiple identities. In that project, the goal is not to create a unitary self that is without contradiction, but rather to create an integrated but diverse and mulitiplicitous subjectivity that can draw creatively from whatever contradictions it retains" (Barvosa 2008, 149; see also Dhamoon 2009, 60–61). Barvosa cites the experiences of Christian Park, a Korean-American cis male interviewed for the documentary *Between Two Worlds*, and

Maria Lugones, who chronicles her navigation of a homophobic Chicano family culture in particular. Barvosa's understanding of Lugones's reactions when her family acts heteronormatively is particularly illustrative of intersectionality's reliance on situational contingency because the notion that outside forces seek to pit these identities against each other does not force the individuals to live their lives that way by definition. In other words, the quotidian choices between analytically distinct multiple identities does not necessarily signify two warring souls, as Du Bois might put it; nor should we assume warring souls underlie a decision not to fight in a given situation. It could in fact reflect the consistency of an integrated identity, not an analytically fractured multiple category identity. Here this element of contingency continues the second intellectual project of intersectionality, where the ontological relationships between categories are mutually constitutive.

Another useful way of thinking about this notion of situational contingency is to think about the construction of a "legal class," which is assembled quite consciously as a group particularly affected by a particular situation that requires a remedy, such as homeowners affected by the mortgage practices of large banks in the past ten years. Individuals may be differently situated in different neighborhoods around the United States, but the actions of large banks and the chosen responses of underwater homeowners (within a circumscribed universe of choices) can both be accounted for in this framework. Also notable about situational contingency in this particular example is the role of agency for each individual. Classes are often constructed with no agency required of each member save an opt-out, or exit option. This option is, as I already mentioned, less dependent on identity or identical experiences[38]—for example, that one person sought a mortgage modification and the other didn't—does not negate the membership in the class of underwater homeowners.

Situational contingency as a source of evidence enables intersectionality theorists to acknowledge the permeability of the binary between oppressed and oppressor. First, it allows intersectionality theorists to expand the notion of social location to include both situations where analytically distinct sources of bias or discrimination cannot be determined (e.g., is one experiencing discrimination due to one's disability, gender, *or* race?). Moreover, this understanding of situational contingency also returns to the notion of strategic invisibility alluded to by Lorde (1979, in Byrd, Cole, and Guy-Sheftall 2009) as a politically legitimate response in a situation, thus justifying "attention and concern, which is another word for love." More importantly, it successfully integrates attention to the roles of structure and agency by considering the situation as a time-delimited phenomenon, which brings us to the second dimension of contingency in an intersectional ontology and epistemology.

Time contingency is a second aspect of an intersectional ontology, upon which Narayan and Dhamoon agree across a twenty-year window, contributing to an understanding of how the limitations of culture are deeply tied up with the time continuum. While it is not unique to intersectional epistemology on its own, its integration with other elements is critical. The Combahee River Collective notes the contingency of time in a manner that expands beyond traditional notions of historical contingency that are frequently raised by many disciplines. This formulation acknowledges a pathway to simultaneous privilege and disadvantage in a way that represents a break from ethnic feminist accounts that focus solely on the oppressed dimensions of categories of difference and a move toward a more complicated understanding of the self as a time-contingent member of a group. In connecting racism and sexism to an economic system, the collective explicitly notes structures that can capriciously bestow privilege and just as capriciously take it away:

> We have arrived at the necessity for developing an understanding of class relationships that takes into account the specific class position of Black women who are generally marginal in the labor force, *while at this particular time some of us are temporarily viewed as doubly desirable tokens* at white-collar and professional levels. We need to articulate the real class situations of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working, economic lives. (Combahee River Collective [1977] 1993, 16–17; emphasis mine)

It would be easy to think of this quotation solely in historical materialist terms, especially given the ideological commitments of the collective's membership. But the notion here of contingency is not simply that we are focused on a singular moment or era in historical time, but that within the moment, the opportunity structures and options for agency are shifting and changing due to the idea that privilege itself is contingent. The Combahee River Collective's use of time thus marshals the continuities of structures of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia while noting episodic interventions that may change in particular Black women's positionality and opportunity structure in their reference to "temporarily class-privileged Black women." The recognition of contingent privilege is particularly prescient during an era more suited to sweeping generalizations and movement hyperbole (García 1997). I return to this point in subsequent chapters.

This acknowledgment of time contingency forwards the idea that oppressors and oppressed may have time-specific infusions of privilege without jettisoning these particular Black women from the category of "Black women" who can no longer be oppressed in particular situations. In this example from the CRC the acknowledgement accounts for the inclusion of both situational and time-oriented aspects of contingency in intersectional accounts of reality.

The claim to ongoing membership is more than an idle assumption, as threatened loss of membership in the group was used as a disciplinary force among Chicanas, who appropriately labeled it as an assertion of boundary-drawing power designed to deflect critiques of sexism among Chicano activists. Moreover, the notion of time contingency, like that of situational contingency, builds greater fluidity into concepts of resistance to domination, providing an important corrective to Marxist constructions of power that underestimate the value of everyday acts of resistance.[39] Sister (Sor) Teresita Basso discusses how Mexican American women religious (nuns) have faced "existential conflicts of identity" that force a reevaluation (1971, in García 1997, 58–59). For Sor Basso, the identity conflict between being a Chicana and remaining an acculturated Mexican American is framed as a binary dilemma, with few extant resources prior to a more formal intersectional ontology that attend to time contingency. Thirty-seven years later, Edwina Barvosa reads in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Maria Lugones in particular a creative, productive, and restorative role for such identity conflicts, proposing that one can turn on a dime, making a decision for today about how to respond to family homophobia, for example, without having that decision rule out an oppositional or alternative response one day or even one minute later (Barvosa 2008, 152–153).

This intersectional understanding of time contingency further complicates the binary between oppressor and oppressed that is a common feature of doctrinaire standpoint theory. The second tenet of Hartsock's feminist standpoint theory contends: "If material life is structured in fundamentally opposing ways for two different groups, one can expect that the understanding of each will represent an inversion of the other, and in systems of domination the understanding available to the ruling group will be both partial and perverse" (Hartsock 1997, 229). Even with a very charitable reformulation,[40] the presumption of fundamental opposing material life isn't intersectional, as Barvosa contends in her well-historicized introduction to multiple and intersectional approaches to theories of the self (2008).

The notions of situational and time-based contingency are part of an intersectional ontology that is distinctive. Specifically, an intersectional ontology embraces contingency in a way that allows the deexceptionalization process to exist alongside specificity and relational theories of power. These aspects of an intersectional ontology, while grounded in intersectionality's intellectual history, have largely sat uninterrogated or unrecognized by contemporary scholars. Instead, several have turned to later theorists like Foucault or Deleuze for resources that, as Sandoval (2000) argued, were already present among women of color feminists of the 1960s and 1970s. Anzaldúa urges us to stick with our intuitions despite internalized fears that send us away from our own knowledge systems. As we'll see in the next section, the integration of knowledge systems is far greater than the sum of its parts.

INTERSECTIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

> I have not yet unlearned the esoteric bullshit and pseudo-intellectualizing that school brainwashed into my writing. How to begin again. How to approximate the intimacy and immediacy I want. What form? A letter of course.
>
> —GLORIA ANZALDÚA, *in Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983, 165)*

> Sometimes for me "that deep place of knowledge" Audre [Lorde] refers to seems like an endless reservoir of pain, where I must

> continually unravel the damage done to me. It is a calculated system of damage, intended to ensure our separation from other women, but particularly those we learned to see as most different from ourselves and therefore, most fearful. The women whose pain we do not want to see as our own. Call it racism, class oppression, men, or dyke-baiting, the system thrives.
>
> —CHERRÍE MORAGA, *in Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983, xvi)*

> Intersectionality challenges us to question how we know, how our experience affects our beliefs and emotional responses to ideas: what feels right can reflect what I'm used to or comfortable with. Setting aside my responses and giving authority to those "who occupy the interstices" is crucial for feminists and others committed to democracy.
>
> —DOETSCH-KIDDER *(2012, 155)*

> For us to move forward in the exploration of Indigenous ideas and to actually see other views of the world there is first a call for the suspension of currently held thought patterns, particularly around knowledge, science and reality.
>
> —MEYER *(2013, 98)*

Intersectionality epistemology emerges from feminist epistemology. In her discussion of postpositivism and presupposition theories, Hawkesworth notes, "We live within theories that structure our perceptions" (2006, 43–44). The epistemology associated with intersectionality theory is consistent with but distinct from the larger subfields of postpositivism and feminist epistemology. Like feminist epistemology, intersectionality conceptualizes power relationally, but not in a binary fashion. Intersectionality's conviction that one understands power as a relational commodity that shapes not simply our perceptions, as much of feminist epistemology has revealed, but even our presuppositions that shape the very questions we seek to ask.[41]

The ontological distinctions discussed above similarly obligate us to a distinct, intersectional epistemology (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006, 187). Native Hawaiian philosopher

Manulani Aluli Meyer traces an ontologically distinct conceptualization of "Indigenous knowing" that is not predicated upon the universality of particulars (common denominator) held in common, like most of Western thought. In addition to its rejection of the universality standard, it similarly is not reliant on an atomization approach that seeks to reduce phenomena to its smallest analytical components. Last but not least, this epistemology is not reliant on an Aristotelian levels of analysis approach, where each level of analysis offers something objectively relevant to understanding the organism or phenomenon in question.[42] The trilogy of knowledge systems presented by Meyer occur simultaneously but not at different levels in the sense of specific to general, micro to macro. Given the ambivalences about the severability of categories of difference in particular as well as the emphasis on avoiding binaries, "holographic epistemology," as Meyer calls it, holds great promise for its compatibility with intersectional ontologies.

Like the feminist empiricists whose work was distinguished from a complete intersectionality ontological approach in the previous section, Patricia Hill Collins and other feminists working in epistemology provide important resources for our understanding of the multicultural feminist roots of intersectional ontology and epistemology. However, it is similarly important to elucidate a full-bodied theory of privilege and disadvantage distributed unequally in historically and structurally contingent ways. And to achieve that purpose we must craft a distinctly intersectional epistemology.

While Collins suggests that Black Feminist thought and other similar feminist thought are subjugated knowledge, Meyer characterizes the holographic epistemology she recovers from a vast variety of sources as enduring knowledge, transforming the power dynamic among sources into a nonadditive relation that incorporates time contingency. Moreover, while

Collins frames women of color feminist epistemologies as alternative (2000, 256), Meyer views indigenous knowing as integrative. "Indigenous is not simply a synonym for that which has endured. . . . It is a way of behaving that offers us older ways to view the world. It is not meant to operate in lieu of but rather to synergize with classical views of science and now with a quantum world already dreamed of, debated and woven into art forms of function, reliability and beauty" (Meyer 2013, 98). The integrative approach, which is marked as distinct from systems operating "in lieu of," also more fully captures the potential of intersectionality to supplant zero-sum conceptualizations of power.

Meyer proposes a "holographic epistemology" that perhaps best captures intersectionality-like thought today.[43] Though she suggests a trilogy of systems that contribute to this epistemology—the objective, physical world; the inside subjective world; and the quantum world of intersections—she is clear that one is not privileged over the other:[44] "The challenge is not to see this trilogy as linear sequence, rather as an event happening simultaneously and holographically" (2013, 94). In her footnote to this sentence she explains the difference between a normal photograph, where each snippet contains one piece of a picture, much like a jigsaw puzzle, and a hologram:

> The three-dimensionality of such images is not the only remarkable characteristic of holograms. If a hologram of a rose is cut in half and then illuminated by a laser, each half will still be found to contain the entire image of the rose. Indeed, even if the halves are divided again, each snippet of film will always be found to contain a smaller but intact version of the original image. Unlike normal photographs, *every part of a hologram contains all the information possessed by the whole.* (Meyer 2013, 100; emphasis in the original)[45]

Meyer's epistemology clearly emerges from a perspective that has a distinct position on the severability of categories—there is clearly no possibility of atomization precisely because reality is constructed as a whole rather than the sum of its parts. Second, because holographic epistemology has a notion of contingency that is deeply contextual, it names and situates the positivist and postpositivist moments we currently live in as part of a longer continuum:

> Science, the process to understand our natural world, is not a new idea; it is old. How it now unfolds within a mathematical, technical, capitalistic and positivistic structure is relatively new. Engagement and meaning-making with our world is an evolutionary process, always present, that accelerates or expands with mature, conscious, and rigorous *reflection*. The opposite is also true: the understanding of our world remains static without reflection in a field of reference that mirrors itself with itself eventually pulling away from direct experience into a self-justifying loop. This is our current situation in my own field of philosophy, and I sense even in Science. We then begin to name events in isolation from others, defying contextual comprehension born through the ages and understood by those who have witnessed them, remembered them, and sung their lessons in the life exchanged. (Meyer 2013, 98; emphasis original)

Meyer's allusion to "engagement and meaning-making" in our world parallels Rita Dhamoon's embrace of meaning making (2009), which originated in anthropology, as a fruitful resource for developing intersectional analytical strategies.

One of the most significant contributions of earlier intersectionality-like thinking to intersectional epistemology is emblematic of Anzaldúa's words above—to foster and preserve a deep trust of oneself, one's connection to knowledge, and the worthiness of that knowledge in the face of devaluation (Collins 1990, 2000; Doetsch-Kidder 2012; hooks 1992; Lorde 1979, in Byrd, Cole, and Guy-Sheftall 2009; Sandoval 2000). This faith in oneself needn't be religious in orientation (Doetsch-Kidder 2012, 85), but can be (Basso, in García 1997). When analyzing the precious few intersectionality theorists with famous reputations, many interlocutors have focused solely upon linking intersectionality with prior debates about experience, rather than acknowledging the epistemological (knowledge) and ontological (reality) ramifications of the intersectional framework. The intention of this chapter has been to bring all three into conversation with each other, thereby illustrating the full complement of challenge intersectionality presents to our single-axis, predominantly positivistic world of scholarship.

As well, this chapter has focused to a large degree on the second intellectual project of intersectionality, one that has been largely neglected in the literature: how intersectionality demands a rearticulation of the relationships between what are traditionally perceived as conceptually distinct analytical categories of difference. Lorde (in Moraga and Anzaldua 1983) characterizes the relationships as interdependent rather than mutually exclusive, a conviction followed thirty years later by Manulani Meyer (2013) in her conceptualization of a holographic epistemology. If we take seriously this second project, we must acknowledge that certain methodologies are incapable of fully meeting that promise, a provocative assertion that I leave for future debate among intersectionality's interpretive community.

That said, chapter 2 has foregrounded the visibility project, and this chapter the ontological relationships project. Both projects contribute to the subject of chapter 4, which distinguishes intersectionality's engagement with experience from prior women of color feminist engagements with experience and, as importantly, mainstream feminists' readings of women of color feminist engagements with experience. In particular,

the role of difference and experience is explored. The connection to experience, Lorde reminds us, is through our differences rather than "the pathetic pretense that they do not exist" (Lorde, in Moraga and Anzaldúa [1981] 1983, 99). In chapter 4 I look at how feminists and intersectionality theorists begin to diverge as to the constitution and role for lived experience.

Chapter 3

1. Indeed, in her speech "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Much Build," Stewart goes so far as to not simply utilize the Jeremiad structure but in fact quotes from the biblical book of Jeremiah itself (see Richardson 1987, 32). See also Moses (1982).
2. *La Gente* was a newspaper popular with Chicano student activists committed to Chicano nationalism.
3. Crenshaw's understanding of that metaphor persisted in the article focused on violence against women of color: "My objective there was to illustrate that many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black

women's lives in ways that cannot be captured by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (1991, 1244). This invisibility occurred despite US society's dependence on the labor of Black women (hooks 1984, ix).

4. Rita Dhamoon helpfully articulates the ongoing challenge for feminists and liberal multiculturalists alike:

> Yet the primacy assigned to culture, even if it is revised, does not altogether eliminate the slippery slope that produces essentialized depictions of difference. This is because the composition of a culture continues to require definition even when it is narratively (Benhabib) and dialogically (Tully) constituted in non-Eurocentric and self-directed ways. Although the conceptions of culture offered by Benhabib and Tully certainly expand its meaning, these revisions continue to assign primacy to one dimension of difference and to underestimate how discussions of culture sometimes constitute regulatory paradigms and sites of resistance. (2009, 46)

5. One notable exception is Puah (2007), who chronicles the post-9/11 US surveillance state.
6. Cheryl Clarke concurs, albeit in more ideological terms:

> As political lesbians, i.e. lesbians who are resisting the prevailing culture's attempts to keep us invisible and powerless, we must become more visible (particularly black and other lesbians of color) to our sisters hidden in their various closets, locked in prisons of self-hate and ambiguity, afraid to take the ancient act of woman-bonding beyond the sexual, the private, the personal. I am not trying to reify lesbianism or feminism. I am trying to point out that lesbian-feminism has the potential of reversing and transforming a major component in the system of women's oppression, viz. predatory heterosexuality. (In Moraga and Anzaldúa [1981] 1983, 134)

7. In this chapter in particular I am attuned to noting, where relevant, how authors have shifted and changed over time as well. For example, both Hartsock ([1983] 1997, 1997) and Collins (1990, 2000) are quoted from two different but substantively related sources over a fourteen- and ten-year period, respectively. Wherever possible I try not to rely on a single source but to instead use multiple sources to illustrate such transformations.

8. I think this last point of Lorde's is important for both sexuality, as she refers to it, and things like gender presentation or identity and "hidden disabilities"—the "norming" motivation to not self-identify.
9. See Yoshino, Kenji (2002, 2006).
10. It is essential to note that these authors articulated one of many possible types of race, gender, and class analyses. This is to say that not all inclusions of race, gender, and class analyses are intersectional, neither are all intersectional analyses restricted to analyses of race, gender, and class (see Carbado and Gulati 2013; Hancock 2013; May 2015).
11. For a more extensive explication of Cooper's contributions to intersectionality theory, see May (2015).
12. Though bell hooks published *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* through South End Press, a Boston imprint, she did not cite the Black Feminist Combahee River Collective, which was based in Boston, as a source.
13. What most known as "intersections" are later also called "convergences" (Collins 1990), "overlaps" (Shah 1997), and/or interstices (Kim, in Shah 1997), along with a wealth of other cognate images and metaphors that, while not identical, share more in common for the purposes of this chapter on epistemology, than they vary.
14. While I focus on the connection between Marxist feminist standpoint theory and intersectionality here, Lykke focuses on the connection between postmodern feminist standpoint theory and intersectionality in her section on Donna Haraway and situated knowledges (2011, 5). The ramifications of Lykke's strategy are explored in chapters one, five and six.
15. As Sandra Harding provocatively stated in 1993: "The problem with the conventional conception of objectivity is not that it is too rigorous or too 'objectifying,' as some have argued, but that it is *not rigorous enough or objectifying enough*; it is too weak to accomplish even the goals for which it has been designed, let alone the more difficult projects called for by feminisms and other new social movements" (Harding, in Alcoff and Potter 1993, 50–51; emphasis

in original). Later in the same article she contends that thinking from the perspectives of marginalized lives by definition leads to questions about the adequacy of extant conceptual frameworks (63). She endorses strong objectivity, where subjects of knowledge (the "knowers") are placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge (the "known"), which is really a way of saying that "strong reflexivity" is equally required in this system (69). Puerto Rican writer Rosario Morales provides a justification for such reflexivity: "I want to be whole. I want to claim my self to be puertorican [*sic*], and U.S. American, working class & middle class, housewife and intellectual, feminist, marxist, and anti-imperialist. I want to claim my racism, especially that directed at myself, so I can struggle with it, so I can use my energy to be a woman, creative and revolutionary" (in Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 91).

16. In other words, race or ethnicity is a source of diversity for how people experience gender rather than an analytical category of difference with equal ontological primacy. Hartsock states directly: "I want to both pluralize the idea [again, an add-on approach of inclusion, not transformational] and preserve its utility as an instrument of struggle against dominant groups. I believe that the tasks facing all theorists committed to social change is that of working to construct some theoretical bases for political solidarity" (1997, 239). Her solution in "The Feminist Standpoint Revisited" is to offer a survey of six "diverse" theorists in a three-page supplement at the end of the chapter, despite her claim: "I believe there is a great deal of work to be done to elaborate the connections between politics, epistemology and claims of epistemic privilege and to develop new understandings of engaged and accountable knowledge" (241).
17. See also Hekman (1997, 354), Hawkesworth (2006, 56).
18. Sandra Harding notes her agreement with an approach to standpoint theory like that of Hill Collins, but publishes it in 1993, after Collins had published *Black Feminist Thought*, in particular. Unfortunately, a full explication of standpoint theory's evolution between 1983 and 1993 is beyond the scope of this chapter, except as to illustrate the trajectory of intersectionality over the same time period.
19. I would include Hawkesworth's "standpoint theory analysis" (2006), which seeks to understand phenomena using multiple standpoints, as another more recent formulation of an inclusion-based approach.

20. Anzaldúa adds another illustration:

> Because white eyes do not want to know us, they do not bother to learn our language, the language which reflects us, our culture, our spirit. The schools we attended or didn't attend did not give us the skills for writing nor the confidence that we were correct in using our class and ethnic languages. I, for one, became adept at, and majored in English to spite, to show up, the arrogant racist teachers who thought all Chicano children were dumb and dirty. And Spanish was not taught in grade school. And Spanish was not required in High School. And though now I write my poems in Spanish as well as English I feel the rip-off of my native tongue. (In Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, 165–166)

21. This emphasis continues in the 2000 edition of *Black Feminist Thought*, though there are slight differences in the chapters, including an increased emphasis on the metaphor and language of "intersectionality" in the later edition.
22. See also Hawkesworth (2006) for a critique of positivism in particular and its impact on methodological decisions that have powerful ramifications about what is and isn't science.
23. With Hartsock as well this metaphor seems to presume that overlap may or may not exist (i.e., what this and the previously mentioned problematic reads of Combahee River Collective, Chicana Feminist Thought, and Patricia Hill Collins all fail to miss is the coconstitutive relationship among these structures. Both/and presumes a place of either/or, that is "*Not* Black feminist thought" (or "*Not* feminist thought," respectively). Hartsock uses the term "overlapping social structures" that become visible, and suggests that (following Harding) the damaging experiences of oppression that are disadvantageous "can be an advantage in terms of knowledge" (1997, 233).
24. Ten years later, Collins remains convinced of the role of power: "Epistemology constitutes an overarching theory of knowledge (Harding 1987). It investigates the standards used to assess knowledge or why we believe what we believe to be true. Far from being the apolitical study of truth, epistemology points to the ways in which power relations shape who is believed and why" (Collins 2000, 251–252).

25. Jasbir Puah (2007) makes a similar argument about intersectionality in general that I take up in chapters 5 and 6.
26. See Hancock (2011, 2013).
27. That said, in 1990 Collins remained deeply tied to the notion of the "outsider within" perspective as part of her larger embeddedness in standpoint theory. Twenty-first-century scholars who have continued in this vein, as part of the women of color feminist project, tend to privilege Crenshaw's understanding of intersectionality's visibility project and embrace analyses of the racing-gendering processes that still operate to keep women of color in particular (and their concomitant policy needs) invisible (see, e.g., Alexander-Floyd 2012; Jordan-Zachery 2013; Sampaio 2014). However, scholars involved in this visibility project are not always judicious about Collins's and Narayan's points of agreement, such as epistemic advantage. Between 1990 and 2000 Collins is remarkably consistent: "Ironically, by quantifying and ranking human oppressions, standpoint theorists invoke criteria for methodological adequacy characteristic of positivism. Although it is tempting to claim that Black women are more oppressed than everyone else and therefore have the best standpoint from which to understand the mechanisms, processes and effects of oppression, that simply may not be the case" (1990, 207). The precise sentences are later modified with no loss of identical content: "Ironically, by quantifying and ranking human oppressions, standpoint theorists invoke criteria for methodological adequacy that resemble those of positivism. Although it is tempting to claim that Black women are more oppressed than everyone else and therefore have the best standpoint from which to understand the mechanisms, processes and effects of oppression, this is not the case" (Collins 2000, 270).
28. See Sandoval (1991), among others.
29. Hartsock, for example, claims Harding says standpoint theory analyzes the essentialism sexism requires of femininity but does not itself require essentialism among women or the female gender.
30. Karin Aguilar-San Juan and Juliana Pegues both allude to this erasure in their respective contributions to Sonia Shah's *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* (1997). See also Francille Rusan Wilson's *The Segregated Scholars* (2006), specifically chapter 5.

31. I personally observed this exchange.
32. Hawkesworth further notes that presupposition theory has not been sufficiently attentive to power. Intersectional epistemology seeks to bridge that gap. For example, implicit-bias theory above suggests that biases are, in fact, theoretical presuppositions that we learned before we could walk or talk. In this regard, returning to our unfailingly polite professors, the account of reality offered by presupposition theory and empirical evidence to support it provided by implicit-bias studies convincingly suggest that racism's existence isn't an assumption that may or may not be true, but a part of reality that not only merits investigation, but also structures lived experiences, the shape of social locations within which people function and interact, and how they understand and interpret the stimuli they are presented with. What the work on implicit bias has generally failed to do is to address the severability and additive ambivalences that continue to pervade our ideas and understandings of how the world works. Thus the intersectional approach to implicit bias would not simply include developing test batteries that would investigate different combinations of race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, religion, and infinite other categories of difference, it would reshape how we think about bias construction in both more specific as well as construction in what Manulani Meyer might call more "holographic" terms.
33. While this change is not unique to intersectionality and stems from its roots in critical race theory in particular, what follows from this change is distinctive to intersectionality theory (from both critical race and feminist theory in particular).
34. This book struck a collective nerve and has done well. It is also part of a much larger set of accounts that have identified through narratives the ongoing oppressions experienced by women of color through law. Adrien Katherine Wing's edited volume, *Critical Race Feminism* (1997), contains a section entitled "Outsiders in the Academy," and Patricia Williams' *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor* (1992), among others. On the literary side, *This Bridge Called My Back* and *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us are Brave* do similar work in revealing

invisibility as an intellectual project of intersectionality. Wing herself details her own personal experiences in her 2001 article, "Polygamy from Southern Africa to Black Britannia to Black America: Global Critical Race Feminism and Reform for the Twenty-First Century."

35. See, for example, Best et al. (2011).
36. I am inspired here by the arguments of both Charles Mills and Carole Pateman, who separately and collaboratively make persuasive cases against liberalism regarding race and sex, respectively, and race and sex together.
37. This is distinct from, say, Patricia Hill Collins, who locates Black Feminist thought in either positivist or "experiential, materialist" epistemologies (2000, 256).
38. As Hawkesworth notes: "The post-positivists conception of a 'fact' as a theoretically constituted entity calls into question such basic assumptions. It suggests that 'the noun, "experience,"' the verb, "to experience," and the adjective "empirical" are not univocal terms that can be transferred from one system to another without change of meaning. . . . Experience does not come labeled as "empirical," nor does it come self-certified as such. What we call experience depends upon assumptions hidden beyond scrutiny which define it and which in turn it supports'" (Vivas 1960, 76; quoted in Hawkesworth 2006, 45).
39. See Robin D. G. Kelley's *Race Rebels: Culture Politics, and the Black Working Class* (1994) and James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1987) for excellent non-intersectional case studies of "everyday resistance."
40. Here I mean sympathetic reformulations like that of Collins in *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) and a later article by Susan Hekman (1997), reconsidering standpoint theory and its responses in the journal *Signs*. As well, Hartsock retains a materialist notion of lived experience: "I was arguing that, like the lives of proletarians in Marxist theory, women's lives also contain possibilities for developing critiques of domination and visions of alternative social arrangements" (1997, 228).
41. Hawkesworth elaborates:

> Recognition of the manifold ways in which perceptions of reality are theoretically mediated raises a serious challenge to not only notions of "brute data" and the "givenness" of experience but also the possibility of falsification as a strategy for testing theories against an independent reality. For falsification to provide an adequate test of a scientific theory, it is necessary that there be a clear distinction between the theory being tested and the evidence adduced to support or refute the theory. . . . If, however, what is taken to be the "world," what is understood to be "brute data" is itself theoretically constituted (indeed, constituted by the same theory that is undergoing the test), then no conclusive disproof of a theory is likely. The independent evidence . . . is preconstituted by the same theoretical presuppositions as the scientific theory under scrutiny. (2006, 46)

42. Hawkesworth offers a useful explanation of the Aristotelian approach:

> According to Aristotle, empirical investigation can generate accurate accounts of all these dimensions of existence. Because each of these forms of explanation focuses on a different level of analysis, the accounts they generate are markedly different. The differences in these accounts do not imply, however, subjectivity in perception. On the contrary, each form of explanation generates objective information about a different aspect of the living organism. A comprehensive account encompassing all these modes of explanation is required to fully understand a particular organism. (2006, 24)

43. It is important to note in a North American context rife with "settler colonialism" and erasure of indigenous populations and knowledge that Meyer originally made this assertion herself through a thought-provoking presentation at the first-ever international intersectionality conference in Vancouver, Canada (April 2014). Her presentation of holographic epistemology visually linked the comments of the intersectionality theorists and activists selected as keynote speakers to the tenets of holographic epistemology. Thus I draw the connection here in a mode of agreement with rather than appropriation of Meyer's incredible work.
44. See also Doetsch-Kidder (2012, 84) for a similar kind of argument.
45. Hawkesworth's reference to Hume suggests that contingency predates intersectionality. "Hume, therefore, noted that empirical observation cannot provide an 'absolute ground' for

knowledge; no matter how much inductive evidence we have to support a generalization, it will never be enough to cover all past and future instances. Moreover, in a world of contingency, things can and do change" (Hawkesworth 2006, 34). I argue that it is intersectionality's combination of the enduring and the contingent rather than the binary that constitutes the epistemological contribution.

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