1

TOWARD AN INTERSECTIONAL PEDAGOGY MODEL

Engaged Learning for Social Justice

Kim A. Case

The first time I taught Psychology of Women as a University of Cincinnati graduate student, the textbook was extremely narrow in focus, lacking any hint of inclusion outside normative and privileged identities within the vastly diverse group called women. Due to this shortcoming, I created a supplemental packet with readings to address race, sexual diversity, poverty, and non-Western women’s experiences. This “solution” felt like a legitimate approach at the time to correct for the main book’s reinforcement of defining women via only white heterosexual middle-class perspectives. On the first day of class, a brave student raised her hand to point out that the textbook did not represent her as an African American woman and seemed focused exclusively on White women. She was right. My co-instructor immediately defended the text saying “no one book can cover everything.” I then agreed with the student and pointed to the packet as one way to include diverse viewpoints and avoid the idea that all women are White, middle-class, heterosexual, U.S. citizens.

Over 15 years later, I view our supplemental packet and our response to the student as an insufficient, dismissive, and insulting Band-Aid that essentially perpetuated the marginalization of women outside the mythical norm as described by Lorde (1984). Just as Bowleg (2008) critiqued her previous research as additive in nature and lacking intersectionality, my original approach to teaching gender from a multicultural perspective served as a lesson in what not to do. At the same time, adding the packet allowed us to pat ourselves on the back as two White women instructors who believed we were acting as exceptional anti-racist allies. Not only was the packet an add-on afterthought residing outside the centralized (read: important; legitimate) textbook, but it also treated various social identity categories and their associated structural oppressions as
separate considerations. That moment when the student expressed her own marginalization due to the course readings made a distinct impression on me as someone who feels professionally and ethically responsible for making sure students from a broad range of backgrounds feel represented in the course materials and get the message that their identities are worthy of academic study. In other words, intersectional theory translated to pedagogical practice is my professional and ethical responsibility (Grzanka, this volume).

Jones and Wijeyesinghe (2011) encouraged consideration of how teaching might be altered when instructors infuse intersectional theory. Without intersectional theory applied in the classroom, educational spaces serve to both perpetuate invisible privilege by focusing on personal oppression and construct only mythical norms as worthy of earning valuable real estate within course materials and broader curricular designs. Valid pedagogies must stop pretending, for example, that White women possess no race, Latino men are genderless, or Black and Asian women embody mutually exclusive gendered and racial social locations. Even though some privileged women in my gender courses insist race and sexuality are irrelevant to the study of women while men of color often resist the deconstruction of gender and gender identity in courses addressing race and racism, intersectional theory demands attention to the mutually constitutive nature of these interacting and intra-connected systems.

During and after graduate school as a lecturer at Northern Kentucky University, my first syllabus for a Psychology of Race and Gender course situated the two topics as isolated entities. The 15-week course included gender-focused content in the first seven weeks with race-focused content in the seven weeks following the midterm exam. Even though the course included multiple intersecting social identities, it pains me to admit that I mostly delivered them categorically (See Figure 1.1).

Similar to Naples’ (this volume) early teaching experience, I taught from more of an additive model, kept social identity categories artificially separated, and struggled to incorporate multiple voices into the flawed framework. Although reading materials, lectures, and activities highlighted marginalized voices within
each section, the course schedule essentially treated race and gender as distinct and disconnected categories. As Crenshaw (1989) warned, this limiting single-axis framework problematically treats race and gender as mutually exclusive, thereby erasing women of color. Even though the readings on gender included gender identity and sexual orientation, and the readings on race included some women of color, this co-existence fell far short of intersectional analysis. In the end, the gender section of the course privileged White women’s experiences while the race section privileged Black men’s experiences. Crenshaw (1989) argued that scholarship must avoid centralizing and privileging White women’s experiences as representative of all women and Black men’s experiences as representative of Black women and all people of color. This prompted me to ask:

- How can we teach about prejudice and racism without addressing how race interacts with sexuality, ability, class, nationality, and a multitude of additional identities?
- How do I teach about women and gender systems to help students think about gender beyond the idea of “woman” as a White, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual, Christian, gender-identity privileged U.S. citizen?

To help answer these questions, the course could and should be taught with a deep and well-planned infusion of intersectional theory, readings, activities, application, and assignments which might look like this (See Figure 1.2).

Given that no one image or metaphor could ever fully encapsulate the theoretical foundations of intersectionality (see Dessel & Cordivae, this volume, for metaphor summary table), this image nevertheless demarks a more complex pedagogy that challenges additive modes of false boundaries. The intersectionality image could represent complicated identity patterns operating within an individual person or patterns of concurrent, codependent, and interactive structural systems of oppression. Considering the image from an individual perspective, the concentric circles might represent various systemic aspects of the self interacting and affecting each other as the circles rotate like the gears of a clock to propel each other and even alter colors and patterns. Larger circles illustrate more salient aspects of identity in a given social context such as race or gender. Circles oriented toward the foreground could highlight privileged group memberships with marginalized and oppressed identities pushed to the back where those experiences go unnoticed and dismissed by the normative culture. Circles within circles represent complexity within each aspect of the self and invisible within-group diversity so often overlooked. Class discussions might deconstruct how some aspects of self may collide or even repel each other depending on one’s viewpoint such as religion and sexuality or bicultural experiences of a middle-class professional from a working-class family.

At the same time, the image may call forth conceptions of interactions among the myriad facets of systemic oppression and privilege. For example, each set of
concentric circles might represent one aspect of social identity such as ability, with privileged able-bodied groups toward the center and marginalized groups with physical and mental disabilities pushed to the outer circles. However, the ability/disability concentric circles are affected and altered by overlapping circles that represent race and social class with their respective privileged groups at the center. Several circles hidden behind others illustrate the invisible intersections and often forgotten aspects of systemic oppression such as immigrant status, global nationality, or imperialist/colonized citizenship (e.g., undocumented immigrant; born a U.S. citizen; citizen and resident of a colonized nation; see Kurtis & Adams, this volume). While certain intersections remain invisible, others occupy salient and centered spaces, such as gender, race, and sexuality, represented by larger circles at the forefront of the image.
In consideration of introducing students to the theory of intersectionality, using the Figure 1.1 image to facilitate their critique of false boundaries, additive approaches, and imagined categorical distinctions could open new spaces for analysis and set the tone for the course. Taking their analysis further, Figure 1.2 could serve as a prime for several pedagogical exercises that ask students to:

- contrast the two images using theoretical tenets of intersectionality;
- connect course readings or personal examples to the image’s illustration of intersectionality; and
- suggest new improvements to the latter image that would deepen the representation of intersectional theory and lived experiences at the individual, group, cultural, institutional, and structural levels.

For a complete description of infusing intersectional pedagogy throughout an undergraduate Psychology of Women course, see Case and Rios (this volume). In addition, Grzanka (this volume) presents the case for, and a roadmap to, intersectional infusion throughout a Psychology of Gender course.

**Complex Interactions: Intersectionality Theory and Pedagogy for Social Justice**

Most existing books, anthologies, and articles about teaching diversity, multiculturalism, or the impact of group identities, focused on a single aspect of social identity at a time such as gender or race (e.g., Aveling, 2002; Caplan, 2010; Case & Hemmings, 2005; Dottolo, 2011; Frankenberg, 1993; Good & Moss-Racusin, 2010; Lawrence & Bunche, 1996; McIntyre, 1997; Rothenberg, 2008; Tatum, 1994). To be fair, pedagogical practice certainly benefits from these contributions, and they clearly provided insights that advance teaching approaches. Only recently have attempts to unpack pedagogical approaches to teaching intersectional theory begun permeating the literature (Pliner & Banks, 2012). This edited book examines how educators and learners can address issues of intersectionality in a diverse classroom. Over two decades ago, bell hooks (1984) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) argued that individuals occupy unique and specific social locations built upon a set of simultaneous and multiple identities, such as race, sexuality, nation, class, ability, and gender. Introducing the term *intersectionality*, Crenshaw (1989) described these complex identities in opposition to categorical generalizations. Collins’ (1990) matrix of domination offered a pedagogically useful conceptual structure for unravelling situated social locations that include both disadvantaged and advantaged identities. The foundational contributions of these and other Black feminist scholars (Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1977/2007; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984; Smith, 1980) advanced intersectional theory within women’s studies, law,
sociology, humanities, and many additional disciplines such that use of the theory spread like wildfire in the 1990s and 2000s. During that time, the work of these Black women intersectionality scholars, Chicana lesbian activist scholars Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (1984, 1987), and international scholars such as Chandra Mohanty (1984) and Gayatri Spivak (1988) paved the way for institutionalization of intersectionality (Grzanka, 2014). Although less often recognized, contributions from White lesbian scholars such as Adrienne Rich (1986), transgender activists including Kate Bornstein (1994) and Leslie Feinberg (1993, 1998), and indigenous activist scholars such as Winona LaDuke (1999) and Paula Gunn Allen (1986), aided the critique of mainstream feminist theory with calls for inclusive attention to the complexity of women’s identity and intersectional experiences of oppression.

Within the vast majority of disciplines, intersectionality remains marginalized, and instructors rarely incorporate intersectionality into diversity courses (Dill, 2009). Scholars also called for an intersectional focus to transform higher education (Berger & Guidroz, 2009), institutionalize intersectionality (Fitts, 2009), and imagine political interventions for social justice (May, 2015). The intersecting complexities among social identity categories and structural oppression are often neglected within courses that traditionally focus on only one aspect of identity and oppression, ultimately failing to simultaneously integrate multiple oppressions or privileges. What do these single-axis courses tell students about disciplinary perceptions of identity? What messages do the curriculum and course titles send to students about “diversity”? On the other hand, intersectional theory calls for moving beyond multiculturalism, single-axis models, and additive approaches to oppression. How do educators help themselves and students move toward an intersectional model? What questions must be asked?

**Intersectionality Benefits to Student Learning**

Use of an intersectional pedagogical design is supported by research that extensively examined intersectional invisibility as manifest within multiple subordinate group identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Rios & Stewart, 2013). Social psychological research found intersectional consciousness (Greenwood, 2008) correlated with white privilege awareness and acknowledgement of blatant racism (Cole, Case, Rios, & Curtin, 2011) and also increased positive attitudes toward Muslim women (Greenwood & Christian, 2008). Curtin, Stewart, and Cole (2015) discovered intersectional awareness was positively related to openness to experience, taking the perspectives of others, intentions to create social change, and rights-based activism. In addition, intersectional awareness was negatively associated with justification for gender and race inequalities and endorsement of a powerful group’s dominance over out-groups (i.e., social dominance orientation).
By implementing the framework of intersectionality, teachers may avoid over-emphasizing any single characteristic or quality in their understanding of individual realities (Dill & Zambrana, 2009) and turn the focus to examination of social locations with respect to privilege and oppression (Cole, 2009). Within this recognition of social locations, teachers must diligently facilitate student analysis of structural power to move beyond the individual level and the tendency to view intersectionality as highlighting each person’s uniqueness (Rios, Bowling, & Harris, this volume). Pedagogically, the intersectional approach provides instructors and students with a critical framework for validating subjugated knowledge, unveiling power and privilege, examining the complexity of identity, and developing action strategies for empowerment (Collins, 1990; Dill & Zambrana, 2009).

As Ferber and Herrera (2013) argued, intersectional pedagogy helps prevent overlooking the invisible impact of what they call the matrix of privilege and oppression. In fact, the absence of pedagogies that take intersectionality into account may do harm by further isolating and invalidating students from marginalized backgrounds (Ferber & Herrera, 2013). Educators utilizing intersectional pedagogy not only move away from such invalidation, but also promote students’ social literacy (Berger & Guidroz, 2009). As students develop this social literacy, they increase their ability to recognize internalized oppression, limitations of singular viewpoints, and the costs of dominance (Weber, 2010). Considering that learning may evoke guilt, shame, blame, frustration, and defensiveness, intersectional pedagogy offers avenues for engaging all students to participate in the process (Banks, Pliner, & Hopkins, 2013; Wise & Case, 2013). This inclusive approach helps reduce resistance because it validates various lived experiences without forcing students to ignore oppressed identities while discussing personal privilege (Wise & Case, 2013). Despite these benefits to students, the availability of techniques and strategies for teaching and learning remains drastically sparse.

**Bringing Intersectional Pedagogy into Focus**

Although scholarship addressing intersectional theory increased in recent decades (Berger & Guidroz, 2009; Cole, 2009; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Dill & Zambrana, 2009), the lack of effective pedagogical tools for teaching and learning about intersections of identity persists. Educators continue to seek out scholarship, resources, and practical advice for bringing intersectional theory into the classroom (Banks & Pliner, 2012; Ferber & Herrera, 2013). Instructors frequently lament about the struggle to locate quality teaching materials related to intersectional theory (Berger & Guidroz, 2009). Currently, there is an urgent and growing need for a model of intersectional pedagogy to address the complex lived experiences of privilege and oppression within the matrix of domination. My hope is that this book will support the development of what Grant and
Kim A. Case

Zwier (2011) labeled an “intersectionally-aware teacher identity” (p. 186). The main goals of the volume are to:

- provide an intersectional pedagogy model for effective teaching and learning about intersectional theory, complex intersections of identity, and the systemic consequences of those social locations;
- develop inclusive intersectional studies that incorporate a multiplicative analysis of both marginalized and privileged locations throughout the matrix of domination; and
- promote interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary infusion of intersectional studies both within a wide array of diversity-focused courses and across the broader curriculum.

This book connects theory and practice for effective teaching and learning about intersectional theory by introducing a new model for intersectional pedagogy. Both the model below and the subsequent chapters approach intersectionality with special attention to analyzing social locations within structural and institutional power, deconstructing privilege, and implementing social justice action.

Developing a Model of Intersectionality Pedagogy

Since my first encounter with student evaluations of gender-focused courses claiming “we talk about race too much in this class” (Case, Miller, & Jackson, 2012) or that the class “has an LGBT agenda,” my search for pedagogical resources addressing intersectional theory has been continuous yet overwhelmingly unsuccessful. Innovative instructional resources and scholarship are essential in order for educators to make the dynamic shift from single-axis content, additive models that fail to engage with complex interactions, and “everyone is unique” identity approaches that flatten intersectional theory.

In my first book, Deconstructing Privilege: Teaching and Learning as Allies in the Classroom (2013), I introduced a pedagogical model emphasizing the importance of intersectionality for teaching privilege awareness. My experiences with infusing intersectionality into privilege studies reshaped my thinking and led to my current view that intersectional studies requires and deserves its own pedagogical model, with the two models complementing each other. As with any topic that gains momentum at conferences and in publications, pedagogical discussions often splinter and form into vague and imprecise conceptualizations. In the end, educators need a clear model to unite these efforts to infuse intersectionality across the curriculum. The newly developed 10-point pedagogical model below summarizes my current vision of best practices based on intersectional theory literature and data-based
research. This collection calls for instructors teaching intersectional theory and application to engage in a model of intersectional pedagogy with the following main tenets.

**Model of Intersectional Pedagogy**

Effective intersectional pedagogy:

- *conceptualizes intersectionality* as a complex analysis of both privileged and oppressed social identities that simultaneously interact to create systemic inequalities, and therefore, alter lived experiences of prejudice and discrimination, privilege and opportunities, and perspectives from particular social locations. Intersectional theory pushes us beyond the additive model that conceptualizes identity and structural oppression as categorical and mutually exclusive;
- *teaches intersectionality across a wide variety of oppressions*, including not only gender and race, but also the long list of social identities typically neglected in the curriculum (e.g., sexuality, ability, gender identity, immigrant status);
- *aims to uncover invisible intersections*, analyzing the consequences of that invisibility for the privileged and the oppressed, and lifting the veil to make these crucial intersections more visible;
- *includes privilege* as an essential aspect of learning about intersectional theory by extending learning goals to consistently deconstruct privileged identities and how privilege operates to maintain oppression;
- *analyzes power* in teaching about intersectional theory, pushing the boundaries of teaching multiculturalism, diversity, oppression, and discrimination;
- *involves educator personal reflection on intersecting identities*, biases, assumptions, and the ways instructor social identity impacts the learning community;
- *encourages student reflection* and writing about their own intersecting identities and careful consideration of how those identities shape their own lives, psychology, perceptions, and behaviors;
- *promotes social action* to dismantle oppression through student learning that extends beyond the classroom walls via service learning, public education projects, community engagement assignments, and ally action for social change;
- *values the voices of the marginalized and oppressed* by avoiding claims of equal validity awarded to all perspectives and maintaining critical analysis of the ways power and privilege limit individual perspectives and experiences with oppression; and
- *infuses intersectional studies across the curriculum*, including a wide variety of disciplines as well as courses not typically associated with diversity content.
Conceptualizing Intersectionality

*Inclusive Exploration of Invisible Intersections*

Traditional intersectional practice originating with Black feminist and womanist scholars focused quite clearly on the interactions of gender and race, although not exclusively. In other words, intersectional theory centered on Black women’s experiences (Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1977/2007; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984; Smith, 1980). Alexander-Floyd (2012) rightly argued that scholars often underemphasize or completely overlook previous foundational work on intersectional theory, thus re-subjugating Black women’s intellectual legitimacy and “privileging dominant modes of knowledge production” (p. 17). As Shields (2008) warns, any advancement or broadening of intersectionality must acknowledge and name the historical roots of the theory in Black women’s original scholarship.

Although some have called for a return to an intersectionality focusing exclusively on women of color (Alexander-Floyd, 2012), this conceptualization risks neglecting oppressions based on sexuality, social class, immigrant status, ability, religion, age, or gender identity. Communication studies and intersectionality scholars Griffin and Chavez (2012) pointed out an over-emphasis on race and gender ultimately erased sexuality, class, and additional arenas of great import in lived experiences. Over 25 years of intersectional theory development yielded creative application to a wide variety of intersections that deserve the critical analysis that this specific theory offers. For example, intersectional theory complicates and advances examinations of White women’s privilege and anti-racist identity development (Case, 2012), Latino men’s feminist identity (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008), masculinity’s intersections with sexuality, social class, and disability (Coston & Kimmel, 2012), and White working-class women’s marginalization within upper-class contexts (Weber, 2010). I submit that intersectionality scholars and educators must maintain a vigilant connection to the history of the theory and the work of Black women scholars while continuing to expand applications to any analyses that facilitate social justice action and deconstruction of power, privilege, and oppression.

*Beyond the Individual to Structural Power*

Rios et al. (this volume) describe a tendency for students to embrace intersectional theory as a celebration of individual uniqueness that glosses over power differences. Michelle Fine critiqued the popular explosion of intersectionality as lacking in structural analysis, thus leaving her “concerned about a kind of ‘flattening’ of intersectionality, with racial disparities in health, education, or criminal justice appearing to be artifacts of culture or genetics, rather than systematic effects of cumulative oppression” (Guidroz & Berger, 2009, p. 70). In fact, May (2015) further warned that many of the widespread claims of
intersectional scholarship merely co-opt the theory as a catch phrase or apolitical descriptive device. These misconstrued and distorted treatments often undermine the very tenets of the theory with empty gestures and careless or ignorant application (May, 2015). This trend of flattening intersectional theory appears quite common with students getting stuck at the individual level. Jones and Wijeyesinghe (2011) noted students’ persistent focus on personal marginalization and lack of power analysis, such as the White male who discounts privilege due to his working-class origins, and called for educators’ cultivation of structural-level intersectionality to unveil power relationships.

Pushing students beyond the individual level presents a difficult pedagogical challenge for intersectionality. The statements in the Intersectional Awareness Scale (Curtin et al., 2015) illustrated conceptualizations that could be used pedagogically to encourage a structural analysis. For example, “Black and White women experience sexism in different ways” (Curtin et al., 2015, p. 15) could serve as a teaching tool to spark discussion and facilitate students’ critical engagement with intersectionality beyond the individual level while avoiding additive frameworks of gender plus race. Likewise, the scale item “People don’t think enough about how connections between social class, race, gender, and sexuality affect individuals” (Curtin et al., 2015, p. 15) provides a path for students to apply the lens of intersectional theory as they focus on the depth of meaning behind the word connections in this particular sentence. A successful intersectional approach must maintain the centrality of unveiling power via structural analysis and making visible the layered complexities of oppression (Andersen & Collins, 2010; Banks & Pliner, 2012; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Grzanka, 2014; May, 2015).

Privilege and Power: Making Intersections Visible

As the above pedagogical model asserts, intersectionality simply must include analysis of privilege and power. The current model preserves marginalized voices as the center of the analysis while deconstructing privilege and shedding light on invisible intersections that maintain power. My original privilege studies pedagogical model offered more details for those interested in specific attention to teaching privilege awareness (Case, 2013) as an important component of intersectional studies. Ferber and Herrera (2013) emphasized the necessity of privilege as part of the intersectional theory learning experience by naming their framework the matrix of privilege and oppression. As privilege and oppression happen simultaneously (Wildman, Armstrong, Davis, & Grillo, 1996), intersectional scholars called for clear inclusion of privilege as part of critical examination of intersections of identity and structural power (Banks & Pliner, 2012; Perrin et al., 2013; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Shields, 2008). By unveiling power and discussing privilege in every single course, educators make these issues visible (Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011). To promote such reflections, the concept of
intersectional invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) provides new paths for examining privileged identities. Without privilege analyses in the classroom, intersectionality leaves dominant groups unacknowledged, thus maintaining privileged status as the normative standard to which all others get compared and labeled as deficient (Warner, 2008).

**Intersectional Pedagogy for Social Justice**

As Alexander-Floyd (2012) stated, application of intersectional theory requires an emphasis on political social action. Intersectional theory’s recognition of systems of power creates new possibilities for not only documenting the impact, but also imagining ways to change intersecting systems (Andersen & Collins, 2010; May, 2015). Weber (2010) asserted that intersectional awareness of oppression and “acting in pursuit of social justice are mutually reinforcing parts of the same process” (p. 220). Intersectionality reinforces teaching about social justice action with grounding in community partnerships as well as personal reflection and awareness of social location in the matrix of domination. In fact, social justice must be a core feature of the intersectional pedagogical approach (Wise & Case, 2013). My intersectionality education project required individual students to educate the general public, teaching them about intersectional theory or a particular intersectional social location (Case & Lewis, this volume). et al. Rios et al. (this volume) provide a detailed description of a class project that involved student groups utilizing intersectional theory to design and implement a social justice action plan. By implementing intersectional pedagogy focused on social justice, teachers offer students new avenues for engaging with the material in meaningful ways.

With the goal of promoting student engagement in learning about intersectionality and considering social justice connections, I often use humor and cartoons. Students typically open up to challenging messages from cartoons perhaps because they experience the cartoon characters as non-threatening. For example, Miriam Dobson’s (2013) cartoon illustration of Bob the striped triangle received social media attention due to its accessibility and fun tone (See Figure 1.3). For the same reasons, I began sharing it in my courses to demonstrate intersectional theory’s potential impact on forming coalitions among groups for social justice advocacy. In fact, when my undergraduate students developed intersectionality education projects, I included Bob as an example of a possible approach to their project, and some created their own intersectionality cartoon as a result. Humor and cartoons also tend to help reduce resistance to learning in these contexts.

Learning about privilege and oppression may lead to resistant behaviors (Case & Cole, 2013; Case & Hemmings, 2005; Chan & Treacy, 1996; Higginbotham, 1996; Jackson, 1999; Tatum, 1994). As course content begins to challenge long-held values, traditions, and beliefs (Lawrence & Bunche, 1996; Tatum, 1992), students may experience hopelessness, guilt, anger, frustration, defensiveness,
FIGURE 1.3 Intersectionality: A Fun Guide (art credit to Miriam Dobson, 2013)
and cognitive dissonance (Stewart, Laut, Branscombe, Phillips, & Denney, 2012; Tatum, 1992; Wise & Case, 2013). Experiential & applied learning provides students with opportunities for channeling such responses into actions to address social issues (Case & Lewis, this volume; Williams & Melchiori, 2013). Opportunities for experiential learning via social action promote student engagement in the process (Case, 2013). When introduced to the idea of experiential service learning, students may slip into thinking “they are serving people who are unable to help themselves, rather than conceptualizing their service learning as working with a community organization to bring about social change” (Williams & Melchiori, 2013, p. 176). Facilitation of applied social justice projects and service learning in the community must include careful preparation, intersectional analysis, and student reflection on empowerment models for addressing social issues.

**Intersectionality Studies across the Curriculum**

Over the last 20 years, Women’s and Gender Studies began building an intersectional curriculum that could serve as a model for other disciplines across the higher education landscape. Although intersectional theory gained much attention as more scholars and educators named it explicitly, the time has arrived for psychology and other social sciences, education, counselor and practitioner training programs, the humanities, fine arts, physical sciences, and business to bring intersectionality into students’ learning environments. Naming intersectionality in university mission statements, strategic plans, course titles, catalogue descriptions, syllabi, assignments, grading rubrics, promotion and tenure materials, and program reviews, just to name a few, sends a message of culturally shifting to intersectional studies across the curriculum. How can faculty incorporate intersectionality and social justice action into diversity courses and the broader curriculum at both undergraduate and graduate levels? For effective infusion of intersectional theory across the curriculum, diversity matters become relevant to all courses, even pedagogical spaces where faculty perceive intersectionality as irrelevant to their disciplinary content (Banks & Pliner, 2012).

To achieve these goals of intersectional infusion, what resources exist to support this work and what resources need to be created? Faculty need not only the development of innovative teaching resources in the literature, but also peer support to expand and maintain this work. Through pedagogical peer support, educators benefit from sharing resources such as books, websites, articles, or blogs that help them develop intersectional approaches customized to their own courses. These resources lend themselves to structural support in the form of discussion groups, faculty book clubs, and lending libraries where colleagues may borrow resources from each other. For example, the Feminist Teacher faculty discussion group on my campus meets monthly to address pedagogical issues. For my turn as facilitator, I chose intersectional pedagogy as our topic. We
read “Intersectional Pedagogy and Transformative Learning” (Pliner, Banks, & Tapscott, 2012) for practical application along with Dill and Zambrana’s (2009) exceptional theoretical review of intersectionality. This discussion, debate, and brainstorming allowed each of us to grapple with application on the ground in our disciplines across literature, communication, history, psychology, sociology, and humanities. For me, professional development in this peer learning community led me to seek out better readings for my students on the intersection of gender, disability, and access to resources.

Of course, one of the most productive ways teachers support each other manifests through sharing ideas for activities and assignments. Unfortunately, educators typically trudge along working in silos to imagine new exercises for in-class demonstrations of intersectionality or innovative papers and projects that aid student understanding. However, developing a more public scholarly community that develops and shares (publishes) pedagogical tools will enhance student learning while bringing intersectionality to a broader base of educators across disciplines. The more teachers who publish their theoretically grounded, innovative practical tools for intersectional studies, the more effective the approaches will be in reaching a wide range of students across the curriculum.

Of course, motivation to write and publish about intersectional pedagogy may be influenced by administrative culture within a given academic institution. In fact, simply incorporating intersectional theory into courses may feel risky, especially for non-tenured faculty, if department chairs, deans, and upper administrators fail to express their support for these efforts. Administrative influence in the form of hiring decisions, merit review, and promotion and tenure evaluation provide structural opportunities to express support for intersectional research and pedagogy. In fact, merit review and promotion policies, mission statements, and strategic plans that explicitly recognize the value of intersectionality encourage faculty to engage in scholarship and pedagogical endeavors. When students express their refusal to learn about oppression, privilege, and intersectionality, administrative support of faculty pedagogical approaches and academic freedom is essential. Using an example related to privilege pedagogy, a White male student at a Houston-area community college reported his frustration after reading Peggy McIntosh’s (1988) essay on white privilege as an optional assignment in one of his courses. This student went directly to a local news station, and the story made the nightly news. Although the reporter merely stopped random students to ask their opinions and failed to interview any academics with expertise on the pedagogical implications, the community college released an impressive statement clearly supporting difficult dialogues and student reflection on personal biases. In this instance, the administrative response sent a strong message that placed value on learning about identity and oppression. Without such unashamed support at the highest levels of institutional authority, many educators will remain hesitant to cover intersectionality for fear of student retaliation, low evaluations
and merit reviews, challenges during promotion decisions, or perhaps even being fired as a tenured professor.

**Organization of Intersectional Pedagogy**

This collection presents three sections designed to provide intersectional theoretical foundations, classroom approaches, and social justice teaching strategies. The chapter authors contributed multidisciplinary perspectives and expertise from social work, higher education, Afro-American studies, psychology, sociology, American studies, and women’s studies. These scholars share theoretical analyses, practical teaching innovations, and experiential learning approaches that advance pedagogical efforts to challenge narrow additive models and individual uniqueness frameworks. Three sections of the collection address:

1. intersectional theory and foundations;
2. classroom strategies for teaching and learning about intersectionality; and
3. intersectional approaches for teaching social justice.

**Part I: Intersectional Theory and Foundations**

In the opening section that follows, Chapters 2 and 3 explore the theoretical origins of intersectionality and its potential applications to research, practice, educational, and activist contexts as well as feminist theory. The chapters address many of the standard critiques of intersectional theory, explore the boundaries of disciplinary utilization, and provide insights into typically invisible intersections that need more focused attention.

Recognized as one of the first social psychologists to bring intersectional theory into research practice, Greenwood (Chapter 2) reviews the history and origins of intersectionality and its deep connections to social justice organizing and activism. Using the framework of three major disciplinary applications of intersectionality, Greenwood describes: (a) health disparities in connection with nursing research and practitioner training (b) social work research, practice, and education; and (c) psychological theory, scholarship, and pedagogy. Her essay responds to various critiques of intersectional theory by outlining its effectiveness and enhancement of scholarship, pedagogy, and social action.

Calling attention to typically invisible and neglected intersections serves as a central tenet of intersectionality. Kurtis and Adams (Chapter 3) introduce intersectionality via transnational feminist perspectives, and thereby problematize assumptions of the Global North mythical norm that affect intersectional work. Their much needed critique of intersectional theory and application points out the common focus on U.S. women, Western frameworks, and Global North perspectives. Kurtis and Adams argue that this neglect of the experiences of the majority of the world’s population reproduces colonialism and domination.
by Western feminisms. They call for a decolonial intersectionality in the classroom and conclude with a discussion of implications for decolonizing theory, research, and pedagogy.

**Part II: Intersectionality and Classroom Applications**

Chapters 4 to 8 provide detailed information for practical application of intersectional theory in the classroom in connection with the intersectional pedagogy model introduced above.

In this section, the authors describe effective undergraduate and graduate pedagogical strategies, course designs, readings, courses, assignments, exercises, and more. Within the comprehensive explanations, authors also include instructor reflections on social location, privilege, and biases as well as suggested alterations for improved student learning outcomes.

Teaching within the discipline of psychology which traditionally promotes positivist science, Grzanka (Chapter 4) highlights the long list of tensions between psychology and intersectional theory. In teaching his Psychology of Gender course, he outlines the challenges associated with teaching gender intersectionally. Arguing that intersectional praxis requires more than merely incorporating multiple dimensions of diversity, Grzanka presents his commitment and approach to the practice of intersectional pedagogy. Through fieldwork assignments, research critiques, and gender autobiographies, his students learn that gender never operates in a vacuum separate from race, ability, class, sexuality, and more.

With the goal of infusing intersectionality, Case and Rios (Chapter 5) present a pedagogical roadmap for teaching an undergraduate Psychology of Women course. From the syllabus framework, to readings, quizzes, activities, and assignments, we illustrate practical applications of the tenets of the intersectional pedagogical model at each level of course design. For example, using the Global Feminisms Project interviews with feminist scholars and activists from around the world, the curriculum promoted transnational feminisms and challenged normative notions applied to Western feminisms. Student assessments focusing on privilege awareness, intersectional photovoice presentations, and intersectionality final projects demonstrated learning with regard to intersectionality’s complexity.

Naples (Chapter 6) shares her practice of teaching intersectionality intersectionally. To serve her graduate students in their struggles to conduct intersectional scholarship, Naples developed the Theories of Intersectionality course. With a sociological perspective on women's studies and the growing infusion of intersectional theory, she critiques additive models that simply add oppressions together and provides justification for intersectional pedagogy. After describing the course that maps the field of intersectionalities, Naples calls for intersectional feminist praxis that transforms the academy and ignites social justice activism.
Teaching lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) psychology using an intersectional pedagogical approach offers several advantages to enhance student learning. In Chapter 7, Case and Lewis document the benefits and challenges of critical liberatory feminist pedagogy and the intersectional framework within two courses: (a) Black Issues in LGBT Psychology and (b) Psychology of Gender, Race, and Sexuality. Taught in the context of a historically Black university and a Hispanic-serving institution, the intersectional theoretical approach supported integration of students’ privileged and marginalized identities in connection with learning about LGBT psychology. The chapter offers instructors a guide for using readings, videos, assignments, and in-class activities to enhance student engagement with LGBT psychology via intersectional theory.

With special attention to power and privilege in the classroom, Hall (Chapter 8) presents her approach to undergraduate courses at a Historically Black University. She describes recognizing early on that the lack of intersectional training as a graduate student sharply contrasted with her own life experiences and research goals. Hall infuses intersectionality into highly innovative activities and assignments that enhance student engagement, such as quote analyses, reaction blogs, autobiographical diagrams, and counter-storytelling projects. The chapter concludes with advice for navigating the challenges inherent in teaching intersectional theory within undergraduate contexts.

**Part III: Intersectional Pedagogy for Social Justice**

The third section of the book (Chapters 9 to 11) expands the pedagogical model’s emphasis on the use of intersectional theory and application for social justice learning goals. Authors provide guidance on effective instructor reflexivity with regard to social location and the impact of intersectional identities on the learning environment. Through experiential learning, group-based projects, and intergroup dialogues, students gain insight into invisible intersections, such as the lived experiences of LGBT people of color, and making them visible to others.

Rivera (Chapter 9) recalls his graduate career taking courses that clearly emphasized race and the experiences of people of color, but rarely covered sexual or gender identities. Working from the synergistic lenses of intersectional theory, critical race theory, and queer theory, Rivera outlines his approach to teaching at the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The chapter presents pedagogical guidance for effective use of strategies including precision in language, the recursive funnel approach, prioritization of social and historical contexts, and facilitation of difficult dialogues.

Rios, Bowling, and Harris (Chapter 10) discuss intersectionality pedagogy within a graduate course, Psychology of Gender, Race, and Sexuality, which included experiential learning and self-reflexivity within a social justice context. The chapter describes the group-based project that divided a main topic chosen...
by the class into intersectional sub-parts for research by each small group. This project moved students from over-simplified understanding of intersectionality as a list of identities to a structural analysis of power, privilege, and oppression in the matrix of domination. The instructor and two graduate students from the course reflect on the process of teaching and learning the theory of intersectionality and invisible intersections.

The final contribution by Dessel and Cordivae (Chapter 11) conveys strategies for teaching and learning about social identity intersectionality within a graduate social work course on diversity and social justice. The pedagogical design incorporated creative activities such as metaphor analysis, personal narratives, the Take a Position exercise, and privilege fishbowls to engage students in examining intersectionality or privileged and oppressed identities as well as movement toward social action. In reflecting on their teaching experiences, the authors describe student learning about intersectionality as well as student development of skills to facilitate intergroup dialogues using this theoretical frame.

**Extending the Intersectional Pedagogy Conversation**

I do not intend for this volume to close the conversation or provide all solutions, but instead contribute to dialogues on effective intersectional teaching. In fact, I argue that educators attempting to teach intersectional theory are only beginning to dig into scholarly dialogues that enhance student learning. Although I thoroughly enjoy conference symposia and discussions on teaching intersectionality, more publications of innovative ideas and outcomes are essential across disciplines and within interdisciplinary spaces (e.g., journals, edited books). As these discussions develop, educators can improve individual courses and content and discover ways to incorporate intersectionality studies across the curriculum (e.g., core courses for the major, core liberal arts courses, graduate training courses).

**Note**

1 The word “White” will be capitalized per APA style when referring to an individual or group of people. When used in reference to a concept, theories, etc., “white” will not be capitalized.

**References**


Toward an Intersectional Pedagogy Model


