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The theory and praxis of intersectionality in work and organisations: where do we go from here?

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Introduction

Intersectionality is understood as a metaphor (Cuadraz and Uttal, 1999; Acker, 2011), a concept (Knapp, 2005; Styhre and Ericksson-Zetterquist, 2008), a research paradigm (Hancock, 2007a; Dhamoon, 2011), an ideograph (Alexander-Floyd, 2012), a broad-based knowledge project (Collins, 2015), and an analytical sensibility (Crenshaw, 2015). In spite of these diverse definitions, intersectionality has been central to the study of inequality, identity and power relations in recent history (Cho et al., 2013), highlighting the inseparability of categories of social differences such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and nation, and calling attention to the systemic power dynamics that arise as multiple dimensions of social difference interact across individual, institutional, cultural and societal spheres of influence (Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011; Weber, 2010). Coined as a term by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to “counter the disembodiment of Black women from Law” (Crenshaw, 2014), intersectionality captured the

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inadequacy of legal frameworks to address inequality and discrimination resulting from the ways race and gender intersected to shape the employment experiences of Black women. However, the roots of intersectionality go back to the 1970s and 1980s when Black and Latina scholars in the United States (e.g. Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995; Hull et al., 1982; Davis, 1983; Anzaldúa, 1987) critiqued the practice of privileging one dimension of social difference over others and argued instead for scholarly attention to multiple forms of subordination. In recent years a large body of work has emerged seeking to establish the conceptual boundaries of intersectionality (Collins, 1993; Prins, 2006; Weldon, 2006; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; Anthias, 2013) and its methodological and paradigmatic scope (McCall, 2005; Hancock, 2007a, 2007b; Syed, 2010; Winker and Degele, 2011; Christensen and Jensen, 2012; Walby and Strid, 2012). Similarly, the broad interdisciplinary reach of intersectionality is recognised in scholarly work that discusses its usefulness in geography, social policy, sociology, psychology, nursing, employment studies and industrial relations (Valentine, 2007; Simien, 2007; Davis, 2008; Cole, 2009; Hunt et al., 2009; Squires, 2009; Choo and Ferree, 2010; Durbin and Conley, 2010; Van Herk et al., 2011; McBride et al., 2015; Mooney, 2016). More recently, scholars have sought to expand intersectionality by linking it with other critical theoretical frameworks, such as postcolonial/transnational feminism, migration and mobility studies, and development studies (Kim, 2007; Chow et al., 2011; Healy and Oikelome, 2011; Anthias, 2012; Metcalfe and Woodhams, 2012; Purkayastha, 2012; Mirza, 2013; Bastia, 2014; Dahmoon, 2015; Grosfoguel et al., 2015).

Although scholarship on intersectionality has flourished, its impact has been uneven across disciplines. In the field of work and organisations, for example, despite the recognition of the workplace as a critical site for the (re)production of intersectional inequalities (Acker, 2006, 2012), intersectionality has not been fully utilised to explore structures of discrimination and systems of power and inequality. Thus, despite its robust potential, intersectionality remains at the margins of dominant work and organisation narratives of equality and inclusion even as global management

and diversity initiatives abound (Zander et al., 2010; Mulinari and Selberg, 2013; McBride et al., 2015). We offer this special issue as a way to focus attention on the potential of intersectionality to explore the dynamics of subordination and power in work and organisations, particularly in the current context of neo-liberal economics and corporate feminism (Eisenstein, 2005).

Intersectionality in work and organisations: where are we today?

In their comprehensive review of critical diversity studies, Zanoni et al. (2010) trace scholarship on inequality in organisations to the 1970s when scholars in the fields of gender and race studies drew primarily on sociological theories of social difference to study “the position of specific socio-demographic groups in organisations” (p. 10). A move in the 1990s from this focus on social identities to a focus on the structural dimensions of workplace inequality operating in all spheres – individual, organisational, cultural and societal – is largely linked to the foundational work of Joan Acker (1990). Her exploration of the structural dimensions of gender inequality offered the concept of the ‘gendered organisation’, which was enormously influential and is credited with having created a paradigm shift in the study of gender, work and organisation (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Britton and Logan, 2008; Saycen, 2012). In the next decade, Acker again exerted influence on the field with the concept of ‘inequality regimes’, an analytical approach that moved from a single axis focus on gender to highlight the complex, fluid, mutually reinforcing and contradicting processes that produce and reproduce multiple, intersecting dimensions of social difference such as class, gender and race differentiations in organisations (Acker, 2000, 2006, 2009, 2012). Acker’s work, alongside that of other scholars (e.g. Glenn, 2012) who focus on dynamics of work, labour and organisations advanced a more systemic view of intersectionality (Choo et al. 2010). This perspective was adopted by scholars in the field (e.g. Zanoni and Janssens, 2007; Healy et al. 2011; Pease, 2011; Sasson-Levy, 2011; Dahlkild-Öhman and Eriksson, 2013) and saw the emergence of a body of work that examined systematic workplace disparities in the control and power of

organisational goals, processes, resources and outcomes.

The state of the field, then, can be described as encompassing two distinct approaches to the study of intersectionality in work and organisations. One approach focuses on subjectivities and explores intersections to highlight the texture and consequences of inequalities experienced by individuals and groups given their social membership. The second approach embeds subjectivities within systemic dynamics of power and explores intersections to highlight these dynamics and make them visible and available for analysis. The majority of intersectional scholarship in work and organisations adopts the first approach. Work from this perspective ranges from a broad exploration of intersectionality in labour market inequality (Browne and Misra, 2003) to the specific exploration of intersectionality in diverse occupations, roles, sectors, work settings and contexts. This includes, for example, class, gender and race in trade unions (Munro, 2001); experiences of gender, race and class of African American women (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Combs, 2003, Mitra, 2003; Parker, 2003; Love et al., 2015); women's narratives of hotel work (Abdil and Guerrier, 2003); religion, gender and ethnicity in women's entrepreneurial work (Essers and Benschop, 2009); gender, disability and age in an automotive factory (Zanoni, 2011); experiences of female academic migrants (Mählck, 2013; Johansson and Śliwa, 2014; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014; Wells et al., 2015), exclusion and subordination in elite amateur sport management (Ryan and Martin, 2013); gender, sexuality and occupation of male cabin crew (Simpson, 2014), age, gender and sexuality in organisational life (Riach et al., 2014), gender and ethnicity in the medical profession (Keshet et al., 2015), gender, class, residence status and employment opportunities of female migrants (Näre, 2013; Wang, 2015), gender, maternity and class (O'Hagan, 2015) and multiple identities of LGBT expatriates (Paisley and Tayar, 2015).

The second, less prevalent approach relies on systemic analyses of inequality and is characterised by a critical look at how power is exercised simultaneously in all spheres of influence and how

these systems of inequality are institutionalised. The processes of institutionalisation in this body of work have been explored in different settings: for example, in the police force (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010); in the formation of the identities of British Pakistani managerial and professional women (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013); in the organisational privileging of senior minority ethnic men and senior women (Atewologun and Sealy, 2014) and in the intersectionalities of inequality and privilege of students, employers and staff in the arts and culture sector (Tatli and Özbilgin (2012a).

A fundamental opportunity to advance our knowledge of intersectionality in work and organisations lies in building upon and furthering work from this second perspective. In particular, we draw attention to two pieces of scholarship that offer robust analytical avenues for more nuanced and actionable explorations of intersectionality in work and organisations. The first is Holvino's model of simultaneity (2012), which proposes "a reconceptualisation of dimensions of social difference such as gender, class and race as simultaneous processes of identity, institutional and social practice" (p. 262). She calls for the contextualisation of subjectivities within structures and institutions and argues that individual narratives, organisational practices and wider societal processes must be explored in an interconnected way in order to destabilise dominant organisational discourses and challenge the power dynamics that sustain systems of inequality in organisations. The second is a framework proposed by Tatli and Özbilgin (2012b), which advocates for an emic approach to intersectional analysis using Bourdieu's theory of cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital to analyse structural and functional elements of organising. They argue that Bourdieu's theory facilitates a much-needed contextualisation and use the concepts of field and capitals to show how difference is part of a wider and integrated historical, institutional and socio-economic analytical framework. These two analytical approaches present us with a challenge: If as scholars in the field of work and organisations we were to take seriously the vision of systemic analysis embedded in these types of frameworks, what issues will we encounter and how should we think

about them? Our struggle with that question took us on a three-year journey that started at the Gender, Work and Organisation Biennial Conference 2012 and has brought us to the editing of this special issue.

The origins of this special issue can be traced to our individual efforts to take up the challenge of bringing a robust concept of intersectionality to our own research in work and organisations. As a work and employment studies academic in the UK, a Puerto Rican scholar and organisational consultant now working in the United States, an older, White feminist scholar from Boston, and an African-American professor now working in South Africa, we each struggled with conceptualising and operationalising the call for more systemic analyses of intersectionality in studies of work and organisation. As we endeavoured to use an intersectional framework in a diverse number of activities, such as designing research and analysing data to address complex organisational contexts crossing the North/South historical, political and cultural divide; developing curriculum for courses in management and employment studies, and re-writing course materials for a women-only leadership development program, we ran up against some of the difficulties and challenges that come from taking up a call that is far easier to write about and critique than it is to implement. At the Gender, Work and Organisation Biennial Conference in 2012, we organised a think-tank to identify and categorise these issues. Out of that came an international conference held at the Center for Gender in Organisations, Simmons College, in 2013 where we furthered our understanding of these difficulties and challenges and also generated a lot of excitement and energy about the need to continue to apply an intersectional framework in work and organisations. As one conference participant put it: “How can we in the field speak of something like the “global manager” without a robust concept of intersectionality and a way to operationalise it?”

The collective knowledge and wisdom co-created at these events combined with a scholarly review of recent contributions to intersectionality in the field of work and organisations, has helped us to

identify what we think of as four terrains – rocky landscapes complete with sinkholes and steep inclines –that work and organisation scholars would need to traverse in order to move the field forward in the way so many intersectionality scholars envision. These four terrains include framing the conceptual meaning of intersectionality in work and organisations; operationalising intersectionality; putting intersectionality into practice, and mapping intersectionality as it travels globally. We position our discussion of each terrain in general debates and contestations taking place within the field of intersectionality and work and organisations.

Framing the conceptual meaning of intersectionality in work and organisations

The breadth of intersectionality scholarship across disciplines has resulted in a plethora of different terms and concepts, inconsistent approaches and even variations in the interpretations of what exactly is being studied and what it reveals (Ward, 2004; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006; Davis, 2008; Nash, 2008; Collins, 2015). This presents a challenge for scholars in work and organisations because despite important work that has begun to define the conceptual landscape, there is little agreement on what it means to bring an intersectional lens to the study of power, privilege and subordination into this particular discipline. This also presents an opportunity for scholars to explicitly and consciously consider the unique particularities of our discipline in order to begin to articulate the specific conceptual meaning of intersectionality in work and organisations. Although consensus is not the goal, both tracing the genealogy of dominant constructs (Lykke, 2010) that have shaped systems of inequality in work and organisations as well as offering concepts to frame the complex interrelationships and power dynamics among subjectivities, work, and organisational systems, structures, and processes (Holvino, 2010) can begin to develop a common language and frame a landscape within which other scholars can either place themselves or chose to expand. We call attention to three areas where the field is faltering and offer them as opportunities to enrich and extend the framing and application of intersectionality in work and organisations.

The first is a call to move from static representations of dominance and oppression to explicitly include the interplay of advantage and disadvantage implicit in intersectional analysis. Other scholars in the field of work and organisations (Nash, 2008; Verloo, 2006) call for the creation of conceptual frameworks to examine, in an interconnected way, the simultaneous forces of privilege and oppression, and dominance and subordination in the workplace. In that respect, constructs like ‘inequality regimes’ (Acker, 2006), which have dominated organisational intersectionality scholarship, although immensely helpful, may have obscured the interplay and fluidity of advantage and disadvantage that is both implicit in an intersectional approach and particularly relevant to hierarchical norms in work and organisations. Ultimately, the resulting preponderance of what we would term ‘deficiency models of intersectionality’ that are more static than fluid, may render invisible important elements of these simultaneous forces, such as acts of resistance, lapses or potential disruptions in/of dominant narratives.

The second issue that merits consideration is the tendency in organisational intersectional research to privilege the sphere of individual subjectivities and identities over systemic processes and structures. Nuanced formations are needed to explain the linkages between particular identities and subject positions and the organisational and societal systems, processes and practices that produce and reproduce workplace inequality (Nash, 2008; Holvino, 2010; Corlett and Mavin, 2014). More specifically, it is important to move from a solely subjectivity-identity centred approach to one that encompasses the interplay of subjectivities, micro-level encounters, structures and institutional arrangements (Holvino, 2010; Atewologun and Sealy, 2014). The conceptual development of intersectionality along these lines holds the promise of denaturalising structural mechanisms cloaked in organisational imperatives for efficiency and economy that instead create and perpetuate categorical inequalities. Theorising linkages between the subjective and structural underscores the importance of understanding the ways in which race, gender, and other categories of difference

produce and reproduce particular identities that define how individuals come to see themselves and how others see them in the workplace (Holvino, 2010). These practices are contemporary but are also rooted in management and organisational practices developed during industrialisation that reflected pervasive societal discourses about racial/ethnic groups, women and classes of workers. For example, Roediger and Esch (2012) show how the combination of societal discourses about race and ethnicity with managerial strategies produced racial/ethnic inequality in the 19th century factories. At the same time, scholars must be mindful how these discourses have evolved over time to take on different tenors with different implications for work practices (Nkomo and Hoobler, 2014).

The third issue is to move beyond the favoured triumvirate of gender, race and class to build a more complex ontology of intersecting categories of difference that may be more reflective of dynamics in work and organisations. We echo scholarly calls (e.g. Hutchinson, 2002; Knapp, 2005; Blommaert and Rampton, 2011) for multidimensional theorising that builds a more complex ontology of categories of difference. For example, the ritual citing of race-gender-class not only overshadows other categories of difference such as age, sexuality and religion, but also discourages the discovery of new, emerging categories of difference particular to transnational workplaces (e.g. linguistic fluency) that sustain forms of inequality in organisations through the creation of hierarchies of ‘global workers’.

Operationalising intersectionality: Crafting and doing intersectional analyses and research in work and organisations

The lack of a distinct intersectional methodology (Bowleg, 2008; Nash, 2008; Shields, 2008, Cho et al., 2013) requires that methodological frameworks be crafted using the resources available in one’s discipline. This in turn calls for awareness of the epistemological and methodological preferences

for knowledge production accepted and legitimised in a discipline (Jack and Westwood, 2006). For scholars in work and organisations, this challenge can be daunting as we need to address the two thorny issues inherent in all intersectional research design. First, to translate intersectionality theory into concrete methodologies (Christensen and Jensen, 2012), and second, to develop analyses that interrogate intersectional paradoxes insightfully while capturing the simultaneous interrelations between the subjective and the structural. In addition, as scholars in work and organisations, we also need to engage with the reality that our discipline is dominated by a functionalist epistemology and positivist methods.

Thus, choices about method have many implications. It is generally accepted that a decision about how to study a phenomenon carries with it certain assumptions about what is being studied (Morgan, 1983; Creswell, 2013). Given the primary focus on identity and subjectivity in most studies of intersectionality in work and organisations, it is no surprise that many researchers have taken a social constructivist approach using qualitative methodologies (e.g. Bell and Nkomo, 2001; Adib and Guerrier, 2003; Bell et al., 2003; Atewologun and Singh, 2014). Social constructivism (often described as interpretivism) asserts a view that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work by developing subjective meanings of their experiences and these meanings may be varied and multiple (Creswell, 2013:24). This explains why most scholars have chosen to use interviews, life stories, and narratives to understand subjectivities and life experiences of marginalised groups in the workplace. Certainly, valuable insights have been gained using these methods; however, as our discussion of the current state of the field suggests, there is a pressing need for intersectionality research in work and organisations that moves beyond subjectivities to capture micro-level encounters, structures, systemic processes and institutional arrangements.

There is no question this is a formidable task. Without a conscious decision about method that includes a plan to capture structural mechanisms and processes, scholars are often left having to

infer these processes from individual-level data (Vallas and Cummins, 2014). The prevalence of studies using social constructionist and interpretivist methodologies may reinforce this approach and ultimately hinder the possibility of moving beyond the study of intersectional subjectivities. Addressing this challenge would require that scholars engage in more explicit deliberation about the interrelationship between epistemological/philosophical assumptions and methodological choices. Being more explicit about this link would make it more likely that scholars consider alternative methodologies.

Recently, some scholars (e.g. Martinez Dy et al., 2014; Woodhams et al., 2015a, 2015b) have drawn on a critical realist positioning to expand both the methodological understanding as well as the empirical study of intersectionality in work and organisations. Empirical works following this approach have used quantitative analyses of large data sets to measure identities as variables, determining their interrelationships and ultimate impact on different material realities (e.g. employment outcomes). They argue that quantitative methods allow scholars to test empirical hypotheses and relationships among variables, have the potential to offer definitive evidence of causal relations, and account for non-additive relationships (Bright et al., 2016). For example, Bright et al. (2016) argue that interventionism and causal graphical modelling using Bayesian statistics may provide a means for testing claims based on the intersection of certain variables. The argument for positivist, quantitative approaches is bolstered by the legitimacy and authority afforded to them in what counts as rigorous and legitimate knowledge production in the field of work and organisation.

As we review the landscape of methodological issues facing organisational scholars we note a new element in this terrain of operationalising research that scholars will also need to navigate. McCall's (2005) classification of three methodological approaches to the study of intersectionality – intra-categorical, intercategorical, and anti-categorical – appear to have become the default framing of

the options available to scholars in work and organisations as well as reviewers of the main journals in the discipline. We caution that McCall's classification system, although extremely helpful in thinking about research samples and the limitations they impose on substantive knowledge production, may preclude the possibility of overlaps among the categories or the acceptance and publication of findings that use mixed methods to capture the complexity of intersectionality dynamics in work and organisations.

Nonetheless, we join others (e.g. Creswell, 2012; Woodhams and Lupton, 2014; Heiskanen et al., 2015) who call for methodological pluralism in intersectionality research and suggest scholars should not limit their choices to methods already employed in the field but also consider methods emanating from structuralist, humanistic and transformative and emancipatory paradigms, including the use of participatory action research methods. Critical ethnographic studies, for example, hold the promise of integrating insights from critical management studies with ethnographic tools to reveal how power is deployed through particular practices and processes (Alvesson and Willmott, 2003). Similarly, visual methodologies may help scholars to visually present qualitative findings of analytically complex, simultaneous intersections or could be used to capture intersectional dynamics reflected in the visual images that abound in organisations and about organisations (Banks, 2007; Mooney, 2016). Our review suggests that scholars have rarely used longitudinal designs that could capture the temporal dimensions of intersectional dynamics or multiple case studies that could identify elements of intersectionality across organisational boundaries and geographical borders. In addition, multi-level and cross-level research design thinking may be particularly useful to capture the interrelationships between individual subjectivities and the structural mechanisms and processes that foster intersectional inequalities in organisations (Koziowski, et al., 2013).

A final challenge in operationalising intersectionality is the articulation of constructs appropriate to

the study of work and organisations. Many have been offered such as inequality regimes (Acker, 2006), translocal subjectivities (Conradson and McKay, 2007), simultaneity (Holvino, 2010), intersectional sensibility (Healy et al., 2011), mobile subjectivities (Calás et al., 2013), and intersectional identity salience (Atewologun, 2016). Constructs from theories that have not been readily applied by organisation scholars might also be useful. For instance, Vallas (2001) suggests that the use of the concept of symbolic boundaries (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) may be helpful in revealing workplace intersectional dynamics that result in cultural exclusion. Furthermore, Vallas and Cummins (2012) note that further theoretical and empirical development of the interplay between symbolic boundaries and the structures of organisations may help link the subjective and structural dynamics of intersectionality. Other constructs from sociological discussions of institutional inequality such as, Tilly's (1998) notion of durable inequality and Roscigno et al.'s (2007) construct of social closure may also be helpful.

In sum, navigating the terrain of operationalising intersectionality for empirical examination suggests a rocky journey. The task is daunting and multifaceted: identify what data to collect and how to collect it; conduct analyses that address the mixture of the diversities and complex interactions of intersections; incorporate structural factors to account for the meaning and prioritisation of categories in specific contexts, organisations and groups, all while capturing the fluidity and temporal nature of these simultaneous intersections. Crafting methodologies to achieve all of this will not be easy, and perhaps the best way forward is simply to embrace the complexity of navigating this terrain and rather than strive for one distinct methodology, take up Mooney's (2016) call for a 'nimble' intersectionality that does not privilege one methodology over another but instead gives smart and agile attention to the alignment between intersectionality's theoretical assumptions and the methods selected to study them.

Putting intersectionality into practice: Using intersectionality to challenge inequality and

enact change

The ultimate aim of intersectionality is to challenge inequality and enact change to eliminate it. Thus, while it is important to continue advancing discussions on epistemic critiques and their implications for the way intersectionality is used as an analytical and interpretive framework, it is also imperative to move from investigation to intervention. This imperative to ‘put intersectionality into practice’ (Verloo et al., 2012) is arguably the most problematic terrain for scholars in work and organisations to navigate. It not only requires translating intersectionality into concrete interventions to challenge and disrupt dynamics of power, inequality and marginalisation in concrete work relations and organisations (Davis, 2008), but also requires using “language that ‘normative processes and cultures’ in management recognise, understand and [can] use” (Woodhams and Lupton, 2014: 306).

Luft and Ward (2009: 11) refer to intersectional practice as “the application of scholarly or social movement methodologies aimed at intersectional and sustainable social justice outcomes”. We suggest three paths to advance intersectional practice in work and organisations: institutional change, organisational change and interventions in curriculum design and teaching. These paths dovetail nicely with Bilge’s (2013) intersectionality’s vision of “generating counter-hegemonic and transformative knowledge production, activism, pedagogy, and non-oppressive coalitions” (p. 405).

Institutional change

The policy domain seems a natural fit for interventions to disrupt systemic power dynamics at the institutional level (Manuel, 2006; Phoenix and Pattynama 2006). However, despite efforts to mainstream intersectionality in policy-making (Hawthorne, 2004; Squires, 2005; Vero, 2006; Eveline et al., 2009; Hankivsky and Cormier, 2011; Verloo et al., 2012), implementation remains

challenging. For example, in their research on Belgian and Dutch equality bodies, Verloo et al. (2012) found that “staff members [...] were aware of the concept of ‘intersectional discrimination’, but were not able to translate this awareness into the everyday practices of their complaints procedure whenever gender [was] involved” (p. 527). They concluded that it was easier to recognise and address additive discrimination than it was to act upon intersectional discrimination. Noting the tensions in current approaches to policy development, Krook and True (2012) advocate adopting Verloo and Lombardo’s (2012) critical frame analysis. This analysis draws from the different representations that socio-political actors offer about both a social problem and its solutions as a way to address the multiplicity of interpretations in policymaking and account for the fluidity and changes in systems of inequality (Verloo and Lombardo, 2012:31).

One reason it may be challenging to bring about institutional change through policy is because policy implementation is likely to be subject to the very processes and structures it is designed to disrupt. For example, in their work exploring the experiences of Bangladeshi, Caribbean and Pakistani women in the public sector, Healy et al. (2011) found that interactions and cultures in the workplace reproduced inequalities and these inequalities were also embedded in the human resource practices designed to disrupt them. Awareness of this complexity presents not only a challenge, but also an opportunity. Scholars can add significantly to the understanding of the processes that instantiate the status quo by making those processes an object of study built into research design, further elucidating the dynamics of oppression to show how they work to silence or marginalise interventions that are meant to disrupt them.

Activism, especially social alliances and mobilisation focused on transformation, is another avenue for institutional change (Velasquez, 2008). Social activism, with its aim to “validate the lives and stories of previously ignored groups of people [...] is a tool that can be used to help empower communities and the people in them” (Dill and Zambrana, 2009: 12). An important terrain for

exploration here is related to the meaning of activism in work and organisations. As they operate as part of internal and external processes in work and organisations, social activism and coalition building have the potential to engage with and help us to understand more about the complex relationship between organisations and society as institutional structures. Equally, social activism and coalition building serve as vehicles through which intersectionality can be deployed as a tool for organisational transformation (Markowitz and Tice, 2002; Chun et al., 2013). Furthermore, intersectional coalitions can be a useful alternative to categorical and single identity-based projects as they allow us to “think about social categories in terms of stratification brought about through practices of individuals, institutions and cultures rather than only as characteristics of individuals” (Cole, 2008:443)

The success of this strategy, however, has been mixed. In her work with feminist activists engaged in coalition work, Cole (2008) found that bringing affinity groups together to address power differentials intersectionally led to a deeper understanding of differences as well as an awareness of less obvious but important similarities. Others, however, have pointed to problems in implementing this approach; for example, Ward (2004) reported that although social activists struggled “not to count, emphasise, and prioritise particular oppressions” (p. 99), it was still difficult to build coalitions for change across groups. A similar finding was reported by Townsend-Bell (2011) on the applicability of intersectionality in collaborative social movement building in Uruguay, where disagreements over the relevance of specific identity categories hindered the development of a multi-issue approach to equality in a national women’s rights coalition.

For work and organisations these obstacles may be even more difficult to overcome. On the one hand, discussions about activism are seldom embedded in discussions about work and organisation; work organisations have systematically resisted interventions that they perceive to unsettle the dominant principles of the neo-liberal capitalist model under which they operate and usurp

managerial control. This is exemplified in the problems of visibility and voice of trade union groups in organisations (Colgan and McKearney, 2012). On the other hand, affinity groups within organisations, such as employee resource groups (ERGs) or networks commissioned and approved by management, often adopt the language of corporate profit to promote their social purpose thereby engaging in what has been called ‘the instrumentalisation of diversity’ (Ward, 2008). This can lead to a focus that is less about disrupting systemic power dynamics and more about gaining a reputable organisational presence, establishing a diversity-related expertise or advancing individual members’ professional development goals and visibility (Githens and Aragon, 2007, Ward, 2008). Coalitions and insider activists are also subject to competition from other groups for attention and resources, limited support from top management to make meaningful change and mechanisms of top-down control (Scully and Segal, 2002; Scully, 2009).

Nevertheless, there are some examples in work and organisations where groups have worked collaboratively across their differences to identify local remedies to embedded inequalities (Scully, 2009:74). For example, in their study of activists in a high technology firm, Scully and Segal (2002) brought together social movement theory and organisational change methods to identify opportunities and constraints that activists experience when working in powerful organisational structures. Similarly, in their study of the deployment of social identity in the workplace, Creed and Scully (2000) discovered many instances of micro-mobilisations, where individuals used workplace encounters and everyday conversations as political moments, deploying and claiming their social identities to advance change. It is important for scholars in work and organisations to learn from and build upon examples such as these to use coalition and activism to bring about institutional change.

Organisational change

There is limited work in organisation and management studies that approaches organisational development, consulting and change with an intersectional lens. Some examples of scholarly work that reports on the challenges of organisational change adopting an intersectional lens include Baines' (2010) discussion of the intersection of gender, sexual orientation, class relations and coloniality in an international project with academics, consultants, community groups and NGO members; Benschop and Verloo's (2011) proposed genderXchange strategy, a political approach to change as a socially, dynamic, contextual, multi-stakeholder process that puts intersectionality at the centre to go beyond gender equality; Doldor et al.'s (2012) analysis of practices in Board appointment processes adopted by leading executive search firms in the UK; and Bendl et al.'s (2015) intersectional analysis of inclusion and exclusion processes in the work of executive search consultants. Two particular examples that report on work that sought to impact organisations and practitioners directly are Heiskanen et al.'s (2015) and Holvino's (2012). Heiskanen et al. (2015) report on their experience of feminist action research, which they undertook as part of gender equality development work they conducted in a work setting in Finland. The authors developed an intervention using the work conference method, which helped them to make visible taken for granted habits and routines in the organisation and highlight the complex dynamics of privilege and disadvantage of groups and how they navigate these dynamics through alliances and conflicts based on different positions. Holvino's (2012) reports on the introduction of a simultaneity model of organisational change to diversity consultants, where she used examples from her consulting practice to show how an intersectional/simultaneity framing can inform the change process, enriching and complicating the models of social identity commonly used by diversity consultants and the way they take up action research interventions. Such attempts to develop and disseminate intersectionality frameworks are rare and their impact on the practice of organisation development and change is not obvious. For example, in a recent call for a special issue on "Understanding diversity dynamics in systems: Social equality as an organisation change issue" (Block and Noumair, 2015), the absence of intersectionality as an approach or methodology that can contribute

important insights to understanding and eliminating inequality through systemic organisation change is notably absent. This highlights that more work is needed in order to open up spaces in the terrain of intersectionality and organisational change.

Curriculum design and teaching

The potential of embedding intersectionality in curriculum design and practice has been recognised as central to practising feminist politics within academia with a view of developing engaged political pedagogies (Wånggren and Sellberg, 2012). However, scholars discussing diversity within curriculum design and development (e.g. Nentwich, and Sander, 2015; Kilgour, 2015) have argued that courses, programs and initiatives do not adequately embed an intersectional understanding of inequality dynamics. Although the broad issue of diversity is often addressed, particularly as it links to organisational performance (Armstrong et al., 2010; Roberge and van Dick, 2010; Hoogendoorn et al., 2013; Andrevski et al., 2014), ‘diversity teaching’ tends to rely on fixed understandings of difference focused on organisational strategies to manage it or develop the requisite diversity competencies (Avery and Thomas, 2004). For Thomas et al., (2010), one of the key flaws in diversity education is that these efforts present “dimensions of diversity separately, as if individuals themselves do not own and occupy multiple dimensions of diversity simultaneously— that we do not have *diversities*” (p. 295).

It is useful to recognise that there are two issues embedded in this problem: how to teach intersectionality and how to teach intersectionally (Naples, 2009; Davis, 2010). To teach intersectionality *intersectionally* we support expanding on Thomas et al.’s (2010) proposal to discuss “how groups share the experience of being afforded as well as denied privilege” (p. 306). This builds on Duarte and Fitzgerald’s (2006) argument that teaching organisation studies should focus on reflexive and experience-based learning in order to understand processes and dynamics

within organisations. They contend that as complex, dynamic settings that are in constant transformation by individuals and groups, organisations are better understood if explored in the context of individuals and groups' own identity complexity and fluidity. In practical terms, Duarte and Fitzgerald point to the importance of activities designed to “enable the translation of reflexivity into action” (p. 16), which facilitates a process where individuals reflect on their social position and explore how their actions contribute to or challenge dynamics of power and systems of inequality. In the same manner, Jones and Wijeyesinghe (2011) suggest the need to teach by acknowledging diverse identities and dynamics in classroom settings, calling attention to how students' experiences differ based on their differential positioning within intersecting systems of power (Collins, 2015).

Ortiz and Jani (2010) bring to the fore the importance of contextualisation, arguing that diversity teaching must be integrated throughout implicit and explicit curricula, which involves the discussion of diversity within institutional and social contexts, placing attention on arrangements and social locations of diverse stakeholders, including students and academics. Finally, in addition to the need for new pedagogy, new course materials would be needed if intersectionality is to be mainstreamed into management and business schools. This would involve cases, exercises and teaching tools that make visible and offer for class discussion previously taken for granted assumptions, such as the way that terms such as ‘diversity’ are biased towards managerial control and terms like ‘manager’ are gendered, racialised and classed (Jolliff, 2012).

Mapping intersectionality as it travels globally

Work and organisations are no longer circumscribed to national borders, and have increasingly become transnational and multidirectional. As such, thinking about intersectionality in work and organisations should also involve complicating intersectionality theory through a transnational lens. Reflecting on arguments (e.g. Gottfried, 2008; Patil, 2013) about the spatial insularity of

intersectionality that sees its theoretical origins as both confined to and derived from experiences within national borders in the West, particularly the United States; scholars (e.g. Chow et al., 2011; Bose, 2012; Choo, 2012; Purkayastha, 2012; Lewis, 2013; Collins, 2015) have explored whether intersectionality travels well. There appear to be three different positions on the usefulness of intersectionality in contexts outside of its origins as well as its early centring on the social location of Black women and women of colour.

One position argues that intersectionality has always travelled (Davis, 2010; Falcón and Nash, 2015). For example, Davis (2010:141) states that "...intersectionality, as performed by women-of-colour feminist analyses, has always represented a transnational critique of the material histories of imperialism and the political economies of nation linking race, class, culture, sexuality, and ethnicity". This position highlights how scholarly attention to interlocking structures and systems of domination have always included linkages across nations and regions. This point of view is bolstered by the early attention Black feminism gave to the transnational linkages of imperialism across the globe and its consequences on people of colour (e.g. Smith, 1983; hooks, 2000). In a recent article, Falcón and Nash (2015) remind us that intersectionality and transnationalism are not dissimilar but mutually constructive and overlapping. They argue against what they view as attempts to place intersectionality and transnationalism in contest with one another. There is also scholarship (e.g. Choo, 2012) that explains how intersectionality has been a relevant and useful frame in contexts different from its national origin.

A middle-ground position about travelling intersectionality focuses on prescribing *how* it should travel (Bose, 2012; Purkayastha, 2012; Valentine, 2007). Scholars like Mohanty (1986); Nnaemeka, (2004) Puar (2012), Anthias (2012), Purkayastha (2012) and Collins (2015) remind us that westernised conceptualisations of categories like gender, race, and class, which are primary to the conceptualisation of intersectionality, may have very different meanings in other parts of the world,

making a core element of its ontology variable but still relevant. Thus, within this position scholars agree intersectionality can travel but not without attention to variations in the forms and effects of race, gender and class inequalities within and across nations (Bose, 2012). Valentine (2007) has argued that place is a key means through which specificity is experienced and structured. Accounting for this specificity is fundamental to understanding the contextual/contingent nature of intersectionality and the relevance of social location as a defining feature of intersectional dynamics (Hulko, 2009). For instance, when exploring the convergence between race, ethnicity, and sexuality, Nagel (2003) notes the importance of understanding the contextual nature of intersections, such as ethnicised sexuality and sexualised ethnicity of ethno-cultural settlers, sojourners, adventurers and invaders, which highlights the different contextual agendas (economic, social, political, cultural and religious) that impact on social constructions of race, ethnicity and sexuality. Similarly, Purkayastha (2012) argues for explicit recognition of differences in racial/gender hierarchies in different countries around the globe as well as how structures of privilege and domination differ. These suggestions for a travelling intersectionality endorse possibilities for enhancing its generative capacity as a framework for both understanding and ultimately addressing gendered, racialised, classed and other intersectional inequalities globally. Such a position is in stark contrast to what Blige (2013) views as the increasing critique of intersectionality as it becomes institutionalised in academia.

The last position contrasts with the first in that it raises questions about the continuing relevance of intersectionality and whether its analytical utility has been overshadowed by transnational realities in a neoliberal world. This position falls within a discourse referred to as post-intersectionality (Chang and Culp, 2002; Cho, 2013), which comprises a rather complex critique. On the one hand, it reflects a critique among legal scholars in the United States around the need to reformulate intersectionality analysis by developing a more holistic theory of categories beyond static and autonomous notions of categories of difference (Kwan, 1997; Chang and Culp 2002). On the other

hand, within feminist debates (particularly from postmodern and post-structuralist perspectives) about globalisation and neoliberalism, the ‘post’ refers to whether the very concept of intersectionality has any applicability in a transnational world. Arguments along this line have suggested that intersectionality is inadequate to capture the fluid and mobile nature of identities and that continued calls for systemic analysis of institutional processes can become reductionist and totalising explanations (Mohanty, 2013).

Calás et al. (2013:711) join this position from the perspective of work and organisations, questioning the viability of an identity-based categorical lens for understanding actors in a transnational business world where mobility may be more characteristic of everyday experience. They argue that the identitarian emphasis within intersectionality literature can result in individualisation as more attention is paid to specific sites and locations—everyone becomes unique. Instead, Calás et al. (2013) refer to ‘after’ intersectionality and promote a reconceptualisation of intersectionality as a “mobile, precarious, and transitory accomplishment of self-hood temporarily fixed by neoliberal rhetoric of ‘choice’ and ‘self-empowerment’”. (p. 708). In other words, embracing the idea of mobile subjectivities is critical to incorporating time/space in the formation of subjectivities. Calás et al.’s (2013) analysis is in agreement with scholars who critique the emphasis placed on identity in intersectionality research. However, the idea of mobile subjectivities does not supplant the existence of systems and structures of domination, control and privilege in transnational spaces (Purkayastha, 2012; Mohanty, 2013). Mohanty (2013:968) challenges what she describes as post-intersectionality arguments that suggest intersectionality has little relevance in a transnational world characterised by mobility and fluid identities. Instead, she argues that historicising and contextualising intersectionality theory is essential to providing systemic analyses of the broader patterns and structures of domination and exploitation across borders and the transnational linkages among such patterns. Purkayastha (2012:60) offers another implication of transnational mobility noting that “being able to build transnational lives—the ability

of groups to live within and beyond single nation-states—suggests that it is quite possible for groups to be part of the racial majority and minority simultaneously”.

These debates and differing positions about transnationalism and its effects on people, work and organisations as well as its relationship with intersectionality have two important implications. First, scholars should reconsider how they think about subject/identity formations by recognising the complex mobilities of individuals, groups and organisations. Second, intersectional analyses should not be confined to organisational practices and mechanisms of inequality but also identify transnational practices and processes that construct and reconstruct marginalisation and privilege in other social/societal spaces. Moreover, there is a need for approaches that traverse geographies, temporalities, disciplines and perspectives (c.f., Ifekwunigwe, 1998; 2004; Purkayastha, 2012; Weldon, 2005; Warner, 2008) so that they account not only for complexities in the intersections themselves, but also for how these interplay with wider issues in contemporary work and organisations, such as debates on migration, expatriation, transnational feminisms, varieties of capitalism, and more generally globalisation and neoliberalism (Choo, 2012; Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998; Gibson-Graham et al., 2000; Grewal and Kaplan, 2000; Mahler and Pessar, 2001; Mohanty, 2003; Kim, 2007; Metcalfe and Rees, 2010; Calás et al., 2011; Chow et al., 2011; Metcalfe and Woodhams, 2012). In this sense, we would call for further exploration that expands understanding of the relationship between intersectionality, dominance and power across space and time. Place and time always matter, but even more in a transnational world (Brown, 2012).

Contributions in this issue

Existing research on intersectionality in work and organisations remains embryonic with much potential for further development. In this section, we present the eight papers selected for this special issue. These papers best responded to our call and, in various and sometimes similar ways,

explore and suggest new avenues for navigating the four terrains we identified.

Atewologun et al.'s paper presents us with a study of multiple identity negotiation at the intersections of ethnicity, gender, and senior management status. The paper utilises identity work as a theoretical framework for studying intersectionality at the micro-level, focusing on the experiences of senior black and Asian, male and female workers in corporate Britain. More specifically, the authors bring together identity and intersectionality theory to offer the construct of 'intersectional identity work' to show a "mutually-constitutive" understanding of multiple identities. As such this paper not only contributes a significant new construct, it also challenges and enriches identity work theory, which generally neglects the significance of the intersectional social locations of individuals in organisations.

Campbell's paper places intersectionality theory in dialogue with Dorothy Smith's work in institutional ethnography. The paper provides a way of operationalising macro, non-individual level forces that reinforce and re-establish dominant power relations even when the stated intention of the action is to undermine or change the status quo to achieve equity and inclusion. An important point made in the paper is that the rules of scholarship do not protect individuals from being integrated into an institution's system of sensemaking and thereby subjected to the same systemic forces that silence, marginalise or otherwise serve to re-instantiate the status quo. The author suggests that 'processes of coordination' be studied as a microcosm of the systemic organisational structures and processes that simultaneously interact to produce what looks like individual level "experience" as well as individual level choice and practice-decisions. The paper makes important contributions not only to debates about intersectionality and social organisation, but also to the operationalisation of intersectionality by offering a way of conceptualising organisational and societal forces that influence behaviour.

Carrim and Nkomo's paper focuses on the identity work of the first group of Indian women to enter managerial positions in corporate South Africa post-Apartheid. Drawing on identity work/social identity theory and intersectionality, the paper problematises managerial positions in terms of time and temporality, including the importance of historical events such as Apartheid. The paper brings forward the concept of 'compartmentalised hybrid identities' to show the simultaneous interplay between the societal, organisational and individual level dynamics in processes of differentiation and systems of domination that produce subjectivities and social inequalities. A contribution of this paper is the contextualisation of identity work in relation to the specific socio-historical-political context. The study demonstrates how dynamic interactions between processes of differentiation (i.e. racialisation, gendering, colonialism, and culturalisation) and systems of domination (i.e. racism, sexism, apartheid and patriarchy) produce and reproduce subjectivity.

Halrynjo and Jonker's paper analyses Hijab discrimination cases brought before Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Dutch equality bodies to examine the question of whether an intersectionality framing of religion and gender is essential to acknowledging Muslim women's experiences with discrimination. The paper raises important issues about the practice of intersectionality in discrimination cases. A major contribution of the paper is demonstrating that in practical terms an intersectionality approach was not necessary to protect the women from discrimination. This contradicts the expectation of many scholars who insist on the necessity of a multiple or intersectional approach in order to recognise Muslim women's experiences of discrimination. The paper also speaks to who gets to define and name the significance of an intersectional approach to understanding the lived experience of marginalised groups. In doing so, it underscores our observation about the on-going challenges of making intersectionality a practical, useful frame for dealing with inequality. Finally, the paper shows how secondary data (discrimination cases) can be used to investigate intersectionality.

Johansson and Śliwa's paper explores English language proficiency among Polish migrants in the UK, focusing on the importance of language as a process of social differentiation, which intersects with other processes of differentiation such as gender, nationality and class. The paper demonstrates how those specific intersections produce specific social and organisational differentiation among Polish migrant workers in the UK creating new systems of inequality that produce new and specific organisational regimes of domination. This paper makes an important contribution to our understanding of the relevance of language as central to processes that produce and intersect in the production of social and organisational differentiation of migrant workers, especially in a transnational workspace where time and place matter.

Knight's paper presents a nuanced analysis of Black women's entrepreneurial experiences in Canada. It uses an intersectional lens to examine entrepreneurship as defined and practiced by 'racialised women', tracing the racialisation, classing and gendering processes that influence and give rise to the particular subjectivities of these women entrepreneurs. The exploration of the women's subjective experiences of being entrepreneurs reveals a great deal about the taken-for-granted assumptions and the very ontology and epistemology of entrepreneurship and calls into question the mainstream view that entrepreneurs are able to quit wage employment and pursue their dreams and creative impulses unfettered by access to resources. A major contribution of the paper is the compelling case it makes for an intersectional framework to interrogate the interplay of structure and agency, demonstrating how intersectionality can inform the way we think about and understand mainstream work and organisation concepts such as entrepreneurship.

Ruiz-Castro and Holvino's paper explores the intersections of gender, racio-ethnicity and class in the production of inequality in a professional service firm in Mexico, using an intersectional lens of simultaneity to re-analyse qualitative data from a study of career advancement in the firm. The paper shows how career trajectories and advancement function as contradictory processes, over-

determined by individual employees' lived identities, where work interactions are shaped by those identities, as well as formal and informal organisational practices embedded in an already raced, classed and gendered societal context and culture. The paper contributes two constructs for the study of intersectionality in organisations: 'cultural scripts' and 'markers of inequality', which offer a way of capturing the simultaneous construction of differences of gender, class and racio-ethnicity in a specific socio-cultural context. This paper also serves as an example of how data can be appropriately re-analysed through an intersectional lens of simultaneity to highlight nuances and dynamics not obvious in the initial analysis.

Wright's paper examines women's experiences in the construction and transport industries, focusing on workplace friendships among women and between women and men. The paper adopts an intersectionality lens to explore how sexual orientation, gender and class influence the way heterosexual and lesbian women experience and participate in social interactions in a workplace setting. With its focus on three categories of potential minority status, the paper complicates the analysis and creates a narrative space to explore the interplay of privilege and disadvantage as well as the 'use' of one's social identity as a resource. The paper makes important contributions not only to the study of intersectionality by empirically operationalising the concept, but its exploration of sexuality also sheds light on a category that continues to remain largely obscured in studies about work and organisation. In addition, the inclusion of class through the examination of differences between professional and non-professional occupational categories further contributes to and complicates extant scholarship. Finally, as the research design used the organisational level as a surrogate for class, it opens the door to the exploration of an interplay of privilege and disadvantage that is particular to the workplace, highlighting the ways in which the traditional framing of intersectionality –with its roots in the effort to explore intersecting regimes of oppression– is inadequate in fully exploring workplace dynamics and phenomena.

Concluding remarks

Our review of the state of intersectionality in work and organisations has identified four areas of the terrain – and some of the pitfalls and difficulties in them – that scholars would need to navigate as they seek to apply intersectionality to the field: framing the conceptual meaning of intersectionality; operationalising and crafting intersectional analyses and research; putting intersectionality into practice in organisations and institutions, and mapping intersectionality as it travels globally in transnational work spaces. The contributions in this issue advance, exemplify, complicate and sometimes even demonstrate the difficulties of travelling through this developing field. In closing, we share our hopes for the future of intersectionality in work and organisations.

The fundamental contribution of intersectionality is its critique, challenge, commitment –and ultimately, its ability— to disrupt dominant logics in both the theory and practice of work and organisations that (re)produce inequalities. As Collins (2015) frames it, intersectionality is a form of critical praxis connected to social justice, where scholarship and practice are “recursively linked” (p. 5). Theoretical frameworks are developed to help people use them in practice and practice informs further theoretical modifications and developments. In the field of work and organisations this translates into knowledge-practice loops in which intersectionality is a lens through which to interrogate mainstream topics such as leadership (Richardson and Loubier, 2008), human resource management (Hearn et al., 2012; Martín Alcázar et al., 2013), entrepreneurship (Harvey, 2005; Essers and Benschop, 2007, 2009, Valdez, 2011) and marketing (Gopaldas, 2013; Maclaran, 2015), among others, to reveal taken for granted assumptions that sustain inequalities in the workplace. In turn, practices that seek to challenge inequalities in these realms are examined and this praxis-based-knowledge is fed-back to further theoretical, empirical and curricula developments. Our hope is that scholars under the broader umbrella of business, management, work, employment and organisation studies, all of which impinge upon the nature of work and dominant organisational

practices and processes, are inspired to use intersectionality to engage with this knowledge-practice loop. Inequalities in work and organisation cannot be understood in isolation from the functional elements of organisations. We also hope for an increase in interdisciplinary collaborations to reduce the lines of separation between academics, practitioners and organisation-community members which would greatly further the goal of applying an intersectionality lens to change dynamics, systems and organisations.

Despite these hopes, we acknowledge that intersectionality in work and organisations will continue to be difficult for scholars to take up because the politics of knowledge production in academia are deeply embedded in the dynamics of privilege and inequality that intersectionality seeks to critique and disrupt. Work and organisation settings are primarily shaped by capitalist dynamics, where power relationships and hierarchies emerge, among other things, from the goals and outcomes set by a neoliberal academic institutional project. As Moore (2014) points out, intersectionality has the capacity to be co-opted by neoliberalism mainly because the power of market forces is stronger than the will to promote equality. Institutions of higher education are part and parcel of these market forces. Indeed, the difficulties that emerge from the interplay between the teaching-student roles, the complex and covert subjectivities of academics, the hierarchical power of managers and administrators, as well as the opportunities and constraints of researchers and practitioners in universities – all embedded in the larger globalised neoliberal economic project (and its resistances) – exemplify well the complexities of intersectional privileges and disadvantages in work and organisations. Yet, we remain optimistic that intersectionality offers a way forward to address these complexities, contradictions, promises and potential for understanding and eventually eradicating complex inequalities in work and organisations. We hope our readers engage with the ideas and possibilities that intersectionality offers to change the broader fields of work and organisation in the 21st century offered in this special issue.

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