Critical Exchange

Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory

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Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (Duke University Press, 2019, henceforth *IACST*) investigates how knowledge has been essential for resisting political domination. Whether visible or not, resistance to unjust power relations of race, class, and gender always exists, whether through faint memory or televised social protest. But what role does knowledge play in such resistance? Throughout my intellectual work, I return to this core question by examining how individuals and groups who are oppressed within systems of power create and pass on knowledge that fosters their survival, resilience, and resistance.

My intellectual journey to intersectionality informs this current book. In *Black Feminist Thought,* I analyzed how African-American women resisted the dehumanization of chattel slavery by producing a self-defined oppositional knowledge. Black women could see, feel, and experience how the treatment of their bodies as simultaneously raced and gendered shaped the contours of their subordination. This initial insight that *both* race *and* gender intersected reflected a methodology of bottom-up theorizing to address social problems. The terms race and gender signify the intersection of racism and sexism, with other terms added over time to flesh out contemporary understandings of intersectionality.

My focus on Black women's knowledge is one case among many. The complexities of the multiple resistant knowledge projects that inform intersectionality lie in the parallel and intertwining narratives of Indigenous peoples, refugee and immigrant groups, women, LGBTQ teenagers, religious and ethnic minorities, and poor people. These and other similarly subordinated groups also find themselves facing social problems that can neither be understood, nor solved in isolation. In *Race, Class, and Gender*, Margaret Andersen and I drew upon these narratives to map the emergence of intersectionality as a field of inquiry. For over two decades, we selected articles that examined how race, class, and gender increasingly informed one another, thereby collecting empirical evidence for intersectionality (Andersen and Collins, 2020). We saw the field grow from its initial emphasis on race, class, and gender to encompass sexuality, nation, ethnicity, ability, age, religion, and similar categories of analysis. We also witnessed the increasing globalization of intersectionality as a field of critical inquiry and praxis. This painstaking work laid a foundation for the synthetic narrative of intersectionality's ideas, scope, and practices that Sirma Bilge and I present in *Intersectionality* (Collins and Bilge, 2016, 2nd edn 2020).

My intellectual journey in many ways parallels the emergence of the field. I came to intersectionality knowing that, while disciplinary specializations offer useful analyses of power relations, their conceptual blind spots can limit their theoretical insight. Privileged groups within disciplinary centers have long treated their partial perspectives on the social world as universal truths. Many such perspectives claim a critical stance that is more often assumed that realized. Such groups embrace a standard notion of criticism, namely, criticizing some idea, practice, discourse, or behavior. Yet when it comes to searching for critical analyses, subordinated groups require tools that go beyond simple critique. Critical analysis does not only criticize, but it also references ideas and practices that are essential, needed, or critical for something to happen.

This expansive notion of being critical informs knowledge creation in the crossroads spaces of a decolonizing and desegregating world. These meeting places enable those who enter them to retain the particularity of the insights and experiences that drive them there, while working through the meaning of what truly is universal with others who arrive from different paths. The term

"intersectionality" references this big tent umbrella of an intellectual and political crossroads or meeting place for political and intellectual engagement across political, substantive, and methodological differences. Politically, intersectionality aspires for robust interpretive communities to house necessary dialogs among disparate ideas and people. Substantively, communities that incorporate people who theorize from the bottom up as well as from the top down can produce a wealth of new questions, interpretations, and knowledge that is far more concerned with changing the existing social order than in explaining it. Methodologically, this dialogical way of producing knowledge elevates the significance of intellectual and political coalitions and alliances within interpretive communities above the brilliance of the individual intellectual.

Building participatory, democratic interpretive communities across differences of experience, expertise, and resources has been the hallmark of intersectional projects. Dialogs among subordinated groups – who no longer see the path to knowledge creation as lying exclusively through old centers of race, class and gender – have sparked considerable intellectual energy and innovation. As individuals and groups who had been involved in an array of social justice projects came to see their commonalities across differences of race, gender, class, sexuality, age, nation, ability, and ethnicity, they increasingly claimed and used the term intersectionality to describe the space where their projects overlapped or "intersected." Since the 1990s, the term has been taken up by an array of projects for social justice to describe ideas and actions that began decades earlier. The connections between the mid-twentieth century social justice movements that refused to accept prevailing social inequalities, and subsequent struggles to incorporate race/class/gender studies into the academy, highlight the recent visibility of the synergistic relationship between the trajectory of intersectionality as a resistant knowledge project and the changing social conditions that animate it (see, e.g., Collins and Bilge, 2020, pp. 72–100). Just as the political struggles against political domination remain in process, so too does the emergence of intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis (Collins and Bilge, 2020, pp. 37–71). And as it grows, intersectionality remains a work in progress in developing a language that enables similar conversations across differences in power. The idea of intersectionality as a broad, increasingly global, resistant knowledge project *in its own right* now provides a vibrant intellectual space for historically disparate projects that have had heterogenous responses to political domination.

As a form of critical inquiry and practice, intersectionality now stands at a crossroads. Virtually overnight, the term intersectionality burst into public awareness in social media and journalistic venues, a full two decades after the term underwent a similar swift uptake in the 1990s within academic venues. Many people now apply the term intersectionality quite loosely to a range of academic and activist projects. Yet labeling something as "intersectional" does not make it

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so. Many people who now use the term intersectionality seem unfamiliar with its history, core constructs, guiding principles, and possibilities. For example, the tendency to "mention" intersectionality in the title or in the first few pages of a research article often masks the absence of intersectional analyses in the remainder of the article. Through this mentioning strategy, an author can harvest the intellectual cachet now afforded the term intersectionality without directly engaging its political, substantive, or methodological substance. The prominence of mentioning highlights a parallel practice that characterizes intersectionality's rapid uptake in academic venues. Many authors also mention intersectionality as *already* being a "theory," often labeling it a feminist theory. If repeated often enough, this unsubstantiated claim has the potential of undermining both aspects of intersectionality's critical possibilities, namely, as a form of critical analysis and as essential to resistant knowledge projects.

Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory takes up the core question of whether intersectionality is a critical social theory and, if not, what would it take to become one? Engaging this question presented epistemological and political challenges. My challenge was to invite, into the terrain of intersectionality's theorizing, a heterogenous group of readers who had limited encounters with one another. How might I write to intellectual activists who were already contributing to the ever-growing knowledge base and practices of intersectionality, but who also rarely identified their work as "theoretical"? How might I craft the arguments in *IACST* for scholars who brought preconceived disciplinary definitions about what constituted "theory" to their reading of my text? Writing this book would have been far easier had I narrowed the scope of my audience. Some readers who engaged the book would find its ideas too abstract whereas others would think they already knew what it was.

Focusing on how these heterogenous social actors *used* intersectionality offered analytical tools for managing these definitional dilemmas (Collins, 2015). Avoiding fixed definitions of intersectionality enabled me to avoid elevating any one use over others. Drawing on the philosophical tenet from pragmatism that ideas gain meaning through use, I identified three characteristic uses of intersectionality – namely, as a metaphor, as a heuristic, and as a paradigm – that provide a conceptual foundation for intersectionality's heterogeneous practices. Throughout the text, I frame intersectionality through the kaleidoscope of these cognitive tools, from the simplicity of a metaphor, through the utility of a heuristic device, to the structured nature of paradigmatic thinking that guides a field of study, to the *possibility* of an explanatory social theory that engages the issues that most concern scholars and practitioners of intersectionality. These cognitive tools invite readers into both my text and the field of intersectionality without privileging one entry point over another.

These multiple cognitive entry points into *IACST* parallel multiple entry points into intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis. Surveying the broad

scope of how people used intersectionality solidified my choice of six core substantive constructs that in varying combinations would be recognizable to intersectionality's practitioners, namely, relationality, power, social inequality, social context, complexity, and social justice. This focus on use also grounds my selection of four guiding premises of intersectional projects, namely, (1) race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability, age, and similar markers of power are interdependent and mutually construct one another; (2) intersecting power relations produce complex, interdependent social inequalities; (3) the social location of individuals and groups within intersecting power relations shapes their experiences *within* and perspectives *on* the social world; and (4) solving social problems within a given local, regional, national, or global context requires intersectional analyses. Together these cognitive entry points, core constructs and guiding premises provide a cognitive architecture for investigating intersectionality as critical social theory and the form that critical social theorizing might take.

These core substantive concepts anchor many of the arguments throughout the book. For example, because the construct of power has been a fundamental construct for intersectionality, it required a sophisticated treatment both as a topic of discussion and as a factor in how I wrote the book. Making sure that I focused on intersecting power relations, not just as a topical theme in the volume, but also on the political dimensions of intersectionality's methodological practices, was essential. I aspired to make intersecting power relations as central to the construction of my text as they are for intersectionality's critical inquiry and praxis. How could I examine the centrality of participatory democracy for intersectionality, e.g., how intersecting power relations shaped its construction and reception, without attending to questions of equitable, democratic participation within intersectionality's internal practices?

This interpretive framework that organizes *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* offers an elastic structure for engaging the contributions in this Critical Exchange. As I initially read each contribution, I could see how different they are from one another in substance, tone, intent, and literary conventions. The following contributions represent scholars with extensive experience with or living in varying national contexts (Brazil, Turkey, Norway, the US, and Spain), academic disciplines (political science, policy studies, gender studies, sociology), career stages, institutional locations, and racial/ethnic/religious backgrounds. This heterogeneity shapes how each author entered the text and informs her choice of topic, questions, and analyses. How could this one symposium hope to achieve a uniform voice from such disparate contributions?

Intersectionality requires a new way of reading that focuses less on the differences between these contributions, either-or frameworks that produce mono-categorical thinking of race or gender, and more on intersectionality's both/and relational thinking. Standard ways of reading that seek to mine intersectionality for what a reader can take *from* it give way to dialogical engagement that respects what

each has to offer *to* the project of intersectionality. Such thinking searches for points of connection between each contribution and intersectionality as a field as well as connections among the contributions themselves. Reading these contributions as being in dialog with one another through the lens of intersectionality's key concepts as well as its paradigmatic premises, provides a different interpretive framework. Just as the ideas of intersectionality are interconnected and find new meaning in intersectionality's metaphoric meeting place as an exchange of ideas, so too do the distinctive views of people who are sufficiently grounded within intersectionality contribute to its critical ethos by offering critical analyses of their own.

Thus, Gonzaga da Silva kicks off the Critical Exchange by attempting to trace the evolution of my conceptualization of intersectionality over time. Ergun writes from within the field of translation studies and reflects on the role of translation in enabling both intersectional analyses and the formation of transnational solidarities. Furseth provides us with a persuasive argument about the mutually illuminating relationship that can develop between the sociology of religion and the scholarship in intersectionality. In her contribution, Bond then invites us to think about political violence both as a tool and a response to intersecting axes of oppression. Last but not least, Martínez-Palacios takes up a double challenge: to propose that intersectional thought can support both social agents in a practice of therapeutical self-socio-analysis that can enable them to build literacy regarding their own complex social positionalities; and can help public policy makers committed to social justice and the sustainability of human flourishing.

Patricia Hill Collins

Intersectionality, then and now

I finish writing this text at a moment in history when there is an ongoing worldwide spread of a new disease called COVID-19. From December 2019, when the outbreak in Wuhan, China started, to early April 2020, when I hand this piece in, confirmed cases surge past 1.8 million, and deaths around the globe are above 115,000. At least, 185 countries now face the challenge of responding to the virus. It is nothing short of a global health problem. The rapid escalation and global spread of the disease, followed by mostly assertive governmental action, taken at face value, may give the idea that the coronavirus outbreak is a real threat to everyone equally on the planet, but one may wonder if that is indeed the case.

In Brazil, the country where I wrote this piece, for instance, the alarm was raised in early February, when thirty-four Brazilians who had been living in Wuhan were repatriated and arrived in Brasilia. It took two more weeks before a first case of a Brazilian infected with COVID-19 was confirmed: a 61-year-old businessman who lives in São Paulo and spent two weeks in Italy on business. Notwithstanding, the

first ones to die afterwards never left the country: a lower class 62-year-old man in São Paulo, and a 63-year-old woman in Rio de Janeiro, who worked as a domestic worker for an employer who had just visited Italy. Differently from Brazil (where data only includes age, health condition, and origin of patients), early data on coronavirus deaths in Louisiana, Illinois, Michigan, and New Jersey, in the United States, allowed some conclusions regarding the racial profile of victims: African Americans account for 30–32% of the local population, but make up for around 70% of coronavirus deaths. The disproportionately high rate seems to indicate that inequality is a co-morbidity: the poorer, marginalized populations that lack access to health care, endure unstable and low-paying jobs, affecting living and nutrition conditions, make them disproportionally exposed to risk. Anyone may die from COVID-19, but some die more than others, because of existing social conditions.

Something similar happens in Brazil when we look into violence against women, and femicide, in particular. Murders of women in the country per year increased by 6.4% from 2006 to 2016, but when such data are detailed along racial lines, the picture is rather different: the homicide rate per year for non-Black women decreased by 8%, while that of Black women increased by 15%.

Women are murdered, but some women are at a higher risk, because public policies targeting violence against women do not take into account that the protection of Black and non-Black women might require different measures for each group. Violence, or the lack thereof, does not fall equally on everyone – and one can only reach this conclusion by adopting an intersectional approach. It goes without saying that the burden of explaining what intersectionality is in 2020, when the term is widely accepted by practitioners, activists, and scholars alike, is quite different from what it was thirty years ago, when the term was given a particular articulation by Patricia Hill Collins, in her effort to give Black women voice.

What might not be so evident – and this will be the key claim in this short contribution – is that although intersectionality is a constant in her scholarship, the definition thereof underwent change over time. In fact, it is possible to identify three phases: the first one includes her early publications, as *Learning from the Outsider Within. The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought* [hereinafter, *Outsider Within*] (1986) and *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* [hereinafter, *Black Feminist Thought*] ([1990] 2000), where she describes and names relevant aspects of Black women's lives; the second phase encompasses, for instance, *Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas* [hereinafter, Definitional Dilemmas] (2015) and *Intersectionality – Key Concepts* [hereinafter, *Key Concepts*] (2016), with Sirma Bilge, published after the widespread adoption of the term and introducing Hill-Collins's effort to chart the field; the third phase centers on her latest book, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* [hereinafter, *Intersectionality*] (2019a), where Collins not only interprets what the practical knowledge of those at the margins is, but also

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points to what it might be, and how to achieve it. In this contribution, I will trace the changes in Collins's intellectual development of her conceptual apparatus.

Naturally, the concern with complex inequality is not exclusive to this scholarship. In Brazil, for instance, Heleith Saffioti published *A mulher na sociedade de classes* in 1969, including references to different roles played by white and black women in the reproduction of capitalism in Brazil. But while Saffioti's (2013) objective was to understand how differently racialized women were impacted by capitalism, a central preoccupation of Collins' scholarship, since *Outsider Within* (1986), is with how the intersection of power and knowledge is connected to the oppression of the many by the few. That means Collins' work is firmly anchored in a sociology of knowledge that speaks against the so-called scientific neutrality and objectivity of those who claim authority to speak for the other. It also underscores the importance of marginalized forms of knowledge that challenges mainstream ideological framing of people in groups.

This is a concern shared by other scholars who were publishing about feminist epistemology in the United States: Nancy Hartsock and her book *Money, Sex, and Power* (1983), Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka's collective work *Discovering Reality* (1983), Sandra Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986), and Donna Haraway *Situated Knowledges* (1988), to name a few. Such scholars engaged in an effort to redefine the making of science, foregrounding the existence of women's standpoint or situated knowledge, and showing how objectivity was supposed to be understood in dialog with the Western canon of philosophy and the sociology of knowledge. More than claiming the existence of a Black women's standpoint, though, Collins was invested in the production of "facts and theories about the Black female experience that [could] clarify a Black woman's standpoint for Black women" (1986, p. 16) – and that is a distinctive trait that will mark her work, not only *Outsider Within*, but also *Black Feminist Thought* a few years later.

The choice was not random, as the author clarifies in the first pages of *Black Feminist Thought*:

> Oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of dominant groups. In this volume, by placing African-American women's ideas in the center of analysis, I not only privilege those ideas but encourage White feminists, African-American men, and all others to investigate the similarities and differences among their own standpoints and those of African-American women' (2000, p. vii).

Collins, thus, reclaims Black women's position as speakers.

Interestingly, that is a concern that will be present also in Black female scholars outside the US. In Brazil, in *Racismo e Sexismo na Cultura Brasileira* (1984) Lélia

Gonzales took dissent to another level and refused to use formal Portuguese, because she understood Portuguese had been replaced by what she called Pretuguês ('Blackiguese', in free translation), a different language that should be used and respected. Later, Sueli Carneiro (2005) would recast the issue of how the production of knowledge and the transmission thereof could be used to subjugate populations at the margins and claim that the construction of the Other as a No-Being that serves as foundation for the Being is actually an "epistemicide."

In contrast to these scholars, Collins' approach goes beyond the identification of oppressive entanglements and offers us a way of transcending group-specific politics based upon a Black feminist epistemology – and here lies the relevance of intersectionality: as Black women sit at the intersection of two powerful systems of oppression, race, and gender, understanding this position opens up the possibility of identifying and understanding other cross-cutting oppressions, enabling a move to transform reality.

In *Outsider Within*, Collins did not use the term "intersectionality." Instead, she speaks of the "interlocking nature of oppression" (1986, p. 19). The author does not claim the novelty of the observation – to the contrary, she affirms that "the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression is a second recurring theme in the works of Black feminists … While different socio-historical periods may have increased the saliency of one or another type of oppression, the thesis of the linked nature of oppression has long pervaded Black feminist thought" (1986, p. 19).

"Intersectionality" will be found in *Black Feminist Thought* a few years later, which reads: "Subsequent work aimed to describe different dimensions of this interconnected relationship with terms such as *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) and *matrix of domination*" (p. 18). Although some readers mistakenly point to Collins as the creator "intersectionality," the scholar herself makes an express reference to Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black legal scholar in the United States who was also doing some research on the intersection between race and sex. The second edition of the book references *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color* (1991), but this paper was published after the first edition. So, it is reasonable to conclude that Collins had contact with Crenshaw's previous work *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics* (1989).

In both works, Crenshaw applied intersectionality more as an analytical tool to show how Black women were in a disadvantaged position when it came to how courts framed and interpreted the stories of plaintiffs. Both in *Outsider Within* and *Black Feminist Thought*, intersectionality will be also an analytical approach, but Collins enriches our understanding thereof. In the former, the "interlocking nature of oppression" indicates a need to change the scope of previous investigations and investigate how systems of oppression are interlinked (Collins, 1986, p. 21). In the

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latter, the term is to be read in conjunction with "matrix of domination," which would explain how intersecting oppressions (both particular and structural, disciplinary, hegemonic) are actually organized (2000, p. 18).

Further in the book, Collins explains how different aspects of Black women's lives operate as sites of intersectionality. As she argues, the investigation of Black women's experiences of pornography, prostitution, and rape, for instance, allow us to understand how powerful groups act to regulate Black women's bodies and how "connections between sexual ideologies developed to justify actual social practices and the use of force to maintain the social order" (2000, p. 134). At the time, Collins was taking seriously the task to reclaim Black women's voice and their power to tell their own story. In the 2010s, after the term was popularized and was widely incorporated not only in scholarship but also by social movements all over the world, Collins took upon herself the task of reviewing and exploring the definitions of intersectionality at work in these contexts – something evident both in *Definitional Dilemmas* (2015) and *Key concepts* (2016).

In *Definitional Dilemmas,* Collins reviews intersectionality as a field of study, as an analytical strategy, and as critical praxis. One year later, Collins and Bilge's book *Key Concepts* (2016) will build on the previous analysis: intersectionality as an analytic tool, and as critical praxis and inquiry. Collins remarks that, while it is possible to note the coexistence of a general consensus about the contours of the idea of intersectionality, there is also a massive heterogeneity of definitions – with positive effects. For instance, the appropriation of the term by social movements allowed some aspects to blossom and others to fade away (2015, p. 7). Moreover, the widespread adoption of intersectionality by both scholars and practitioners alike revealed a connection between knowledge and remedying social inequalities in a fashion that made sense for their social justice project – what Collins understands as critical praxis and inquiry. Notably, the expression "matrix of domination" that previously captured how intersecting oppressions are organized (2000, p. 18) is nowhere to be found. Instead, Collins and Bilge now combine intersectionality with "domains of power," in what resembles a downgrading of the concept in her theory: "power relations are to be analyzed both via their intersections, for example, of racism and sexism, as well as across domains of power, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal. The framework of domains of power provides a heuristic device or thinking tool for examining power relations" (2016, p. 29)

Despite admitting the risk that the very popularity of intersectionality causes it to lose meaning (2015, p. 2), by then the scholar seemed to think it was too premature to define theoretical boundaries for the concept (2015, p. 11) – a position that clearly changed by the time her latest book was published. There she proposes that "[i]f intersectionality does not clarify its own critical theoretical project, others will do so for it" (2019a, p. 3). In *Intersectionality*, the primary concern about the interconnection between knowledge and power, as well as the interlocking relation

between different systems of oppression is still there, but Collins transcends previous categories that marked her work to put forward the contours of a wider theoretical model and develop it as a critical social theory (Collins, 2019a). The expression "matrix of domination" will be used only once in an example that involves a comparison of the United States and Brazil. It is most definitely no longer a key concept. In fact, Collins expressly states that "I analyze power relations not by emphasizing domination, but rather by developing the concept of intellectual resistance and exploring intersectionality's connections to it" (2019a, p. 10).

Instead of focusing on how oppression works and is organized, Collins opted for a different kind of theory, one that also challenges existing social orders and opens possibilities for change. In her words, "critical social theories aim to reform what is in the hope of transforming it into something else" (2019a, p. 5).

Interestingly, the release of *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (2019a) in the United States was almost concomitant to the release of the translation of *Black Feminist Thought* into Portuguese in Brazil. The Brazilian edition includes a preface to the volume that affords readers a glimpse of such change: differently from the prefaces to the first two editions, where the goal of examining how knowledge can foster African-American women's empowerment is a main driver (that would be expected), in the preface to the Brazilian translation Collins calls upon readers to reflect upon how their own background influences their reading of the book, how being in different positions brings about particular views on racism, sexism, class exploitation, heterosexism, nationalism, and discrimination against people with different abilities and of different ages, ethnicities, and religions. Once one is able to tell their own story, they will be prepared to engage in authentic and well-founded dialogs with others.

In Brazil, the publication of Collins's work is not only an academic invitation to produce sound science, but also the result of a political effort by intellectual activists (Black or not) engaged with a social justice project. Notably, Collins' relevance includes her own history as a Black woman confronted with oppression, who became one of the globally most well-known intellectuals.

The journey of intersectionality in Collins's thought – from the moment she first described intersecting systems of oppressions as intersectionality up to this latest project of critical social theory – has been long. The keyword is still intersectionality, but the content thereof has expanded to encompass new trajectories and horizons.

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Transnationalizing intersectionality in and through translation

In *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins highlights the urgency of transcending national borders to engage in conversations and collaborations that will reveal and forge liberatory transnational connectivities among differently situated women of African descent (2000). This call to transnationalize black feminist thought and action is an extension of her recognition of "a transnational matrix of domination" that is composed of multiple – simultaneously operating, mutually constituting, fluidly intersecting, and unpredictably assembling – local and global structures of domination that shape black women's experiences in different yet interconnected ways (p. 231). Such a politically and ethically ambitious project of accomplishing intersectional and transnational justice for all black women, along with other historically oppressed groups, requires a relational ethics of "mutual stretching," dialogic reciprocity, and polyphonic togetherness (Lorde, 1988, p. 19). That is, transnational justice for all marginalized individuals and communities necessitates that we not only engage in difficult dialogs across differences and hierarchies but also democratize and decolonize our cross-border relationalities so that the dissonant stories, theories, visions, and knowledges we (co)produce serve to disrupt the assimilative mono-logic of neoliberal globalization. We cannot achieve such intervention, democratization, and decolonization without attending to the politics and ethics of translation (selection, production, validation, distribution, reception, and metabolization of translation) as a fundamental question of diversity, intersectionality, and transnationality.

As a facilitator of cross-border mobility, encounter, and exchange, translation can expand the geopolitical boundaries of intersectionality as a feminist analytic that, on the one hand, helps expose the locally and globally situated co-operations of multiple systems of domination and, on the other hand, envisions justice as a coalition-based and polyphonic transnational struggle. In fact, when simultaneously configured as a politically charged and invested epistemic practice of border crossing, localization, and globalization, translation appears indispensable to our imaginaries, theories, and actions of "justice for all," which need to be guided by intersectional premises to live up to its promise of "for all" (Hill Collins, 2019b, pp. 45–50). Given that the world we live and dream in is made up of multiple interconnected localities – each with its own languages, ideological worldviews, intersectional assemblages, discursive regimes, and interpretive communities – and that these interdependent localities are infused with various global forces like capitalism and imperialism, our justice-oriented theories and actions have to correspondingly cross linguistic borders in their intersectionally informed pursuits. In other words, our dreams of heterogeneous, just, caring, and peaceful forms of planetary coexistence can come true only in and through translation, when we "cross without taking over" (Lugones, 2010, p. 755). Translation, hence, promises

to increase the critical and radical potential of intersectionality by transforming into it a project of world making.

Indeed, bringing the translation question to the center of feminist debates on intersectionality helps spatialize and transnationalize intersectionality, which, Vrushali Patil persuasively argues, has remained a largely domestic and US-centric theory, "leaving unexamined cross-border dynamics, processes beyond the local level of analysis that nevertheless are integral to the unfolding of local processes" (2013, p. 853). In their collaborative piece exploring the political productivity of intersectional and transnational feminisms when put in dialog, Sylvanna Falcón and Jennifer Nash similarly critique "intersectionality's unmarked preoccupation with U.S. locations" (2015, p. 3). Three important interrelated critiques are raised here: (1) In comparison to gender, race, class, and sexuality, nationality, and geopolitics – or politics of location, if you will – are typically not incorporated as determining axes of power, identity, and knowledge in intersectional analyses, which have a tendency to overlook the questions of colonialism and imperialism. (2) Intersectionality's analytical focus has largely been limited to the localities of the Global North, particularly the US, whose national configuration is too often taken for granted, rather than treated as a strategically orchestrated geohistorical accomplishment – hence, Patil's term "domestic intersectionality" (2013, p. 852). (3) Finally, these domestically focused intersectional analyses have ignored the transnational nature of locally or nationally conceived and experienced spaces, which are in fact complex contact zones permeated by numerous – violent and subversive – forms of border crossing.

We can respond to these calls to spatialize, de-westernize, and transnationalize intersectionality by factoring in translation as a bridge between intersectionality and transnationality, two predominant analytics of contemporary feminist thought and action that are often deemed mutually exclusive, if not competing or even oppositional, in the institutional context of the corporate US university (Falcón and Nash, 2015, p. 4). In other words, translation can help reveal that intersectional feminism and transnational feminism not only are politically complementary theoretical and practical platforms of justice, but also need each other to envision and generate more effective coalitional strategies of social change and solidarity building, particularly for "women of color" – a vast and vague category that comprises differently interpellated and situated groups of US-based and non-US-based women of color, which Andrea Smith neatly explains in her article, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy" (2006). Because women of color experience, signify, and enunciate life in and through different languages, vernaculars, and interpretive conventions, we need translation to be able to engage in cross-border dialogs and collaborations so that our partial truths can inform and grow with one another, creating more thorough and truthful knowledges and visions of justice and liberation.

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Translating the works of women of color intellectuals and expanding the reach of their theories and stories of dissent and protest beyond their immediate linguistic borders not only helps us validate and celebrate the epistemic authority of women of color – hence geopolitically expanding the mission of intersectionality – but also increases coalitional affiliations and potential solidarities among US-based and non-US-based women of color, who are often separated from, if not pitted against, each other by the neoliberal economy of difference. One revealing example that illustrates the ways in which translation can increase both the explanatory power and geo/politically transformative potential of intersectionality is Octavia Butler's 1979 classic science-fiction novel, *Kindred* and my Turkish translation of it, *Yakın* ["Close/Akin/Intimate/Significant Other"], published in Turkey in 2019.

Kindred tells the story of an African-American woman, Dana, who finds herself travel back and forth in time between 1976's California, where she lives with her white husband, and a slave plantation in 1815's Maryland, where she finds her ancestors among both slaveholders and enslaved people. In fact, it is one of those ancestors that involuntarily calls Dana back in time so that she can save his life every time he finds himself in a life-threatening situation: the plantation owner's son, Rufus, who grows up to be the plantation owner himself. He rapes Alice – Dana's enslaved great grandmother – and in doing so, becomes Dana's great grandfather. *Kindred* is woven around Dana's navigation of slavery as a black woman and her dilemmas of saving Rufus for the sake of her family's continuation, trying to survive the brutal reality of slavery, staying in solidarity with the other slaves, yet becoming complicit in the very system that is designed to dehumanize them all. *Kindred* is an intersectional story of racial, economic, and gendered oppression and survival, but it is not just Dana's story. It is also America's story. And it is Octavia Butler's genius to merge these two stories in a plain yet arresting narrative and situate the unsuspecting science-fiction reader in the plot as one of the shareholders of that great American pain. What happens to this very American story when it leaves the locality of the US and travels to another place where that unfinished past of patriarchal slavery does not exist?

This is a compelling, yet slightly misleading question because while it seems like an exclusively local story, *Kindred* in fact depicts the US as a transnational space by not only focusing on the trans-Atlantic slave trade (and its continuing heritage across the globe), but also highlighting the interconnected nature of the various manifestations of genocidal logic citing, for instance, the indigenous genocide in the US, the South African apartheid, the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, and the Lebanese civil war – hence, relationally reconceiving the national configuration of the US as a transnational doing. As the protagonist Dana brings these transnational connections into her growing critique of the intersectional operations of race, gender, and class violence in the locality of the US, she also invites the reader to question the legitimacy of the US (and their allegiance to it) and reimagine systematic oppression as well as resistance and liberation beyond the oppositional

parameters of the nation state. Hence, by treating racism, capitalism, patriarchy, nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism as locally and globally intersecting systems of violence, Butler's novel highlights the significance of coalitional and intersectional resistance across borders. In that regard, we might consider *Kindred* as giving an account of a black feminist standpoint that is simultaneously intersectional and transnational. My Turkish translation of *Kindred* has sought to expand that intersectional and transnational web of relations that the novel claims by facilitating the book's travel to Turkey, whose distinctive geohistorical landscape has witnessed its own locally and transnationally procured and contested violent intersectionalities.

In order to help facilitate such geo/politically connectionist readings, I introduced *Kindred* to the Turkish-speaking reader by adding a brief preface to it where, by citing Audre Lorde (1984, p. 43), I first portrayed translation as a political project of sharing and expanding "the feminist word" across borders: "And where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. That we do not hide behind the mockeries of separations that have been imposed upon us and which so often we accept as our own." I, then, added:

> The second reason why I translated *Kindred* is the gratitude I feel for black American feminists whose theories, stories, poems, activisms, and friendships have always stimulated, nurtured, and transformed me in my own feminist journey and given me hope and strength to resist. So, the translation you are reading aims to ensure that the words of black feminists live on and blend in our own words, despite the world order that operates against them. Translating the works of women writers, especially women of color writers, and enabling their encounters with different readerships across languages is not only an intervention into the male-dominant, colonial publication world, but also an attempt of facilitating cross-border feminist exchange and solidarity … As you read this translation, I hope you too get inspired by its story, which is both distant and close, and find the courage to confront the historical truths that you have been afraid to confront by going on your own time-travel (2019, pp. 8–9).

I hoped witnessing *Kindred*'s confrontation with the intersectionally and transnationally interwoven violent history of the US would similarly motivate readers in Turkey to intervene in their own intersectionally and transnationally assembled collective memories that remember, misremember, or forget several (open) wounds of racism and fascism, be it the officially denied Armenian genocide, ongoing massacres against Kurds, gross rates of femicide, or racist attacks against Syrian refugees and immigrants from Africa. As I further explained in the preface,

> Forgetting the past entirely or distorting history in service of nationalist, racist, and patriarchal discourses allows us to habitually transmit the unfounded hatred (and fear) for 'the other' from generation to generation, makes it harder to interrogate those calcified scripts, and prevents actions of compromise, reconciliation, and solidarity between communities that are defined as irreconcilably different from each other. *Kindred*'s attempt to intervene in the US' collective memory is precious precisely because it invites us not only to remember, but also to question what we remember and search for what we have forgotten. No matter which geography we are a product of, we can only free ourselves from the hatred and fears that have been encoded in our minds through distorted historical discourses by accepting that invitation (2019, p. 9).

In short, just as the US needs to recover and recover from the intertwined legacies of genocide, slavery, and heteropatriarchy, Turkey also needs to engage in such acts of recovery in the face of its own legacies of genocide and ongoing mass violence against differently marginalized populations. I hoped that feeling the collective pain of African Americans in *Kindred*, no matter how mediated it is in translation, could cause an affective resonance among Turkey's readers in regard to how they feel about their own Others and encourage them to forge new affective solidarities for justice, both locally and transnationally. I concluded the preface explaining this coalitional potential of translation:

> Readers in Turkey may be mistaken thinking that this American novel with its focus on slavery has no relevance for the realities of their geography. But the story is in fact very close to us, even inside of us. No matter how much cultural, historical, or linguistic difference its details entail, the novel's central concern is also our concern. We do not have to read *Kindred* or look to distant geographies to see the systematic discrimination, oppression, and violence that people who we construct in opposition to ourselves are subjected to just because they are different from "us" or because they refuse to become "us." However, it will be beneficial to read *Kindred* to feel deep inside the injustices, longings, and hurts that the displaced "other" experiences or the resistances that they engage in to survive and live freely.

This brief analysis of *Yakın* suggests that translation can function as a critical mode of cross-border engagement that helps lay the epistemic and affective groundwork for intersectional analyses of oppression and transnational feminist solidarities. Hence, the analysis, by reimagining "justice for all" as an intersectional, transnational, and translational contact zone – or "borderlands" in Gloria Anzaldúa's terms – seeks to motivate and mobilize us to translate the words and works of marginalized truth seekers and weavers, like women of color, more (and across all geographic directions, not just "from the west to the rest") and touch one

another more gently, generously, and responsibly in translation for cross-border solidarity, planetary justice, and polyphonic peace. This is an urgent task because the future of an intersectionally and transnationally just world lies, as Patricia Hill Collins argues, in "stimulating dialogue across the very real limitations of national boundaries, to develop new ways of relating to one another" (2000, p. 232). And that mutual stretching demands translation.

Emek Ergun

Intersectionality and the sociology of religion

Intersectionality is finding its way into new fields of research. While it has traditionally been used in studies of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, it has largely ignored religion. With a few exceptions, intersectionality has been relatively absent in sociological analyses of religion, as well. Here, I would like to explore how intersectionality might influence debates in the sociology of religion and conversely, how the sociology of religion might influence intersectionality. Before I propose suggestions for a closer link between intersectionality and the sociology of religion, I will provide a brief outline of how religion is treated in the work of Patricia Hill Collins. The aim is to highlight different areas where intersectionality and the sociology of religion might beneficially learn from each other.

Collins has not developed a systematic view of religion, but religion appears as a topic in her work. Early on, her approach of viewing domination as a matrix led her to include religion as one form of oppression. In both *Black Feminist Thought* (2009/2000) and *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (2019), Collins talks about religion in general, and discusses Christianity in more detail, especially the Black Christian churches in the U.S. As I will attempt to show, she tends to move between using feminism's binary approach to religion and overcoming this binary.

Feminist theorists, including Collins, are deeply critical of several forms of binaries that are gendered. Nevertheless, feminist theory often operates with dichotomous thinking when discussing religious women. Its binary approach frames religious women as either subordinated or submissive to patriarchy *or* empowered if they subvert the existing tradition and offer resistance. Despite Collins' criticism of binary categorizations, she often relies on feminism's dichotomous approach to religion. She emphases one side of the binary, the oppressive elements in Christian teachings on women. In *Black Feminist Thought* she describes how religion was used to justify slavery and construct homosexuality as deviance. Likewise, she outlines how U.S. Black women often had subordinate roles in Black civil society organizations, including the Black churches, and that these organizations largely ignored Black women's issues (2000/2009, pp. 10, 12, 95, 140, 150). Collins also relies on the other side of the feminist binary by

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focusing on how U.S. Black women changed religion by subverting it. The women used male-run churches to advocate issues that concerned them (2000/2009, p. 9). They questioned the scriptural interpretations preached by male ministers on their "rightful place" and challenged the perception of their role in the Black churches. Thereby, African-American women theologians and feminist thinkers helped to produce changes in church teachings on gender and sexuality (2006, pp. 132, 135).

Religious women have posed a challenge for feminist theory, because there has been an unwillingness to concede agency to religious piety. In Mahmood's (2001, p. 207) study of women in Egyptian Islamic movements, she criticizes feminism's coupling of self-realization to liberal notions of freedom, which sees agency as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination. While the liberal understanding of freedom led American white feminists in the 1970s to call for the dismantling of the nuclear family, Collins and other African-American feminists opposed such a limited view of freedom. For them, freedom implied being able to form families, since the long history of slavery, genocide, and racism had prevented family formation. According to Mahmood, Collins' contribution "expanded the notion of 'self-realization/self-fulfillment' by making considerations of class, race, and ethnicity constitutive of its very definition such that individual autonomy had to be rethought in light of other issues" (2001, p. 208).

Collins' move beyond feminism's limited view of religion appeared early on in her work, in the first edition of *Black Feminist Thought*. She sees the possibility that women's self-realization may take place within religious institutions. She shows that many Black women scholars, writers, and artists worked within the Black churches, and "churches typically formed the core of many Black women's community activities" (2000/2009, p. 65). Furthermore, the churches played a vital part in the civil rights movement; they created buffers against negative stereotyping, constituted important "safe spaces," and were fundamental in developing moral and ethical teachings on social justice. In fact, they became "an arena for Black women's political activism and as well as their consciousness concerning the political" (2006, p. 128). Collins argues that the type of Black feminism that emerged within these churches and other Black civil society organizations expressed a more comprehensive commitment to social justice than what emerged first within western feminism. The focus on social justice also sensitized many African-American women to gender issues, which resulted in a growing feminist consciousness.

Collins shows that the community work and activism of many African-American women were based in the churches. They exerted different types of leadership and promoted the importance of education, sisterhood, self-definitions, self-valuations, and economic self-reliance (1989, pp. 762–763; 2000/2009, pp. 228–229). For Collins, religion has constituted and can still constitute a part in the matrix of domination for U.S. Black women. This does not lead her, however, to propose that the self-realization of African-American women must take place outside religious

institutions. By seeing self-realization in light of class, race, and gender, she sees the Black churches as important institutions that have offered institutional support for the development of Black feminist thought.

So, how might intersectionality influence the sociology of religion? Just as many intersectional theorists have tended to list religion as one of many differences without offering a more profound analysis, there has been a tendency in the sociology of religion to undertheorize the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion. This led Wood (2006) to call for "Breaching Bleaching: Integrating Studies of 'Race' and Ethnicity with the Sociology of Religion." Wood's concern is that when several dominant theories of contemporary religion, such as secularization theory, ignore race and ethnicity, white religion is constructed as the "normal" form of religion and dominant theories become applicable to white religion only.

Furthermore, when race and religion are studied, there is a tendency to focus on single dimensions and not analyze the intersection of race and ethnicity with other dimensions, such as gender, social class, structural, and political developments. Since the 1990s, there has been a growth in sociological studies of religion that include race and ethnicity. For example, studies of post-1965 immigrant religious communities in the U.S. addressed ethnicity, social class, and gender (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2001; Foley and Hoge, 2007), although few discussed race and the various ways in which these communities were affected by racial ideologies and structures. This stands in contrast to studies of Islamophobia and antisemitism, which often relate the construction of and prejudices against Jews and Muslims to racialization processes (see Meer, 2013). There has also been an increase in studies of racial attitudes and practices among white, conservative Protestants and racial diversity in Christian congregations (Emerson and Smith, 2000; see Dougherty *et al.*, 2020). A critique against these studies is that they provide individualistic and religious cultural forms of explanation, and they fail to recognize how religious racial attitudes intersect with racism, structural inequalities, gender, and the growth of the political right in the post-civil rights era.

In other areas, intersectionality has had a profound impact on the sociology religion. As with general sociology, these contributions often concern gender and sexuality. In the 1980s and 1990s, a considerable body of multi-disciplinary literature examined religion, gender, and sexuality. Many studies put women at the center of analysis, and this kind of feminist inquiry implied a reorientation in the sociology of religion, going beyond religious institutions to include religious practices and cultural discourse. Collins' work on intersectionality influenced, for example, Gilkes' work (2001) on the role of U.S. Black women in church and community. By emphasizing the intersection of gender, race, and class, Gilkes highlights the role of women in the Black churches as community workers, church mothers, and political agents. The same approach has been used to study the role of religion among Latina women activists in their work for empowerment and social

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change (Peña, 2003). Collins' work has also inspired studies of race, gender, sexuality, and religion. In a study of how gay men and lesbians challenge Christian rooted notions of homosexual sin, McQueeney criticizes other studies of religion and sexuality for treating "race and gender as secondary," stating that "sexuality is never separate from other systems of domination, such as racism and sexism" (2009, pp. 152–153).

At first, Collins' work had primarily an impact on American sociology. It soon affected sociology globally, especially the study of gender and sexuality. While intersectional analyses have often been absent in studies of European Muslim women, Nyhagen and Halsaa (2016) draw on Collins and other intersectional theorists in their study of lived citizenship among Christian and Muslim women in Spain, Norway, and the United Kingdom. They want to contribute to "the so far limited feminist scholarship on religion and intersectionality" by using "more complex feminist analyses of citizenship based on intersectional approaches to inequality" (2016, pp. 58, 60). Additionally, Page and Yip (2021) apply intersectionality in their edited volume on religion and sexuality that include case studies from across the world. These studies highlight how religion is a complex phenomenon that both can produce inequality and stigmatization and be a resource that challenges other oppressions.

Intersectionality provides an important contribution to the sociology of religion in its focus on multiple and complex intersections of various dimensions. While there is a tendency in current research to either focus on religion and race, or religion, gender and sexuality, intersectionality might benefit the sociology of religion by giving attention to the various ways in which religion is linked to a wider set of dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, politics, and nation, and the ways in which these dimensions intersect.

This brings us to the question of how the sociology of religion might influence intersectionality. First of all, the sociology of religion might contribute to taking religion more seriously, or as Gilkes argues, "religion needs to be placed in the foreground of questions" because "in any society characterized by the durable inequality of race, religion matters" (Gilkes, 2010, p. 418). The sociology of religion also has a lot to offer in understanding the complexities of religion. While the dominant discourse in feminist research and intersectionality presents a relatively monolithic and binary understanding of religion, Collins criticizes the binary view of reason and faith towards the end of *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (2019a, p. 283). For her, their assumed oppositional difference is a hindrance for exploring how they are related, and this binary aligns with other binaries that create constraints for Black women's knowledge, which intersectionality challenges.

Furthermore, the sociology of religion can provide a wider understanding of religion. When intersectional analyses focus on religion as oppression/subversion, there is a tendency to emphasize religious doctrines and ideologies. In

Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory, Collins goes further and discusses how faith-based ethics provides "meaning to everyday life … explanations for phenomena that are seemingly beyond human comprehension … meaning of life, birth, death, human suffering, evil, and beauty" (2019, p. 282). Faith-based ethics are often "collective and communal" and may provide the basis for political work. Collins does not present a one-sided positive view of faith-based ethics but argues that their consequences depend on how they are interpreted and practiced. While some religious communities legitimate and reproduce social inequality, others struggle with ideas of social hierarchies, try to see how they affect their own practices and change them.

Nevertheless, sociological studies of religion show that religion is a far more complex phenomenon than doctrines, ideologies, and ethics. Current sociology of religion includes studies of everyday and lived religion, religion and the body, rituals, material religion, the blurred boundaries between religion and nonreligion, and religious complexity of different and inconsistent religious developments, just to mention a few. Although Collins describes relatively broad aspects of religion in her work, she does not analyze them systematically: religious practices, activism, care work, spirituality, symbolism, language, poetry, music, organizations, leadership, and the link between religious and political consciousness. There is a need to include these dimensions of religion in intersectional analyses.

The argument here is that a closer link between intersectionality and the sociology of religion has a lot to offer to both. The sociology of religion provides a broader and more complex view of religion that can help move the understanding beyond the simplistic binary assumptions of religion. Intersectionality can also be broadened to studies of an array of topics that are relevant for the sociology of religion, such as nation states and its religion policies, electoral politics and political behavior, nationalist and right-wing ideologies, and public discourses on religion. Intersectionality can also be useful in studies of media coverage and images of religious majorities and minorities, religion and education, religion and public institutions, inclusion, exclusion, privilege, and disadvantage in majority and minority religions, as well as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Inger Furseth

Intersectional interpretations of violence in the realm of politics

Scholarly and practical interpretations of violence in the realm of politics have offered centuries' worth of robust debate over what the true relationship between the two is, or should be. One prominent argument is that violence is a tool that enables politics: bargains and compromises are facilitated by the possibility of paying the costs of physical injury, damage, distress, and/or death. A common alternative perspective is that violence instead indicates a failure of politics, where

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in the former's presence paramount distributional concerns are superseded by a need to respond to the destruction that it yields. However, violence does not just reveal or assist politics: it *is* politics. Episodic threats and uses of physical force, when applied in social settings and with social intentions, reflect and operationalize clear attempts at the accumulation, distribution, use, and management of authority, autonomy, and agentic self-actualization. It is another matter altogether whether the process itself is revolutionary or status-quo affirming.

In this contribution, I aim to further develop two arguments that Collins briefly introduced while theorizing violence as a "saturated site of intersecting power relations" (Collins, 2019a,b, p. 238). First, I explore the possibility that episodes of violence represent points at which the confluences of systems of oppression are not only particularly *visible* but also particularly *vulnerable* to dismantling. Second, in dialog with the common conceptualization of violence as a social problem, I probe the possibilities of violence as a solution to the social problem of dominance itself. The embodied experience of collective violence as both a tool of and a response to domination ought to be at the forefront of any analysis of political order and change. An intersectional framework to understanding violence not only supports such an approach but also may in fact require it.

The intersectionality framework allows for a more complete accounting of the mechanisms through which violence organizes inter- and intra-systemic power relations by centering its fundamental relationality. While subject and object experiences of violence alike describe the imperialist impulse that elevates domination as a political ideal, the scalability of violence illuminates this as much at the person level as in higher-order aggregations, like war among states or rebellion within them. Even one of the largest-scale structural representatives of the political status quo, the Weberian state – the government of which is expected hold a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within its borders and with respect to its population – is simply one composite representation of the innumerate power relationships within and across human communities. The state serves also as a logic and a technology of violence that increasingly derives power from individuals' willingness and abilities to distance themselves (physically and psychically) from the harms that they commit against others.

Notwithstanding its focus on systems rather than merely acts of oppression, the lens of intersectionality can greatly help us resist the pull toward abstracting away agents' responsibility for violence when parsing its structural implications. For instance, consider Collins's claim that political domination "seems hegemonic...when violence becomes naturalized and normalized to the point where it becomes invisible" (p. 239). Acknowledging violence as a saturated site of intersecting power relations allows us to push forward into a recognition that, at the point of hegemonic consolidation, status-quo domination may not be truly achieved unless all of its implications – the employment of violence included – enjoy legitimacy only in the image of the other. This logic seems succinctly summarized

in Charles Tilly's oft-cited aphorism, "War made the state and the state made war" (1975, p. 42), as in it, violence and its perpetrators construct themselves in each's image, along with the normative and institutional logics that sustain them. Returning to Collins' claim, I submit that the invisibility of violence that she describes as a mark of a maturing domination complex only becomes so precisely because its agents have assumed a normalizing anonymity that masks their individual responsibility while eliding it to the system's persistence. This is convenient, because in the power-saturated site of violence, only those who are visible can be assigned responsibility for it, because only they can be held to practical account for the empirical implications of their behavioral choices. However, when we can identify the system configurations that support domination *and also* their individual arbiters, we chip away at the hegemony of hierarchy as an orienting norm and move toward self-determination as a fully formed politics of collective control instead.

At the person level, it is critical to acknowledge individual-level decision making in the production of violence because it is as much kinesthetic as it is kinetic. For stewards of status-quo politics and their challengers, the observable act of violence is just one of many possible penultimate steps in an iterated process of political expression that involves the very human conditions of both experience (i.e., being and doing) and cognition (i.e., knowing). For example, when an object is launched in the midst of a riotous crowd, we are able to observe in that moment a crude operationalization of not only deliberations over whether arming has become feasible – let alone necessary – to someone, but also the discriminating moments by which that object is perceptually and actually purposed as a weapon. This moment of energy release constitutes a penultimate step because, again, the value of violence resides in its inter-subjectivity: For what meaning does violence have apart from the experiences that construct and communicate its "display" (Fujii, 2017)? Once the physical act is complete, can the tool or the perpetrator be neutralized, or will it always retain the threatening patina of having once been fashioned as a weapon by the hands and minds of someone in particular? This may well be less the "co-formation" that Collins argues "is far easier to imagine intellectually than…to 'find' in the social world using standard tools of social science research" (p. 241) and more a selection process moving at an indeterminate pace, and in which individuals act on violence as a choice in dialog with social institutions that are indemnified by patterns of privilege, which themselves reflect the interpersonal negotiation of attempts at establishing dominance. (Ethnography and immersive methods that prioritize indigenous knowledges seem to be the social science tools best suited to for observing and analyzing such a process.) Each of these deeply political moments is directly informed by the stratified experiences of legitimacy, visibility, and protection that every individual lives.

From Machiavelli onward, there is a long and broad history of political thought that rightfully identifies violence as a tool commonly available to the structurally –

and culturally – privileged for bolstering their own political dominance (even if this is not the specific language that those theorists would have used). However, episodes of violence – by status-quo representatives and challengers alike – may also indicate points of weakness in the complex systems that maintain multiplex oppression, not just points of strength. Consider, for example, the violent clashes during the 2012 Jo'Burg Pride Parade in Johannesburg, South Africa: after Black lesbian and feminist activists from the 1 in 9 Campaign disrupted the parade with a die-in and a call to observe a minute of silence to acknowledge members of the South African queer community who had been raped, killed, or otherwise victimized with physical violence, many White attendees were seen to have shoved, stepped on, and verbally assaulted group members during and after the insurgent activists' dramatization of the physical inertia of (Black) death. The episode clearly highlighted the availability of violence as a means for reinforcing the intersections among race-, gender-, and class-based domination in the local LGBTQIA* community. However, it also shone a light on the fragility of those relationships: at the core of the violence was a recognition that the presumed powerless had been audacious enough to organize and deploy the strength of the powerful – not just to try but to *believe* that one can coerce and compel changes to the political status quo – against the latter's domination.

Intersectionality's embrace of relationality can also help to parse the potential of violence as a means of resistance. The idea that the use of violence may be a beneficial and ethically justified method for challenging multiplex oppression is certainly not new (Fashina, 1989, p. 191; Coates 2015). However, the explicit lens of intersectionality further clarifies the ways in which moralizing about the value of violence as a political act, without acknowledging the causal and justificatory power of the interlocking power relations that shape it, is an attempt to invalidate the simultaneous vulnerability and agency of the multiply oppressed. It continues to strike me that this is the context in which many scholars and activists who are ourselves living the intersections of multiple oppressions come to debate the relative values of violent and nonviolent resistance as behavioral alternatives or political ideals. Over the decision to even discuss violence as an affirmation, this context also yields a nakedness that reveals our discourses as saturated sites of intersecting power relations themselves.

The danger of violence for those attempting politics under the influence of multiple systems of domination appears to be more so in being political – making and responding to claims that are of consequence to autonomy and self-determination – than in the actual practice of the violent act. Consider discussions of women's participation in collective armed struggle: narratives that simplify and reduce their choices to either emotional outburst, blind allegiance to a romantic partner, or a uniquely savage personal disposition belie the anxiety that often accompanies recognitions of a disenfranchised individual's willingness to make the political calculation to speak the language of the oppressor back to him (Bond

et al., 2019). The case of the *Ketiba Banat* (Girls' Cadre) of the 1980s-era Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) provides a powerful example of how even as the agency of women's participation in armed conflict has been used to validate the enterprise externally, the interlocking of womanhood with ethnicity and class still can be used to exploit women's vulnerabilities at the same time. While the group's leader John Garang developed the unit to facilitate women's visibility in the broader revolutionary struggle, it functionally served as an "incubator for creation of a new female elite," channeling different privileges (e.g., marriages with elite SPLA men) and protections (e.g., access to the post-conflict spoils of neo-patrimony) for its members than other militarily trained women enjoyed (Pinaud, 2015, abstract). Nonetheless, the "new" elite class of women also came to reflect pre-existing social divisions among the predominantly Dinka recruits: girls drawn from the more privileged communities in the country often fought in fewer military engagements and did less of the domestic labor in SPLA camp areas (Pinaud, 2013). In discussing the general influence of ambient violence on why women kill, Asale Angel-Ajani and Nimmi Gowrinathan (2020) write "There is no vital distinction between the violence that shapes the lives of women engaged in armed struggle and the violence faced by women who live under the tyranny of threat and abuse … To forge connections between women who resist violence by turning to violence is not a fetishization of the act. It's a reclamation of will."

Among countless others, these examples of intersectionality as both a lived experience and a political analysis do support the possibility – as I have argued – that episodes of violence represent points of vulnerable fragility in multiplex systems of oppression, thus, exposing the possibilities of violence as a solution to the social problem of dominance itself. Collins's treatment of the topic provides fertile soil for further developing the long-standing question of how necessary, beneficial, or inevitable the embodied experience of collective violence may be to the establishment of a truly emancipatory political order.

Kanisha D. Bond

The power of metaphorical intersectional thought[1]

In this text, I propose to explore the power of metaphorical intersectional thought, based on a reflection inspired by the latest book written by Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (2019). First, I study the potential of intersectional thought through metaphor, as a tool for social agents to perform a beneficial, therapeutical form of self-socio-analysis and build literacy regarding their own complex social position in the world. This exercise in self-socio-analysis is important in order to demonstrate how individuals could learn to read the social context in which they live and make decisions based on their understanding of the "matrix of domination … that emerges from the multiple systems of oppression

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which frame everyones's lives" (1990, p. 229). Second, this text examines the capacity of intersectional thought through metaphor to help design public policies that put at their heart social justice and the sustainability of Good Living (*Buen Vivir, Sumak Kawsay*). My aim is to offer new tools so that individuals are able to understand the social position they occupy in the "domains of power," and how policies whose objective is social justice can be formulated, following in the footsteps of the intellectual and activist Patricia Hill Collins. In her latest work, she reviews the possibilities for achieving such objectives from an intersectional perspective and invites us to think intersectionally, deploying the concept as a heuristics, metaphor, and paradigm.

As a heuristic oriented to the solution of social problems, for example, social loneliness, intersectionality reveals that subjects experience it in a variety of ways and in relation to the social, institutional, and economic structures. As a paradigm, there are six central ideas of intersectionality – relationality, power, social inequity, contextualism, complexity, and social justice (Collins and Bilge, 2016) – all of which contribute to a complex way of seeing the world. Intersectionality as a metaphor – the aspect to which this text is dedicated – can be seen as a way of seeing the world and its interlocking structures or as a daily *praxis*. I suggest that considering intersectionality through metaphor offers important explanatory images. As Collins explains, the reflective work of several authors provide us with inspiration when it comes to the use of metaphor: Kimberlé Crenshaw's "intersection," Gloria Anzaldúa's "borderlands," "live jazz," the "spider web," or Collins' idea of the "matrix of domination." To this list, I would like to add – and take as starting point for my reflection – the metaphor recently proposed by two Spanish feminist social scientists: "marked bodies" (López and Platero, 2019). I believe their metaphor facilitates the understanding of social facts in an intersectional manner, including the objectivized and embodied form of social structures.

In the first part of this contribution, I will focus, in an autoethnographic mode, on mental health, which is, in itself, an outsider's or a taboo space. This is meant to exemplify the form of therapeutical form of self-socio-analysis I introduced above. I write these pages at a moment of losing my way and I seek, through them, to better understand what is happening to me; all of this, too, with the hope of offering light to other people who find themselves in similar situations, and to offer analytical tools to those in charge of designing public policies in a participatory way, as Collins' suggest (2017), whether in the sphere of mental health, or any other field. I will explore the metaphor of the "marked body" to describe the experience of vulnerable and finite bodies, crossed by different structures of oppression. This metaphor connects with Collins' intersectional perspective for it can access the objectified and institutionalized matrix of domination in the structural, institutional, cultural, and individual domains of power.

Depression, chronic stress, burnout, obsessive-compulsive, anankastic personality – all these are labels which, for the last two months, have sprung up in my medical file, obstructing my relationships, my understanding of my position in the world, my writing, and my life. During this period, I have passed through the consulting rooms of different medical specialists. Each one of them has given a diagnosis of the situation in which I find myself, and in each a pattern repeats itself, namely the use of one metaphor or another as an explanation: "you are a burnt-out athlete," "you have broken yourself," "you have kidnapped yourself," "you have come out of your body and left yourself empty." The "burnout," the "self-breaking," and the "kidnapping" leave me little chance of resisting the pain and making myself whole again. With these metaphors come the medical protocols that put me in a position of vulnerability that I integrate, gradually, into my gestures when I walk, fearfully and gingerly. The more vulnerable they say I am, the more vulnerable I become. Furthermore, labels overlap and contradict themselves. I do not know which one to use as a support. I feel a vulnerability in which I can hardly express myself. I cannot find a metaphor through which I recognize my limits and the impossibility of individualist self-sufficiency. This vulnerability stops up my words, I can hardly speak and when I manage to do so, I do it through metaphors. The doctors use them, I use them, the people closest to me read me with the help of metaphors.

However, in their *praxis* of metaphors, the medical doctors speak of "scorched earth" and consider solutions to general and universal problems: "after a mental breakdown, take care of yourself, rest and be patient." Yet how do you do that if you do not know how? "Read interior design magazines and watch television." I do not even have a television.

Dejected and sad, I come away from my doctor's appointments with my bunch of metaphors, supposedly designed to explain this general apathy that accompanies me. I look around the waiting room and see faces similar to my own: white women and men, with enough economic capital to access the care of a specialist doctor who dispatches patients while others wait in rooms that have the odor of expensive air freshener. No sweat, no noise, everything is neutralized. I wonder whether these metaphors of scorched earth and pills are the same they use with these apathetic faces, or whether they assume that these "mental breakdowns" are intersected by gender, race, social class, bodily functionality, and other series of structures that should oblige them to reconsider those metaphors and those pills, and to particularize them. That is to say that a crisis of exhaustion does not mean the same, or have the same signifiers, in a black woman with functional diversity without medical assistance, as in a 34-year-old woman who works in the public sector and has private medical insurance. I know my doctors are not academics who specialize in intersectionality, but I think it would be useful for them to reconsider metaphors to adjust the readings of their patients' discomfort.

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Each one of these metaphors connects me to the latest book by Patricia Hill Collins, in which she presents the possibilities of working on intersectionality as a critical social theory. The author talks about the power of metaphors to integrate an intersectional perspective when explaining social phenomena. She mentions different images on which I project that complexity and consider places of resistance based on which public action can be taken. Anzaldúa's metaphor of the "bridge" mentioned by Collins evokes connection and not just rupture. The traffic-alluding "intersection" by Crenshaw brings to mind a complex place wherein one must to act. The "matrix of domination" proposed by Collins insinuates the existence of symbolic violence at the crossroads of structures of oppression. When I manage to overcome fear and get out of the house to talk to my feminist friends using the psychiatrists' words, they say that "mental breakdown" and "athlete's burnout" are images that are too abysmal to allow progress. What is more, they remind me that these metaphors dismiss problems of a social, economic, and cultural order. So they ask me whether these metaphors help me capture the complexity of the situation I am experiencing. I say no. And soon another series of images is triggered in order to explain the state of my being: a piece of chewing gum that has been stretched too far, a mass of clay that needs to be remodeled, the beam of a building that has been damaged by hidden structural faults. These are all ideas that put the emphasis on a state in which regeneration is an exercise that is less radical than that implied by breakage, as Collins proposes herself. I feel there is hope. I tell myself: "it is time to give shape from within yourself, to do it in a way that reflects on the position you hold in the world today and on the one you want to hold from now on, in order to channel your energy towards social justice goals." As if part of a shoal, I feel accompanied and I understand better what is happening to me, although the pain persists.

Moving on to the second objective of this contribution, when I was reading Patricia Hill Collins' latest book, I was also studying *Cuerpos marcados* ("Marked Bodies") by Silvia López and R. Lucas Platero. In it, they propose the metaphor of a marked body as a starting point for designing public policies. My understanding of these authors' proposal is that bodies are the means we have to relate to the environment. The body is a source of expression that speaks intersectionally with each gesture. Its internal and external forms, colors, scents, and pains are social marks that offer, to those who inhabit that mass, one position or another in the social world.

Therefore, the interest of this metaphor is that it refers to objectivized and embodied marks of structures and social institutions based on the experiences of the living body. Family, school, and the media, among others, are visible social institutions that channel an embodied norm reflected in social *habitus,* whose matrix of domination varies according to context and domains of power. Taking the example of the family, it is possible to say that being the "owner" of a white heteronormative family of upper social class is a source of symbolic capital in most

societies within the capitalist Global North. The heteronorm, gender, social class, and race mark the body, reify a specific idea of marriage and family in which lesbian, gay and trans* people, single mothers, and fat, older, black women do not enter. Formally, these outsiders are reminded that they are not in a position of privilege on each administrative form they have to fill in to register the birth or adoption of a child, a form that requests, in hegemonic language: "mother's name," "father's name," and "permanent place of residence." What is more, white, heteronormal, middle-, and upper-class families appear in the adverts and stories told at school, inoculating values, attitudinal norms, and wishes that become, in words of Bourdieu, *doxa* (desires based on beliefs that we do not even consider to be beliefs due to the high degree to which they are naturalized). The body marked by the heteronorm of class, gender, and race is learnt in institutions and is incorporated into attitudes, gestures, and tastes in the way reflected by the artist Catherine Opie in *Cutting* (1993).

So, both books (Collins, 2019a, b; López and Platero, 2019) led me first of all to think about their value for beginning therapeutical processes of self-socio-analysis – that is, to begin to understand my social position via a kind of individual self-analysis that could be undertaken by non-academic social agents – at times when one cannot see the light and one is "mentally broken," whatever that breakage might be. Second, these works made me think, about the value of metaphors for creating, in a participatory and intersectional way, public policies whose goal is social justice and the sustainability of life. If, generally, in political science, we explain the setting up of public policies by means of strategic plans with goals to be achieved in four or five years, why not also use intersectional metaphors to explain that these policies are experienced differently, depending on the position held by the subject?

The intersectional metaphor of the marked body can be useful in the academic practice of the participatory and intersectional public policies also advocated by Patricia Hill Collins (2017). It could be interesting, in terms of mental health, to design public policies participatively, by means of metaphors that inform people's experiences and, in this way, see who has a life of suffering and who is living well. Thus, considering the creation of a community mental health plan, the technical agent responsible for participation could use the "marked body" metaphor as tool of participatory and deliberative processes, that is, as a method to guide participatory action and research processes. This could facilitate an understanding of the complexity involved for anyone suffering a psychiatric problem and the mapping of how mental illness is an axis with an embodied dimension (which can be expressed through gestures linked to the stigma of madness, such as tics), and an objectivized dimension (which is expressed in labels, medical diagnoses or the marks of suicide attempts). In conjunction with other axes such as race, social class, age, and cultural capital, illness marks a body and subsumes it to the category of "depressed," "schizophrenic," etc. Such processes would enable us to see different

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depressions, not only the generic type projected by the medical staff involved, but differentiated according to the social structures objectivized and embodied in each context.

In this regard, metaphorical thought, in academic experimental contexts, could facilitate the reading of complexity in two senses. First, talking about a "marked body" makes it possible to identify the external and visible marks of the body, those characterizing appearance and triggering processes of "external exclusion," that is, the physical expulsion of a subject from the process of creating public policies. Second, this metaphor facilitates the understanding of embodied oppression, invisible to the eyes, which facilitates "internal exclusion" (Young, 2000): even though subjects are present, they know that what they say will automatically be excluded, whether for not knowing the linguistic code or the right way to dress or, more broadly, for not having practiced the bodily gestures required by the normative context.

The potential of the "marked body" metaphor to project and assess public policies that put the sustainability of life and social justice at their heart makes it possible, for example, to read, to give another example, the psychiatric effects of fatphobia by means of a marked, black, fat, lesbian, French body. Recently, fatphobia was used by Daria Marx and Eva Pérez-Bello (2018) to explain how functional diversity, gender, age, social class, and race intersect in bodies that are seen as obese and do not enter, quite literally, into the instruments needed for public policies to be carried out. So, via the metaphor of "marked body," in this case, fat, black and belonging to a woman, it is possible to think about a collective viewpoint on mental health that can serve to assess public health policies, using participatory tools (participatory workshops, planning cells, meetings about future scenarios, etc.) rooted in the multiple experiences of day-to-day discriminations.

In this regard, the goal would be to think about how the practitioners of participatory and deliberative democracy who are going to design public policies could make use of the intersectional metaphor of the "marked body" in order to make it clear that the social agents at whom these policies are directed are affected by different matrices of domination in an embodied and objectivized way.

In terms of using metaphorical thought in order to decipher oneself and also to be able to transcend, collaboratively, these readings about oneself, metaphors that contain an idea of intersectionality may have a therapeutical use, oriented towards a life that is worth living, crucial in moments of personal crisis, when there is a need for self-literacy, whether as part of a participatory policy or as a process of self-care. In this regard, metaphors may come mediated by an external expert agent in intersectionality from the community or may arise from the individual's own creativity.

In the specific case, I discussed in the first part of this text, changing the diagnosis from "mental breakdown" to one of the body "marked" by a matrix of domination (that involves the effect of neoliberal forms of accumulation of all

kinds of capital, a socialized gender in a Christian culture of self-sacrifice, a social class, a race, an age, and a particular sexuality), invites us to think of the key aspects that should inform policies oriented towards social justice. The first idea is the impossibility of self-sufficiency and the inexistence of "independent individuality" (Hernando, 2012, p. 103), i.e., the assumption that everyone should look after themselves and escape from the state's marking processes. The second is the importance of inter-eco-dependence. All the metaphors considered by the medical structures gave a picture of me as an athlete who ran alone and burned out. The metaphor of the body "marked" by a complex matrix of domination, let us me see the constructed nature of that matrix and the naturalization process carried out by myself. Third, the "marked body" arises from a dough, one that is specific but also heterogeneous and elastic that one relies on permanently and without which one cannot carry out one's actions: recognizing the body as marked does not mean we must reconcile ourselves with to the fact of a paralyzing vulnerability. On the contrary, this vulnerability is a resistant one that can act as a lever to perform a critical *praxis*, which is, by definition, relational and contextualist, and which includes the idea of social justice and the search for the sustainability of a good living.

Jone Martínez-Palacios

Reflections

Intersectionality is a narrative of our times that was made possible by the loosening of political and intellectual borders of all sorts. Each author engages *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* through a different set of concerns and questions, thereby bringing a distinctive angle of vision to their reading of this book. Yet the significance of these contributions goes beyond their substance. *IACST* prescribes a different kind of reading that rejects the assumption that readers extract meaning from the text through prescribed reading conventions. Instead, *IACST* proposes a dialogical reading where the connection between the text and the reader is crucial. What we bring to these contributions in terms of what questions are meritorious, what counts as evidence, what constitute appropriate methodologies, and the ways in which these contributions speak to us is crucial to interpretation.

Elaini Cristina Gonzaga da Silva analyzes the genealogy of intersectionality, grounding her analysis in a close reading of my publications as evidence for the changing meaning and use of the term. She begins her analysis, not in the decontextualized space of abstraction, but rather in a specific context. By invoking how it feels to do social theory from the Global South during a global pandemic, her work reminds me of the uncertainties and challenges of doing intersectional work outside the protections of privilege. I read her detailed analysis of the travels of intersectionality within my own work as a metaphor for the struggles over the

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meaning of intersectionality and its trajectory as a field of study. Time figures prominently in her contribution, yet the significance of time for constructing knowledge as a process is often bracketed out of mainstream theory. Her narrative begins in a particular time and place, namely, COVID-19 in Brazil, which laid bare the correlation between social inequality and death. She traces my work across time and space, provoking my memories of how I wrote differently about intersectionality in order to reach different audiences. Doing so meant that I translated its ideas for different interpretive communities and learned much from those dialogs. I was especially intrigued by how the simultaneous release in Brazil of the Portuguese translation of *Black Feminist Thought* and *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* provided a distinctive reading experience. Although I wrote these two books in different times and places, their temporal conflation in Brazil, coupled with their release in two different languages highlighted the complexities of critical theorizing that is committed to dialogical engagement.

Emek Ergun's analysis of the importance of translation for dialogical engagement sharpens intersectionality's methodological edge. Ergun's expertise in the field of translation studies, her social location within gender and feminist studies, and her experiential knowledge of Turkey uniquely position her to identify the need to deepen intersectionality's transnational footprint and to recommend translation as one important tool in doing so. Ergun not only diagnoses the problem of the US-centric trajectory of intersectionality, but she also proscribes the intellectual action strategy of translation as essential to transnational engagement. It is fitting that she chooses Octavia Butler's *Kindred* as a family story that is both personal and profoundly American to ask, what happens when this story is translated? By focusing on what happens within the space of dialog, Ergun identifies one core methodological challenge facing intersectionality as it moves toward being a critical social theory. Dialogical engagement is impossible without translation, and the act of translation occurs across differences of power. Significantly, by situating the theme of translation within the need for intersectionality to expand the universe of dialogs within a transnational context, Ergun provides compelling reasons why it is important to do so.

Inger Furseth's chapter also engages intersectional border spaces that require skills of translation, namely, cultivating dialogical engagement between intersectionality and fields of inquiry that lie outside its borders. Intersectionality is currently in conversation with multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. But where are the missing dialogs with fields that also speak to intersectionality's questions and concerns? In *IACST's* closing chapter, I ask, is it possible to have intersectionality without social justice? This question challenges the taken-for-granted assumption within intersectionality that social justice is inherently a part of its discourse and that therefore, the ethical dimensions of intersectionality need not be examined. Furseth extends this question to explore the border space between intersectionality and the sociology of religion for a possible route to examine how

ethics might inform intersectionality's development as a critical social theory. Furseth contributes to this debate by laying the foundation for dialogical engagements between the sociology of religion and the call for ethical self-reflection within intersectionality. In doing so, she invites us to confront the contentious politics of how intersectionality participates in broader debates about politics and religion.

Kanisha D. Bond's analysis of violence demonstrates that there is much at stake in rethinking the construct of violence as intersectionality deepens its critical theorizing about power relations. Bond's succinct summary of the relationship between violence and politics brings important insights from political science to bear on intersectionality's guiding premise that intersecting systems of power are interdependent and that they mutually construct one another. In *IACST*, I emphasize violence as a tool of domination, positing that violence constitutes a dense transfer point among systems of power that potentially highlight the intersectional nature of power itself. Because violence has long been a catalyst for political activism among Black, Indigenous, women, Latinx, LGBTQ and similarly subordinated groups, analyzing and responding to violence have been the subject of considerable critical inquiry and praxis. Yet my analysis does not consider the ways in which subordinated groups may also develop mechanisms of violence to counter political domination. Nonviolence is but one political strategy for resisting the violence of intersecting power relations. Bond suggests that the visibility of violence not only creates possibilities for political domination but also for political resistance. Notably, conceptualizing violence as inherently intersectional facilitates theorizing political resistance to violence through an intersectional lens.

Jone Martínez-Palacios provides a provocative use of intersectionality's possibilities, offering an honest, embodied analysis of what it means to do intellectual and political work in the challenging space of intersectional inquiry and praxis. Using intersectionality as a metaphor, she positions two ostensibly separate ways of knowing in close proximity, the subjective world of individual experience that organizes everyday life, and the objective world of social structure that operates under rules that lie outside human agency. Martínez-Palacios presents an autoethnographic analysis of her emotional, intellectual, and political struggles to make sense of her own well-being during a global public health crisis (her contribution was completed early on in the 2020 pandemic). But she also offers a window into the value of metaphors for creating public policies whose goal is social justice and the sustainability of life. Juxtaposing the artificial distance between subjective and objective ways of knowing creates space for new insights, questions, and possibilities that are signature features of intersectional analysis. For example, Martínez-Palacios brings the emotional labor that accompanies much intersectional work into the center of her contribution, sharing with readers the emotional costs of caring about social justice, and the sustainability of life. Usually this emotional labor is hidden within theoretical analysis yet here Martínez-

Palacios offers a holistic view of intersectional theorizing, one that incorporates the personal, the political, and the intellectual as a pathway to building more robust political communities.

The scope and breadth of these contributions in this Critical Exchange remind me how much is at stake in getting intersectionality's journey toward becoming a critical social theory right. As an ever-growing, shape-shifting intellectual project that moves in tandem with decoloniality, intersectionality offers a conceptual *lingua franca* for people to engage one another about shared concerns regarding emancipation and equality. Significantly, intersectionality is also a language of discovery, whose commitment to dialogical engagement provides an alternative to a knowledge regime that upholds colonial conquest and neoliberal commodification. Eschewing narrow pathways into social theory that invite historically subordinated people into seemingly finished Western disciplines, intersectionality has been participatory and democratic since its inception. Making intersectionality less so, all in the name of prematurely elevating its status as a social theory, undermines its critical potential. This symposium provides a glimpse of the possibilities as well as the work that remains to be done. Intersectionality is a discourse of social change, of hope and, as these authors remind us, of possibility.

Patricia Hill Collins

Note

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