

# PUTTING THE POWER BACK INTO INTERSECTIONALITY

Moving beyond identity, Mapping  
Interlocking Powers



Intersectionality in Domestic Violence  
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Dr. Nilmini Fernando  
WIRE Women's Information Victoria

# PROBLEMATICS IN PRACTICE

**Different levels of understandings across different interpretive communities**

**No models of how to apply it or “do it”**

**Confusing and overwhelming to attend to everything all at once**

**Not attentive to power relations that force/shape or disempower the bodies labelled with those identities**

**Few places to learn from the theoretical source: black, Indigenous, postcolonial feminisms of colour**

# “ADDITIVE IDENTITY” CATEGORY MODEL DOMINATES

These identities have been imagined and represented as fixed axes of discreet differences



## **This method**

- 1. Re-inscribes marginalized bodies with differences (from white cis het norms) deficit**
- 2. Not attentive to power relations that force/shape or disempower the bodies labelled with those identities**
- 3. Does not unsettle the power structures that produce and maintain these differences**

Equivalence of all categories of differences

Race as a category is masked under “culture” or “ethnicity”

Anti-capitalist and class power critiques left out

Critiques of State power/violence/force left out

Conflated with ‘diversity’



(Kimberley Crenshaw 2015)

Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power.

It is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects.

It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there.



**Nationwide 14 FVPLSs  
work with Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander victim/  
survivors of family violence**

‘Today, nearly three decades after I first put a name to the concept, the term seems to be everywhere.

But if women and girls of color continue to be left in the shadows, something vital to the understanding of intersectionality has been lost’.

Crenshaw 2019



‘...this way of looking at and living in the world constitutes a new area of inquiry that is still in its infancy’

## CRITICAL INQUIRY/ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL PRAXIS

Gender, race, class, ethnicity, nation, sexuality, ability, and age are not just categories designed to make intersectionality more user-friendly for academic research.

Intersectional Praxis is grounded in the knowledge traditions of those who resist the oppressions and social injustices of those process

## INTERSECTIONALITY & DIVERSITY

When intersectionality becomes a 'happy point', the feminist color of critique is obscured. All differences matter under this view.



Sara Ahmed 2012



@TitoTitoq85

"Welcome to our panel about diversity and inclusion"



2:03 PM · 26/04/2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

HOW CAN WE PUT  
INTERSECTIONALITY  
TO BETTER USE?

- Contextualize practice in settler colonial context
- Understand how identity and power are fluid and relational
- Identify and map interlocking powers to strategize how to dismantle them
- To better recognize and build agency for us as workers and for those we serve



**Prof. Aileen Moreton-Robinson**

White women are not represented to themselves as being white: instead they position themselves as variously classed, sexualized, aged and abled.

Talkin' Up 2000

## EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE

Epistemic violence is enabled by the power of patriarchal knowledge and its ability to be the definitive measure of what it means to be human, what does and what does not constitute knowledge and who can and cannot be a knower.

Whitening Race 2011



Not all positioned perspectives are equally ... valued, equally heard, or equally included.

Some positions have been oppressed, distorted, ignored, silenced, destroyed, appropriated, commodified, and *marginalized-and all of this, not accidentally.*

Conversely, the law simultaneously and systematically privileges subjects who are white

COLONIAL POWER  
IS HELD THROUGH  
FORCE, NOT BY  
LAW

Prof. Irene Watson



## MATRIX OF DOMINATION

The matrix of domination is “the overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained.



Patricia Hill Collins ( 2000, 228-9).

### INTERLOCKING POWERS    MACRO –LEVEL

Mutually constitutive macro-level connections linking systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender:

### INTERSECTIONALITY : MICRO –LEVEL

Social locations that individual and groups occupy within interlocking structures of oppression

DISCIPLINARY/CULTURAL  
POWER- EMERGES AS A KEY  
SITE  
WHERE WE “HARM AS WE  
HELP”

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**STRUCTURAL POWER:** In Australia rooted in white Western settler colonial structures

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**Organised and managed** through bureaucratic organisations, policies and protocols that dictate access and eligibility (e.g. Centrelink, schools, Legal Aid, Child Protection)

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**DISCIPLINARY** : Ideas, discourse, research, representations, practices make and re-make difference and hierarchies

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**CULTURAL** dominant white Western cultural norms, gender norms, values, beliefs and ideologies that make oppressions seem legitimate.

VIOLENCE -AS  
SATURATED SITES OF  
INTERSECTIONAL  
POWER RELATIONS

Collins 2019

Violence is the conceptual glue that joins multiple systems of power (Collins 1998)

Colonialism, imperialism, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, nationalism and racism and similar systems of power all rely on violence to sustain domination.

The forms that violence takes varies tremendously

Settler colonization is structure rather than an event

Patrick Wolfe, 1999,

PUTTING  
INTERSECTIONALITY  
TO WORK...

- Rethink understandings of "identity" as social locations
- Deconstruct how power operates through processes of identification
- Power as mutually constructive relations of force
- Name the oppressions as processes: sexism, racism, capitalism as structures, not identities
- Understand how power operates in contemporary white capitalist settler colony
- Gender/race literacy: How we read bodies in spaces, and situations of inclusion/exclusion, access to rights/services
- Decolonial tool- useful to de-center and unsettle whiteness in Australia

KEY QUESTIONS TO  
ASK

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Which bodies are we talking about? (not identities)

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Where are they located?

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What work are they doing? (physical labor, nursing homes, cultural labor)

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What powers are preventing their mobility from that location?  
Progressing?

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Accessing resources? Rights?

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What to do about it? How to recognize it?

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Why can my relationships look like? Relational (interpersonal and contextual) rather than transactional connections with people?

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What are my hopes for intersectionality? Anti-Racism ?

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What do I want it to do? What can it do that we have already not doing?

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