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This essay critically reflects on the following statement by Thomas *et al.*: ‘Intersectionality as a concept was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to disrupt the ideologies of how inequalities manifest as distinct silos of individuals by gender or by race rather than considering how different inequalities intersect, compound, and are mutually constitutive rather than mutually exclusive.’ (Crenshaw, 1989, in Thomas *et al.*, 2021). Beyond race and gender, additional markers of inequality and their implications will be examined through the example of racialized international migrant women in Europe, aged 40-65, who work as freelance consultants. These women face the risk of exclusion due to intersecting barriers which affect their occupational stability, professional recognition, and psychosocial health (Ulusoy *et al.*). This group also possesses forms of ‘migrant capital’ (Saksela-Bergholm, 2019, p. 164) including multilingual competence, advanced educational qualifications, and extensive international experience, yet these do not shield them from structural vulnerabilities (Stuhlhofer, 2022). Short-term contracts, irregular remuneration, and limited access to long-term career development contribute to cumulative disadvantages over time (European Commission, 2025). Moreover, internalized multicultural frameworks shape these women’s ways of working (Al-Ariss *et al.*, 2013). Differences in perception, attention, and reasoning across cultural contexts influence both interpersonal interaction and institutional evaluation processes (Berber *et al.*, 2023). The structural and interpersonal devaluation of culturally patterned cognitive frameworks (Jia, 2026) can result in a form of epistemological oppression and cognitive marginalization (El-Falaky, 2023). This essay first defines the group and situates its professional, social, and cultural context within the European Union. It then considers how inequalities are often perceived as distinct silos before introducing intersectionality as a lens for analyzing the barriers faced by this group. This intersectional exploration of the issues faced by this group will highlight both individual dimensions of exclusion and how these interact to compound exclusion (Debusscher and Maes, 2024). This essay concludes by outlining implications for policy and organizational practice (European Parliament, 2020).

DEFINING THE GROUP

The group under consideration consists of racialized international migrant women, aged 40–65, who work as freelance consultants in the European Union. Many individuals in this group hold advanced degrees and professional qualifications that formally signal expertise (Stuhlhofer, 2022). Despite these formal qualifications, women in this group often encounter structural inequalities associated with short-term and project-based employment (European Parliament,

2023). Age intersects with employment precarity, as women in mid- to late-career stages are sometimes perceived as less flexible or overqualified for certain positions (Dannefer, 2003). These women also face gender discrimination and racism (Brah and Coombes, 2005). The ability to navigate multiple epistemological frameworks interacts with structural and symbolic constraints, which impact their inclusion in professional settings (Paris and Alim, 2017).

POSITIONALITY

I share several characteristics with this group, including transnational mobility, international professional experience, and exposure to multiple cultural frameworks (Grigolet-Richter, 2017). The term ‘migrant’ rather than ‘expat’ is intentionally used to foreground the power relations related to this label (Yuval-Davis, 2011). This dual positionality situates me as simultaneously being inside and outside of the zone of enquiry. I acknowledge that my own personal biography, professional trajectory, and multiculturalism will shape my analysis, interpretations, and conclusions (Hernández-Saca *et al.*, 2018). This approach aligns with Arzubíaga *et al.*’s (2008) notion of knowledge production as a situated cultural practice, in which assumptions, values, and embodied social interactions mediate both interpretation and representation of findings. Explicitly situating my positionality will provide me with a reflexive lens through which I can analyze intersecting inequalities, and connect my own experience with the broader structural, symbolic, and cognitive factors I describe.

I will now define barriers which lead to exclusion for the chosen group, and elucidate how these contribute to exclusion.

BARRIERS

AGE AND THE PRECARIAT

The structural precarity faced by racialized international migrant women aged 40 to 65 in the European Union is significantly influenced by their limited access to stable, long-term contracts and growth opportunities in their freelance consulting roles (Grigolet-Richter, 2017). This demographic often finds themselves in vulnerable positions due to temporary contracts, which are prevalent in the working landscape for mid- to late-career women, particularly as age intersects with institutional expectations that limit advancement (Kalleberg, 2018).

While freelance work can provide a degree of flexibility, it frequently excludes these women from critical institutional benefits such as health coverage, pensions, and parental leave, further

exacerbating their economic insecurity (European Parliament, 2023). The challenges of non-permanent residency can magnify these effects, creating additional layers of instability (Erel *et al.*). The stress associated with short-term contracts can also impact mental health (Stuhlofer, 2022).

RACE AND RACIALIZATION

Race can be defined as a social construct that categorizes individuals based on physical traits, reinforcing power hierarchies among various groups (Suyemoto *et al.*, 2020). This classification has historically led to systemic discrimination and the marginalization of those who are racialized within societal structures (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

Migrants in the European Union face considerable barriers in accessing the labor market due to cultural biases (Yolci *et al.*, 2022). Restrictive immigration policies also limit their career opportunities and progression (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017). The process of racialization imposes specific categories that influence how individuals are treated in professional environments (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The psychological effects of racialization can be profound, often resulting in feelings of invisibility, low self-esteem, and mental health challenges (European Commission, 2025). This perspective on race creates significant divides and reinforces a hierarchy that privileges some while marginalizing others (Kosnick, 2025).

ETHNICITY

Ethnicity can be understood as a set of shared cultural practices and a sense of belonging to a particular community (Suyemoto *et al.*, 2020). In The European Union, minority ethnic workers, including freelance consultants, frequently encounter challenges in negotiating inequalities within a predominantly silent context of ethnic relations (Anthias, 2012).

ETHNICITY AND COGNITIVE MARGINALIZATION

Research in cultural psychology demonstrates that cognitive processes, including what individuals pay attention to and how they perceive their environment, are culturally patterned (Kitayama and Salvador, 2024). For instance, Masuda *et al.* (2008) demonstrated that individuals from East Asian cultures are more sensitive at perceiving contextual relationships in visual scenes compared to those from Western cultures, suggesting that cognitive processing is culturally mediated. These perceptual differences extend beyond visual processing; they also

influence social and organizational cognition, shaping how decisions, risks, and social dynamics are interpreted in professional environments (Varnum *et al.*, 2010).

Because cognitive diversity is an invisible trait, transnational professionals may be evaluated based on culturally specific criteria (Kitayama *et al.*, 2009). Relational or context-sensitive reasoning may be a disadvantage in settings that prioritize rapid, quantifiable outputs (Henrich *et al.*, 2010). The undervaluation of cognitive diversity can reproduce historical epistemological hierarchies (Greenfield *et al.*, 2003). Cognitive diversity thus functions both as a vital resource and a potential site of marginalization, where diverse viewpoints may be overlooked (Kitayama *et al.*, 2017).

GENDER

Gender serves as a critical marker of exclusion for the group under examination. Gender discrimination in the European Union undermines women's professional capabilities and their access to employment opportunities (European Union, 2025). In 2023 for example, the employment rate for women aged 25-54 with children was 74.9%, compared to 91.9% for men (European Union, 2025).

Migrant women frequently experience employment rates below those of 'native' counterparts (European Union, 2025). The technology sector, for example, is characterized by distinctive gender segregation and biased perceptions that disadvantage women, particularly in terms of job performance evaluation (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017). The platform economy extends traditional work dynamics by reinforcing existing inequalities and limiting opportunities for women (Hoang *et al.*, 2020). The European Union's 2025 report on gender equality highlights that men still dominate high-skilled roles (European Union, 2025). Women in the freelance economy often face challenges in networking and visibility, which are necessary for securing consulting roles (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017). Gendered assumptions can lead to fewer opportunities, and result in these women gravitating toward precarious work situations with little security and unfair compensation (European Parliament, 2020).

After providing this overview of barriers faced by racialized international migrant women, aged 40-65 who work as freelance consultants in the European Union, I will transition to an exploration of intersectionality and its advantages for analyzing the interlocking connections between the barriers named above.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERSECTIONALITY

In 1851, at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, Sojourner Truth delivered a speech called 'Ain't I a Woman?'. In it, she mentions both the systemic oppression of Black women and the denial of their rights in US American society at the time, where slavery and patriarchy served to doubly oppress Black women. In India, Savitribai Phule, a 19th-century Indian reformer, confronted Brahminical patriarchy, caste oppression, and colonial domination, thereby explicitly naming the intertwined nature of social injustices in her context (Desai and Roy, 2022). A hundred years later, Frances Beal, a Black feminist and activist, further explored these intersections with her concept of double jeopardy, which described the compounded effects of racism and sexism on Black women. This work laid the foundation for more expansive discussions of overlapping inequalities (Beal, 1970). Shortly after, the Combahee River Collective stated that racism, sexism, class exploitation, and heterosexism intersect in ways that cannot be analyzed separately (Combahee River Collective). Intersectional perspectives were also articulated by Chicana feminists, who examined how gender, race, and colonial histories intersect to shape the lives of Mexican-American women (Ahmed, 2004), and by Asian American scholars, who highlight how immigration, minority myths, and racial stereotyping create unique forms of oppression (Chun *et al.*). Kimberlé Crenshaw explicitly coined the term 'intersectionality' in 1989, and described how race and gender interacted to create distinct forms of marginalization for African-American women in the U.S. American legal system (Crenshaw, 1989).

DEFINING INTERSECTIONALITY

Collins and Bilge avoid an explicit definition of intersectionality (2016). Instead, they provide 'guideposts for thinking through intersectionality (...) : relationality, social context, power, inequality, social justice, and complexity.' I favor this approach to thinking about and engaging with intersectionality, as it avoids the dangers of congealing intersectionality into a fixed theory, thereby stripping it of its activist approach (Collins and Bilge, 2016).

INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

Racialized international migrant women in Europe, aged 40-65, who work as freelance consultants can experience multiple, mutually reinforcing forms of disadvantage, shaped not only by gender but also by intersections with race, ethnicity, age, migration status, income, and cultural cognition (Berber *et al.*, 2023). The compounded impact of these intersecting identities

often results in unique challenges that cannot be fully understood through single-axis analyses, and strengthens the case for adopting intersectional frameworks for both research and policy (Anthias, 2012). Gendered expectations within professional labor markets, for example, can interact with racialized stereotypes to hinder career progression, with older migrant women frequently facing assumptions their technical ability (Flynn *et al.*, 2023).

Structural precarity can come in the form of limited access to secure contracts, benefits, and social protections, particularly in non-standard employment arrangements such as freelance consultancy (Doshi *et al.*, 2025). These structural vulnerabilities are intensified by cognitive marginalization, through which institutional and cultural assumptions shape whose expertise is recognized, rewarded, and valued within professional settings (Bilge, 2022). For instance, professional evaluation criteria often embed culturally specific notions of competence, privileging locally socialized behaviors over transnational or non-Western modes of professional reasoning (Markus and Kitayama, 2010). This can produce subtle yet persistent forms of exclusion, reinforcing hierarchies of knowledge and authority that disadvantage migrant women despite formal equality policies (Falcón, 2016).

Migration status further adds to these inequalities. Legal and policy frameworks across the European Union, such as visa categories and credential recognition systems, frequently prioritize standard employment trajectories, leaving freelance or consultancy arrangements unsupported (European Commission, 2025). Migrant women may therefore confront a double bind: they navigate insecure contractual conditions while simultaneously needing to prove the legitimacy of qualifications obtained in different national or cultural contexts (Bailey and Mulder, 2017). Evidence suggests that professional opportunities are contingent not only on formal credentials but also on cultural capital, social networks, and the alignment of self-presentation with locally normative professional identities (Al Ariss *et al.*, 2013).

The interplay of age and gender further illustrates this group's intersectional vulnerability. Women aged 40–65 may be subject to ageist assumptions about diminished adaptability, which in turn can create barriers to accessing professional networks (Flynn *et al.*, 2023; Dannefer, 2003). Older migrant women may be racialized as 'outsiders' within European labor markets and face compounded marginalization due to stereotypes around competence, professionalism, and social integration (Grigoleit Richter, 2017). Consequently, the structural precarity of employment and cognitive marginalization operate in tandem, and produce conditions in which intersecting disadvantages become mutually reinforcing (Yolci *et al.*, 2022).

Institutional cultures often reproduce these exclusions through epistemic hierarchies that prioritize locally embedded forms of knowledge. Bilge (2013) argues that organizational practices that valorize certain communication styles, modes of leadership, or culturally normative decision-making processes inadvertently privilege some groups over others, creating barriers for those whose expertise derives from transnational experiences or different cultural frameworks. This aligns with Kitayama *et al.*'s (2022) findings that cultural cognition shapes perceptions of competence and who is deemed suitable for leadership or high-responsibility roles. In practical terms, racialized migrant women may encounter micro-level exclusion in meetings, project allocations, and promotion decisions, often without explicit acknowledgment of the underlying structural or cultural biases (McNulty and Brewster, 2017).

POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF EXCLUSION

Women in non-standard employment, including part-time or temporary roles, face elevated risks of income instability and limited career progression (European Commission, 2023). Migrant women may experience additional challenges when formal credential evaluation processes prioritize national standards over transnational qualifications (BMAS, 2022). Exclusion from these networks can limit access to informal knowledge critical for navigating institutional hierarchies (Berber *et al.*, 2023). Policy approaches may therefore need to address both formal employment access and mechanisms that shape recognition and inclusion (Bailey and Mulder, 2017). EU mobility frameworks for highly skilled workers often provide limited support for freelance or consultancy status, and can lead to gaps in social protections such as healthcare, pensions, and parental leave (European Commission, 2025). Policies designed to promote gender equality frequently focus on broad categories without addressing intersections of racialization, ethnicity, gender, age, migration status, and type of contract (Debusscher and Maes, 2024). Consequently, standardized policy frameworks may privilege conventional employment paths over diverse professional trajectories (Brah and Coombes, 2003).

Gender equality policies in The European Union, while rhetorically progressive, do not always address intersecting forms of disadvantage. Initiatives aimed at improving parity may not account for women who are simultaneously migrants, racialized, or in precarious employment (Anthias, 2012). Some research notes that these policies may inadvertently privilege locally socialized women over transnational professionals, thereby reflecting hierarchies structured around gender, nationality, migration history, and professional status (Stuhlhofer, 2022).

Structural and cognitive exclusions can persist in policy landscapes that do not fully account for relational disadvantage (Falcón, 2016).

The cognitive dimensions of exclusion are also relevant for this discussion. Institutional norms encode assumptions about competence, communication, and professional reasoning (Kitayama and Uskul, 2011). When policies focus only on numerical representation or formal qualifications, they may overlook culturally embedded mechanisms that influence professional valuation (Jia, 2026). Integrating insights from cultural psychology with intersectional awareness can support policy that recognizes diverse forms of expertise (Kitayama *et al.*, 2022). Structural precarity and cognitive marginalization operate as interrelated barriers for internationally mobile women in The European Union (European Commission, 2025). These issues cannot be captured through single-axis analyses alone (Anthias, 2012). Intersectionality therefore provides a lens for understanding how social positions are shaped by intersecting factors including gender, race, class, age, and migration status, while cultural cognition highlights that perceptions of competence and professional value are culturally situated (Henrich *et al.*, (2010). Together, these approaches clarify mechanisms through which disadvantages are produced and sustained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy and institutional responses should address structural precarity and cognitive marginalization simultaneously rather than sequentially (Anthias, 2012). Temporary and non-standard employment arrangements which contribute to vulnerability should be replaced by more stable contractual frameworks (European Commission, 2025). Women's overrepresentation in flexible, non-standard employment due to their larger share of care work highlights the importance of gender-responsive labor regulation (European Commission, 2022). Improving procedures for recognizing foreign qualifications is also critical for labor market access (BMAS, 2023).

Moreover, intersectional approaches suggest that equality policies should move beyond additive categories and consider how gender, migration, race, ethnicity, race, cultural cognition and age interact to shape disadvantage (Anthias, 2012). Intersectionality links social analysis to institutional transformation (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Embedding intersectional monitoring into equality frameworks would allow outcomes to be assessed across intersecting dimensions rather than aggregated indicators alone (European Commission, 2022).

Research in cultural psychology has demonstrated how cognitive frameworks are embedded in social ecologies, which, in turn, shape organizational norms and practices (Kitayama *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, institutional change also requires reflexivity and reflection on how competence, leadership, and professionalism are defined (Kitayama and Salvador, 2024). Together, these insights indicate that reform should address discrimination, contractual conditions, evaluation criteria, and cultural norms simultaneously.

Policy reform must also consider the structural differences between standard employment and freelance or consultancy-based work arrangements, as self-employed migrant professionals often fall outside traditional welfare and labor protection systems (European Commission, 2025). This is particularly relevant for internationally mobile women whose careers may involve transnational mobility and discontinuous employment trajectories shaped by migration processes (Bailey and Mulder, 2017). Without targeted institutional support, such discontinuities may accumulate across the course of their lives and contribute to long-term inequality in income, pension access, and professional advancement (Dannefer, 2003).

Recognition systems should further incorporate contextual evaluation mechanisms that acknowledge transnational experience and intercultural competencies as forms of professional capital (Pöllmann, 2013). Research on intercultural capital suggests that cross-cultural knowledge and multilingual competencies can enhance innovation and organizational adaptability, yet these skills are often undervalued within nationally structured labor markets (Pöllmann, 2013). Expanding recognition frameworks to include these competencies could therefore reduce structural exclusion while also strengthening institutional performance in globalized economies (European Commission, 2023).

Informal mechanisms of exclusion operating within professional environments should also be amended. Access to mentorship, professional networks, and leadership pathways plays a critical role in career progression, particularly for workers in non-standard employment (Berber *et al.*, 2023). Migrant women may face barriers to these informal structures due to language differences, cultural expectations, or limited access to professional communities, which can increase existing inequalities (Erel *et al.*, 2016). Policy initiatives that support inclusive networking platforms and mentorship structures could therefore mitigate these relational forms of disadvantage (Eurocities, 2025).

The growth of digital labor platforms has expanded opportunities for freelance work while simultaneously introducing new forms of algorithmic inequality and evaluation bias

(Rodríguez-Modroño *et al.*, 2022). Research indicates that algorithmic rating systems can reproduce existing gendered and racialized expectations, particularly in client-facing consultancy roles (Hoang *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, regulatory approaches should incorporate transparency and accountability mechanisms to ensure equitable work allocation processes (European Parliament, 2020).

Intersectional policy design also requires attention to age-related dynamics. Older migrant professionals may encounter additional barriers related to technological change, labor market restructuring, and age-based stereotypes (Flynn *et al.*, 2023). These factors intersect with gender and migration status to produce distinct career constraints, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors where continuous skill updating is required (Grigoleit Richter, 2017). Lifelong learning initiatives and targeted professional development programs may therefore support more equitable participation across age groups (European Union, 2025).

Reflexivity within institutions represents another critical dimension of reform. Intersectionality research emphasizes that inequality is reproduced not only through formal structures but also through everyday organizational practices and assumptions (Bilge, 2013). Organizational cultures that rely on implicit norms of communication or leadership may inadvertently privilege locally dominant cultural styles (Markus and Kitayama, 2010). Embedding reflexive training and culturally responsive evaluation practices could therefore help reduce cognitive marginalization in professional contexts (Kitayama and Salvador, 2024).

Policy development should also integrate insights from migration research regarding transnational life structures. Many internationally mobile women maintain social, economic, and familial ties across multiple countries, which shape employment decisions and career trajectories (Anthias, 2012). Traditional policy frameworks often assume linear career patterns within a single national context, limiting their applicability to transnational professionals (Bailey and Mulder, 2017). Addressing these structural mismatches may require flexible social protection mechanisms that account for mobility and cross-border employment patterns (European Commission, 2025).

Finally, intersectional monitoring and evaluation should be embedded across policy implementation stages to ensure that reforms effectively address multidimensional disadvantage (UN Women, 2021). Aggregated indicators may mask disparities experienced by specific groups, particularly racialized migrant women in non-standard employment (Debusscher and Maes, 2024). Disaggregated data collection across gender, migration status,

race, age, and employment type would therefore enable more targeted interventions and improved policy outcomes (European Parliament, 2023).

Taken together, these recommendations highlight that structural precarity and cognitive marginalization are interconnected processes that require coordinated institutional responses across labor regulation, organizational culture, and professional recognition systems (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Integrated policy approaches that combine intersectional and cultural psychological perspectives can better address the complex realities of internationally mobile migrant women and support more equitable professional inclusion (Kitayama *et al.*, 2022).

Further policy development should also consider the role of institutional accountability mechanisms in addressing intersectional inequalities. Transparent reporting structures and diversity audits can help identify patterns of exclusion that may otherwise remain embedded within organizational routines (European Parliament, 2020). Regular evaluation of hiring, promotion, and compensation processes across intersecting identity categories may support more equitable outcomes and reduce structural bias (Debusscher and Maes, 2024).

In addition, collaboration between policymakers, employers, and migrant advocacy organizations could strengthen the implementation of inclusive labor practices by incorporating lived experiences into policy design (Eurocities, 2025). Participatory approaches can align with intersectional frameworks by recognizing that social positions shape access to opportunity differently across contexts (Anthias, 2012). Integrating both structural reforms and culturally informed organizational change thus remains indispensable for reducing persistent forms of professional exclusion (Sibley, 1995).

CONCLUSION

The professional experiences of racialized international migrant women in Europe demonstrate that disadvantage is neither isolated nor uniform; it is relational and multidimensional, and operates across intersecting axes of identity, such as gender, race, age, and migration status (Anthias, 2012). Intersectionality reveals that these forms of inequality emerge from structural, cultural, and cognitive mechanisms that interact to shape both opportunity and recognition (Crenshaw, 1989; Yuval-Davis, 2011). The structural precarity embedded within non-standard employment and freelance work creates conditions of instability which limit career progression and access to social protections (Kalleberg, 2018). This form of precarity disproportionately

affects women, who often carry additional caregiving responsibilities (European Parliament, 2020).

Institutional processes often privilege culturally normative forms of expertise, and marginalize professionals whose skills do not align with dominant frameworks (Bailey and Mulder, 2017). These processes also intersect with cultural cognition: modes of reasoning, communication, and leadership that are valued within professional hierarchies tend to be culturally specific, and migrant women's externalization of their expertise may be systematically undervalued when it does not conform to dominant norms (Kitayama and Salvador, 2024). Consequently, disadvantage is simultaneously material and epistemic, reflecting the entwined nature of social, cultural, and institutional forces (Bilge, 2013; Thomas *et al.*, 2021).

The temporal dimension of inequality further complicates these dynamics. Cumulative disadvantage suggests that early career marginalization can amplify later vulnerabilities, such as agism or digital skill requirements (Flynn *et al.*, 2023). Freelance or temporary work exacerbates this effect by reducing opportunities for continuous skill development, mentoring, and relational integration within professional networks (Berber *et al.*, 2023). Intersectional approaches are necessary to capture how disadvantage accumulates over time (Yazdankhoo *et al.*, 2025).

Moreover, digital labor platforms exemplify how structural and cultural mechanisms are becoming increasingly intertwined. Algorithms frequently reproduce existing social biases which already place women, older workers, and racialized migrants at a disadvantage (Hoang *et al.*, 2020). The structural organization of work thus reflects societal hierarchies while masking the cognitive and cultural assumptions that underpin them (Anthias, 2012; Kosnick, 2025). Migrant professionals must navigate these systems while also negotiating culturally embedded norms of competence, authority, and professional conduct, which further intensifies their intersectional vulnerabilities (Adams and Markus, 2004; Kitayama and Salvador, 2024).

Historical and institutional contexts are crucial for understanding contemporary inequality. European labor markets have long favored (White) male-dominated, nationally localized career pathways, which has led to the exclusion of women and migrants (Al Ariss *et al.*, 2013). Formal equality initiatives, focused on quotas, often fail to account for how institutional, relational, and cognitive factors reproduce disadvantage (Luft and Ward, 2009). Intersectionality highlights that policy effectiveness is contingent on recognizing the relational and processual nature of inequality rather than treating identity categories in isolation (Evans and Lépinard, 2020).

Cultural psychology complements this analysis by elucidating how professional value is socially constructed within specific contexts. Migrant women may possess relational, collaborative, and culturally nuanced expertise, which is often overlooked in Western-centric evaluation systems (Pöllmann, 2025). Recognition and inclusion thus depend not only on formal credentials but also on the capacity of institutions to accommodate diverse cognitive frameworks and culturally embedded forms of competence (Kitayama and Salvador, 2024). Institutions that fail to recognize these forms of expertise reinforce epistemic hierarchies that privilege dominant social groups and marginalize transnational professionals (Adamovic, 2023).

Relational networks remain a critical site where inequalities are reproduced or mitigated. Access to mentorship, sponsorship, and informal professional knowledge is structured by social position, often privileging those already embedded within dominant cultural and institutional frameworks (Berber *et al.*, 2023). Exclusion from these networks can constrain career progression independently of formal policies, and reveals that intersectional disadvantage operates at both macro-structural and micro-social levels (Falcón, 2016; Erel *et al.*, 2016). The relational and social nature of inequality underscores the necessity of moving beyond formal metrics of inclusion to examine everyday interactions, implicit bias, and organizational culture (Thomas *et al.*, 2021).

The concept of double jeopardy remains highly relevant. Migrant women face simultaneous exposure to gendered and racialized disadvantages, which, when coupled with structural precarity, create persistent career barriers (Berber *et al.*, 2023). Intersectional frameworks can uncover how multiple forms of oppression coalesce to shape lived experiences, thereby exposing the insufficiency of single-axis approaches (Yuval-Davis, 2011). This analytical lens also enables the identification of leverage points for change, and interventions which may disrupt intersecting mechanisms of disadvantage (Collins and Bilge, 2016; Hancock, 2016).

Finally, these insights highlight the ethical and epistemic imperatives of intersectional research and policy-making. Reflexive attention to power, social location, and cognitive frameworks ensures that knowledge production does not inadvertently reproduce marginalization (Markus and Hamedani, 2019). Understanding how structural, cultural, and relational dimensions of inequality interact provides a comprehensive foundation for fostering inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive professional environments (UN Women, 2021). In doing so, intersectionality functions not merely as an analytical tool but as a transformative lens for

reconfiguring institutions, policies, and social norms to account for the complex realities of racialized international migrant women in Europe, aged 40-65, who work as freelance consultants (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Indeed, bell hooks captured it best when she said ‘[T]here is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives (bell hooks, n.d.).’

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