

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Intersectionality as a radical framework for transforming our disciplines, social issues, and the world

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Abstract

In this introduction to the special issue on *Applications of Intersectionality to Critical Social Issues*, we assert that a psychological study of social issues that seeks to move toward social justice, equity, and liberation must embrace intersectionality's radical core. This requires constant critical inquiry and praxis centered on power, including how we shape power and how power shapes us. The both/and logics of intersectionality are particularly essential, as we can exist in both oppressive and liberatory ecosystems simultaneously, and we must reflect and act on this to achieve intersectionality's transformative potential. We outline ways that the articles in this special issue offer ways of "doing" intersectionality in psychology and allied fields, while also acknowledging the issue's limitations and potential replication of the status quo. We also offer personal reflections on our journeys with intersectionality in hopes of contributing to radical transformation of ourselves, our disciplines, social issues, and the world.

KEYWORDS

Intersectionality, Oppression, Social justice

Nicole's Recognition Practice: I am the primary author for this introduction and I draw on the wisdom of all the Black womxn in my life while writing this piece. These Black womxn

heavily influence my past, present, and future practice of intersectionality, and I am most grateful to the woman who gave birth to my Black radical imagination—my mother. I draw on *all* of the knowledges in my life and lay out how they are key to a liberation psychology. I am in interdisciplinary conversation with many critical scholars across oppressed diasporas around the world. At the time of this writing, it is vital to know that all ecosystems, including our own bodies, are a battleground where oppression is built on fear and survival and liberation is rooted in faith and hope for a thriving and sustainable world for all living beings. Thus, liberation (for ourselves, our disciplines, social issues, and the world) necessitates a constant radical and critical practice of intersectionality in big ways and small throughout all of our ecosystems.

A psychological study of social issues that seeks to move toward social justice, equity, and liberation must embrace intersectionality's radical core. Intersectionality at its core is about power—where power lies and how it functions, how power shifts in time and space, how systems of power (e.g., capitalism, heterosexism, racism, and sexism) are interlocking (e.g., racial capitalism, gendered racism) to affect the conditions of our lives, and how to dismantle systems of power in service to new modes of thinking, being, living, and dreaming (Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1981; Kelley, 2002). Over the past decade, intersectionality's "visibility" in the field of psychology has increased substantially, but often appears without any mention of power. Instead, intersectionality's radical core is often "flattened" when researchers solely emphasize multiple or intersecting identities and fail to analyze identities as sites of difference, oppression, marginalization, and privilege via systems and practices of power (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Bowleg, 2017; Case, 2017b; Grzanka, 2017; Gilmore, 2002; Guidroz & Berger, 2009; May, 2015; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Rosenthal, 2016; Shin et al., 2017). The "flattening" of intersectionality as it travels across disciplines is not new or unique to psychology (Bilge, 2013; May, 2015). However, psychology's reckoning with intersectionality comes at a pivotal time in intersectionality's own history in the social sciences. Collins' (2019) recent groundbreaking work, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*, positions intersectionality as a critical social theory, with its own assumptions, epistemologies, and methodologies, that requires *constant* critical inquiry and critical praxis to achieve and sustain its transformative potential for liberation. Critical inquiry requires using intersectionality as an analytic strategy for producing knowledge that uncovers how interlocking systems of power maintain and sustain the status quo. Critical inquiry also necessitates producing *resistant* knowledge that challenges, disrupts, and dismantles the status quo within our field and in society more broadly. Critical praxis demands using an intersectional power analysis for critical self-reflexivity in order to divest from hegemonic logics and practices (e.g., sense of urgency, perfectionism, scarcity, defensiveness, making new scientific claims, owning scientific discoveries) that sustain oppression in all ecosystems. Moreover, critical praxis uplifts and supports radical imaginings of liberation and engages lateral (rather than vertical) actions across identity differences to move toward making these imaginings a lived reality (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; Cole, 2008; Collins, 2015, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Ellison & Langhout, 2020; French et al., 2020; Kelley, 2002; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Mosley et al., 2020; Nair & Vollhardt, 2020; Richter et al., 2020; Rosenthal, 2016; Terriquez et al., 2018; Watts, 2004).

We believe that activating intersectionality as critical inquiry and critical praxis is a powerful approach for dismantling hegemonic power dynamics and shifting into liberation given its precision on how multiple, interlocking systems of power function across space and time. It is also a constant work in progress to identify the necessary tools, logics, assumptions, and practices that can support intersectionality moving toward its radical potential for transformation via deep engagement with theories about power and practices of power (Collins, 2015, 2019; Collins



& Bilge, 2016; Hampton, 1969; May, 2015). We argue that intersectionality's most pressing, challenging, and radical demand for transformation is to engage it as a practice that attends to how we shape power and how power shapes us (Butler, 1993; Freire, 1970, 1994). In other words, the most powerful truths we can claim, and the most powerful truths we can declare, are the truths that we have lived ourselves because those are the forms of power that we know most intimately, and it is in our most intimate spaces (e.g., our bodies, the people that we are in community with across place, space, and time) that power operates most transparently to reveal its most stubborn dynamics. In declaring these truths, we provide critical knowledge about the politics of power that keep us trapped in the matrix of domination and/or shift us into a matrix of liberation.

To that end, it is important to be connected to the knowledges housed within ourselves and within our collectives to communicate most vulnerably and boldly about power. The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) is home to a large contingent of engaged scholars who are invested in putting knowledge from theory into practice (e.g., influencing public policy, public dissemination of research, social activism). Moreover, Nicole's and Lisa's attendance at the Interamerican Society of Psychology/Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología (SIP) Congress meeting in Havana, Cuba in July 2019 revealed that this society is also home to a contingent of scholars who already practice intersectionality but whose findings and insights about what is needed for a liberation psychology are sidelined to the margins of our discipline (e.g., Martín-Baró, 1994). We argue that the time is ripe to coalesce critical approaches in psychology using intersectionality because critical social issues of our time, crises born of multiple interlocking systems of power and oppression, demand a collective, transdisciplinary, transnational analysis, and practice of power rooted in social justice, equity, and liberation. We also believe that these opportunities to coalesce should utilize more creative pathways for connecting outside of the conventions of our respective disciplines and the confines of our respective journals.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

In 2020, we have borne witness to a truth that is central to intersectionality, which is that we can exist in *both* an oppressive *and* liberatory ecosystem at the same time, while still holding fast to radical imaginations of social justice that transform our world. The *both/and* logics of intersectionality are essential to engaging the paradigm as critical inquiry and critical praxis. Since the time of our initial call for proposals for this special issue in 2018, the global uprisings of the #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement amid the COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced our belief that a psychological study of critical social issues, particularly those affecting Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), requires precision in how we analyze and practice intersectionality in order to activate its potential for tackling, and possibly eradicating, systems of oppression. We believe that intersectionality's transformative potential is evident in the BLM movement, which began as a social media campaign to protest police brutality, anti-Blackness, and state-sanctioned violence against Black people in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer in 2013. The BLM movement was cocreated by Black women and LGBTQIA+ folx using an intersectional analysis of power to guide the movement's visionary policy agenda that centers the liberation of all Black people and Black communities (see Carruthers, 2018; Garza, 2020; Khan-Cullors & bande, 2018; <https://m4bl.org/>). The Movement for Black Lives engages intersectionality as critical praxis in its approach to organizing locally, nationally, and globally in collaboration with allied activists and other social movements (e.g., for Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and Disability Rights/Justice), critical collective and self-reflexivity, and advancing actions that move toward social justice and liberation. Thus, we recognize the Movement for Black Lives as both a realized dream of an intersectional

analysis of power in guiding social movements as articulated by the Combahee River Collective (1977) and a renewed call for imagining how an intersectional analysis of power can be put into practice to move toward social justice and liberation (Collins, 2019; Kelley, 2002).

Thus, a key question grounding this special issue on *Applications of Intersectionality to Critical Social Issues* is: How can psychologists use intersectionality to work toward realizing social justice, equity, and liberation? The answer to this question requires a paradigm shift in how we “do” science in psychology, and we argue that intersectionality is the paradigm best suited to transform our disciplines, our approach to the study of social issues, and the world (see Collins, 2019 for discussion of intersectionality as a paradigm shift). This paradigm shift is already underway (e.g., Bowleg, 2017; Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; Cole, 2009, 2020; Goff & Kahn, 2013; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Rosenthal, 2016; Shields, 2008; Warner, 2008) and connects to long and rich histories of critical approaches in the field such as in community psychology, counseling psychology, critical queer studies, critical race studies, decolonial psychology, feminist psychology, global critical race feminism, and liberation psychology. These critical approaches have been pushed to the margins of psychology, and there is similar resistance to intersectionality as it travels within psychology (Cole, 2020; Ellison & Langhout, 2020; Settles et al., 2020). However, in activating intersectionality as a radical and critical practice, we can understand where there may be power to transform the stubborn particulars of psychology (Cherry, 1995) by identifying how they are rooted in similar hegemonic logics and practices of oppressive power in the field.

The coeditors of this special issue on *Applications of Intersectionality to Critical Social Issues* invited contributors to join us in grappling with what it means to “do” intersectionality in psychology as critical inquiry and critical praxis because we understand this to be intersectionality’s most pressing, challenging, and radical demand for transformation (Collins, 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2016; May, 2015). In other words, realizing intersectionality’s potential for radical transformation in the world requires active work in maintaining its critical edge (Cole, 2020). This special issue highlights several models of “doing” intersectionality theory in psychology and allied fields as critical inquiry and critical praxis. The coeditors and contributors collectively engaged intersectionality as critical inquiry by analyzing complex connections among structural and institutional forces, the coconstruction of various forms of oppression, lived experiences at particular intersections of oppression, privilege, and power, social policies, intersectional consciousness, activism, and critiques of power relations, including those within our own disciplines. Moreover, in this special issue, we engaged intersectionality as critical praxis by reflecting on our own positions and power dynamics in the process of knowledge production and our struggles in striving to do intersectionality in the field, and by explicitly addressing action-oriented and policy implications of our investigations. This introduction highlights how we can use intersectionality to be more precise in our analysis of power in psychology. We also address how we can use intersectionality to declare truth to power in ways that advance social justice, equity, and liberation goals. We conclude with thoughts on potential pathways for deeply embracing intersectionality’s radical core—a necessary demand for a psychology seeking to transform from a reactionary science to a revolutionary science.

ACTIVATING INTERSECTIONALITY TO TRANSFORM A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF CRITICAL SOCIAL ISSUES

Transforming a psychological study of critical social issues requires activating intersectionality as critical inquiry and critical practice. The coeditors draw on the radical imaginings of Black

feminist thought to inform this transformation (Kelley, 2002). Black women's activist struggles, knowledges, radical imaginings of liberation, and lived experiences across the African Diaspora represent the foundation of Black feminist thought (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981; Kelley, 2002). We center this foundation because it is where each of us found a home in our respective searches for a more critical analysis of power outside of psychology during our undergraduate and graduate studies. Black feminist thought provides a dynamic framework for reflecting on our respective lived experiences outside of and within the academy as well as *outsiders within* the field of psychology (Case, 2017a; Collins, 1999). However, our conversations with Black feminist thinkers and doers began much earlier than our respective lives or decisions in the academy. Although Black feminist thought is central in our approach to intersectionality as critical inquiry and critical praxis, it represents one entry point into intersectional analysis and practice, and as such, it is important to acknowledge that the struggles of Black feminist activists are *both* unique from *and* share similarities to the power struggles of Indigenous Womxn of Color across various diasporas around the world (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987; Chow, 1987; Cotera, 1977; El Saadawi, 1983; Gunn Allen, 1986; Mohanty, 1984; Roy, 2020; for a history of intersectionality, see Collins, 2019). As a side note, I (Nicole) am re-connecting to Indigenous knowledges of my ancestors and finding similarities to that of Indigenous peoples across the diaspora. These sites of similarities and differences in relation to power are integral to a critical intersectional analysis (Bowleg, 2017; Case, 2017b; Cho et al., 2013; Cole, 2009; Collins, 2019; Goff & Kahn, 2013; May, 2015; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Rosenthal, 2016; Warner, 2008). We also argue that this *both/and* analysis is essential to coalescing critical approaches in psychology to produce knowledge, practices, and actions that challenge, disrupt, and dismantle oppressive systems of power within the field and in the world more broadly.

The term *intersectionality* originated in activist-scholar circles and garnered increased “visibility” when legal activist-scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989/1991) first used the term in print of the Stanford Law Review. It is important to note that what is “visible” in print for white audiences often obscures elements of Black women's power in their decisions to share their truths with the masses. I (Nicole) am reminded of what I learned about Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech at the Women's Rights Convention in my Introduction to Black Culture class. In this speech, Truth declared her truth to power about being a woman who survived interlocking systems of oppression such as slavery, patriarchy, anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and capitalism, and used her power to advance social justice and equity for African American women. There are two versions of this speech, one written by her dear friend and Black journalist Reverend Marius Robinson and another written for a white audience in a “southern slave dialect” by white abolitionist Frances Gage (<https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/compare-the-speeches/>). One can unpack for hours how power played out in this scenario but the truth was out and as we say in my circles “what is known doesn't need to be explained.” However, for a psychology that seeks to move toward social justice, equity, and liberation, there is much to be explained about power in order to activate intersectionality's radical transformative potential.

A FOCUS ON POWER IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR ACTIVATING INTERSECTIONALITY'S RADICAL CORE AND ITS TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

Social justice and liberation movements led by Black, Indigenous, Womxn of Color, many of whom are queer, provide an important basis for understanding intersectionality's guiding premises. For instance, the Combahee River Collective (1977/1995) stated:

We are a collective of Black feminists who have been meeting since 1974... The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. (p. 272)

Reflected in this statement are the guiding premises of intersectionality (Collins, 2019):

- Systems of power (e.g., capitalism, heterosexism, colonization, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and patriarchy) are interdependent;
- Intersecting systems of power shape societal inequalities and critical social issues (e.g., racial capitalism; gendered racism; white supremacist, colonizing, anti-Black, capitalist, cisheteropatriarchy);
- Systems of power operate on the macro-level (e.g., institutions, societal structures, policies, laws) and are linked to the conditions of people's lives on the meso-level (e.g., intergroup and intragroup relations) and micro-level (e.g., prejudice, internalized oppression); and
- An intersectional analysis of power and approach to building power are necessary for advancing actions linked to social justice (Cole, 2020).

These guiding premises are vital to intersectionality as critical inquiry and critical praxis. Specifically, conventional single-axis approaches to understanding power (e.g., focused on either sexism or racism) sustain the status quo and are embedded within our institutions, politics and policies, social structures, social movements, and scientific inquiry and practice (Bowleg, 2017; Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989; Hancock, 2007; May, 2015; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Richter et al., 2020; Rosenthal, 2016; Settles et al., 2020; Simien, 2007). Thus, it is critical to sharpen our intersectional analysis of power at the macro-, meso-, and micro-level when examining critical social issues that are produced by multiple, interlocking systems of power and oppression (Bowleg, 2017; Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

However, there is also a vital component of the Combahee River Collective (1977) statement that is often overlooked: that their *politic* is one rooted in actively fighting against interlocking systems of oppression. A politic is a way of being, living, thinking, and dreaming in the world. I (Nicole) would like to call in an intersectional practice of offering “different interpretations of the same facts” (Clarke & McCall, 2013, p. 350) by offering a different interpretation of DMX's lyrics in his song *How's It Goin' Down* to illustrate this point about the politics of power, particularly for a liberation psychology. DMX asked “What type of games is being played, how's it going down?... Is you with me or what?” which is precisely what a psychology seeking liberation needs to clarify. In other words, what type of power games are being played? When? How? By Whom? With What? And most critically, is there alignment in struggling with an intersectional politic of liberation or not? These are some of the questions we seek to parse out in this section. It should be noted that folks who are committed to the struggle often move through this politic across power differences laterally to dismantle power hierarchies rather than vertically to reconstitute power hierarchies (Cole, 2008, 2020; Ellison & Langhout, 2020; Mosley et al., 2020; Nair & Vollhardt, in 2020; Richter et al., 2020; Terriquez et al., 2018). We argue that this practice is vital in coalescing our knowledges to advance a liberation psychology.

Bridging our collective knowledges as outsiders within the field of psychology (Collins, 1999), we draw on interdisciplinary critical scholarships within and outside of the field to remind us of

why critical scholars alerted us to the *politics* of psychology or the way that the game of power is played for people to achieve their goals and interests through oppressive and/or liberatory practices (Fanon, 1952; Martín-Baró, 1994). Power is one construct that is a part of intersectionality's radical core (Collins, 2019). We argue that within psychology, power is the construct that scholars should contend with most urgently and closely to be precise in our study of critical social issues (Cole, 2020). This insight is important for a psychology that seeks to activate intersectionality's radical core to produce knowledge and actions that advance social justice, equity, and liberation because a politic of power attends to:

- how power functions within particular (in both oppressive and liberatory) structures (e.g., academic institutions, fields of study, the American Psychological Association, social justice movements) (Bullock et al., 2020; Cole, 2020; Gilmore, 2002; Richter et al., 2020; Young, 2020);
- what is considered a valuable resource in obtaining power within those structures, who controls (and has access to) valuable resources in those structures, and the means by which those resources are obtained (e.g., authority, violence, collective self-determination, collective capacity/resource building) (Fanon, 1952; Gilmore, 2002; Rosenthal et al., 2020; Settles et al., 2020; Watts, 2004);
- what actions, practices, and ideologies maintain, disrupt, and dismantle the status quo (Case, 2017a; Case et al., 2020; Fanon, 1952; Freire, 1994; Rosenthal et al., 2020; Rosenthal, 2016; Settles et al., 2020; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999);
- how power shifts in time and space by reflecting on the historical and political contexts of critical social issues and how power dynamics operate within particular structures (e.g., coalition building) to maintain or dismantle the status quo (Bonam et al., 2018; Cole, 2008; Collins, 2019; Ellison & Langhout, 2020; Ferreira & Santiago, 2018; Hagai et al., 2020; Nair & Vollhardt, 2020); and
- areas where we can be more precise in an intersectional analysis of power, reflecting on the above, about how interlocking systems of power reinforce and uphold each other in our logics, actions, and practices (Bowleg, 2017; Case et al., 2020; Cole, 2020; Cole, 2009; Heberle et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020).

In activating intersectionality's radical core, we ask more precise questions about what “makes oppressive and liberatory structures work, and what makes them fall apart” (Gilmore, 2002, p. 17). To that end, there are no new claims about power in this paper; that is, the claims we make about power can be found in slow, close, and careful reading of critical scholarships within and outside of psychology. However, we do use the insights from our process to inform a psychology that is invested in social justice, equity, and liberation. To do so, we reflect on *how we shaped power and how power shaped us* in the process of producing this special issue. We believe that engaging intersectionality in this way opens up our understanding of its other key constructs: complexity, relationality, social context, social inequality, and social justice (see Collins, 2019, for analysis of these constructs). Moreover, when we sharpen our analysis of power, intersectionality signals a clear paradigm shift in how we enact psychology as critical inquiry and practice (French et al., 2020). In other words, intersectionality cannot simply be incorporated into psychology because it is incommensurate with hegemonic logics and practices that are embedded within the field (Settles et al., 2020). Thus, attempting to force intersectionality into dominant ways of doing psychological science, engaging it without any depth or care, or resisting being a radically self-aware and accountable practitioner of intersectionality, all hegemonic practices that we have engaged in while navigating and surviving interlocking systems of oppression, often

result in flattening intersectionality's transformative potential to challenge, disrupt, and dismantle the status quo. Rather, these hegemonic practices contribute to the most urgent replication crisis in the field, and that is the replication of the status quo. In order to shift psychology out of its existing paradigm, psychologists must explicitly discuss how we study and practice power within psychology via dominant logics, epistemologies, and methods (Settles et al., 2020) and use that knowledge to divest from hegemonic practices that obstruct intersectionality's transformative potential (Cole, 2020). Finally, we must work to sustain intersectionality's radical potential for transformation by drawing on the knowledge of critical scholarships within and outside of our disciplines, and use that knowledge to imagine and create a socially-just, equitable, and liberatory science (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; Cole, 2020; French et al., 2020; Watts, 2004).

HOW THIS SPECIAL ISSUE REPLICATES THE STATUS QUO

As it stands, this issue both did and did not do what we intended (grappling with how to do intersectionality as critical inquiry and critical praxis; realizing intersectionality's potential for radical transformation). A major reason for this is that grappling with how to do intersectionality leads to a deeper understanding of how to activate and realize its radical potential, and in many ways, this is the scientific process in and of itself. In other words, we could not have declared the truths we learned at the start of the process because they were unknown to us (and in some ways also known). Laying bare the truth of this knowledge is the radical and critical subjectivity that comes with being vulnerable about the lessons you learned related to *how we shaped power and how power shaped us*. Intersectionality unearths many of these contradictions that open up paths to liberation.

In the documentary *The Edge of Each Other's Battles: The Vision of Audre Lorde*, Audre Lorde impressed upon the audience to figure out their work in this battle for liberation and to do it. We believe that this demand is critical for a liberation psychology. Rather than list out all of the ways that this special issue replicates the status quo, I (Nicole) would like to invite the readers of this special issue into a practice of "doing" intersectionality by thinking about the following:

- What topics in this special issue reflect a lived experience for you or resonate with you? Why? How does the article miss the mark in speaking a truth to power? Where does the article get closer to a particular truth about power? In other words, where are the sites of similarity and difference and what can we use about those insights to advance social justice, equity, and liberation?
- What is your "work" in the field of psychology and allied fields? In order to answer this question, I gently encourage reflection on how examining and investigating the truths of someone else's lived experiences allows you to operate in a disconnected way in the academy and may "work" to maintain the status quo. This disconnection creates objectivity around the truths that operate most perniciously in your life, and by not exploring them, you maintain their (and your) power by keeping them hidden. Similarly, presenting theories based on your lived experiences as objective also reveals a lot about how these truths may be operating at a particular intersection, and how folks at this intersection may enact systems of power and oppression onto others in the academy. For those who wish to amplify the voices of marginalized groups, it is

absolutely essential to have these groups at the helm of the scientific endeavor from beginning to end (Fine & Torre, 2019).

As we figure out how to do the work of interrogating our science in shifting from reactionary to revolutionary, we must engage logics and practices that allow us to sustain the transformative shifts that come from activating intersectionality. Finally, Cole (2020) provides a useful critique on ways to approach this special issue with regard to the following questions: Where have we been as a field in using intersectionality? And where are we headed in moving intersectionality toward social justice and liberation goals?

THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION

At the most general level of abstraction, we know that structures change under conditions of power redistribution—i.e., during times of crisis. In times of crisis, [power] dynamics are peculiarly apparent, and insofar as we can catch historical or contemporary shifts on the fly, we might recognize something powerful about race and freedom (Gilmore, 2002, p. 17).

We are in crisis. However, what we attend to in crisis can provide powerful insights into liberation. What is “peculiarly apparent” in this time of crisis is that many of the questions psychologists are asking are reactionary to current conditions that were already described and analyzed by scholarship at the margins of the discipline 60 years ago (Fanon, 1952; Friere, 1970; Martín-Baró, 1994; Memmi, 1965). To us, these reactionary questions and knowledge projects take away from a psychology that seeks to disrupt and dismantle conditions of oppression because they describe the many facets of oppression in our current world that are simply reformulations of systems of oppression in the past. In psychology currently, efforts to reify hegemonic logics and practices (e.g., objectivity, universal truths, generalizability, transparency about “findings” rather than truths) are reformulations of goals at the inception of our science rather than shifts toward revolutionizing it with radical possibilities of doing psychological science (French et al., 2020). We do not want to make the same mistakes twice, but avoiding this requires deliberate attention and action. We need careful collective effort to dismantle the status quo in psychology and active engagement with critical scholarship on power within and outside of psychology. We believe that our emphasis in psychology on the conditions of oppression often prevent us from catching glimpses of the conditions of liberation that operate simultaneously (Mosley et al., 2020). We get caught up in trying to “prove” that systems of oppression exist and cause harm, but no amount of “evidence” of this will force those invested in the matrix of domination to acknowledge and rectify these truths; thus, we must focus on and act more deliberately toward liberation. In this section, we turn our attention to transforming psychology from reactionary to revolutionary. We attempt to model the power of critical reflexivity (Cole, 2020) that presses beyond a listing of demographics to interrogate how we shaped power and how power shaped us.

Reflections from Nicole

I begin with some critical reflections about my life and then broaden it up to address liberation dreams from other scholars of color in the academy. Transformation is power. Much has changed

from the time this call was released in 2018 to the writing of this article at the end of 2020, including myself. My present self holds compassion for who I was then, and I also honor my past self for setting the necessary conditions for me to nurture where I am currently in order to declare truth to power and act in that power today. I also acknowledge my community who is doing this work with me, wherever we all are in this collective journey. To that end, the boldest claim that I can make about power in this paper is this: We already know that we hold the power to be as expansive as the universe and the purpose of that power is to create the necessary conditions for a world where BIPOC can thrive authentically and freely because this is a world that is sustainable for all living beings (Combahee River Collective, 1977; Garza, 2020). A part of realizing this truth is recognizing that its power is rooted in radical unconditional love (i.e., linked to liberation) and remembering that the reality I exist in works to actively disconnect me from this truth despite (and in spite of) the conditions of the world, and that we can always return to it when we come home to ourselves (DuBois, 1903; hooks, 2000). The moment I connected to this power within myself, I could see this unconditional love offering living all around me, even in the midst of struggle, such as in the BLM movement, in the hopes, dreams, and actions of my parents, in the freedom dreams of my ancestors, in my friends and family, and in nature.

My meditation practice provided the stillness to tap into knowing what truth felt like, and stepping into my body was required for this practice—a liberation practice I evaded for much of my life to be able to navigate and survive multiple, interlocking systems of oppression. In other words, because I knew what it felt like to be free, I knew I could explore paths for getting there in psychology and what the importance of that knowledge meant for advancing transformative actions and practices that are rooted in healing, social justice, equity, and liberation (French et al., 2020). To that end, I state unequivocally that intersectionality is a critical social theory that allows us to be more precise about power in ways that advance liberation using knowledge and practice to inform each other. I now know that the journey I am describing is a journey of radical healing, which connects us to collectivism, critical consciousness, radical hope, strength and resistance, and cultural authenticity and self-knowledge—critical components that are necessary for existing within ecosystems that are both oppressive and liberatory, and vital to our understanding as we shift in and out of surviving and thriving (French et al., 2020). The Radical Healing Collective is a model of doing intersectionality that transforms psychology from a reactionary science to a revolutionary science (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; French et al., 2020). I recognize the Radical Healing Collective as visionaries for providing models of doing psychology in ways that shift us into liberation and bring us back home to our whole human selves. Knowing that liberation work is healing work, I also recognize their radical vision as a healing project that provides practical tools for achieving liberation as we navigate the reality of a world we did not create and as we step into creating a world that we always knew was possible (<https://buildingmovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EcoMap-CC-BY-NC-SA-4.0-Handles.pdf>; <https://buildingmovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-Roles-CC-BY-NC-SA-4.0.pdf>).

As I shift into creating in this revolutionary world, I come back to an experience during my first silent meditation retreat. During the retreat, I recall one of my teachers saying that science allows you to approximate being on the moon and meditation allows you to experience being on the moon itself. I thank Bonnie Duran for reminding me of the importance of feeling this contradiction rather than overthinking it. I left my first meditation retreat with a feeling that science was supposed to include both of these knowledges to inform theory and practice not either/or, and, in truth, this moment represented a spiritual awakening for me because I felt what it meant to do intersectionality. I believe that this spiritual awakening was as true for me as it was for Ignacio Martín-Baró and William James. Intersectionality is a paradigm that allows me to make complex

connections about all the ways I am linked to these radically different scholars across space and time (and there are many more synchronicities between us but too many to name here). My liberation dream for our disciplines, the world, and ourselves is, as my good friend H. Shellae Versey and other BIPOC scholars of color in the academy have stated, peace and being able to tell our stories/live our dreams without constraints. As we shift into this powerful practice of intersectionality in the academy, may all beings find radical healing in the ongoing struggle of liberation.

Reflections from Lisa

As we finish this special issue, I am full of gratitude—for having this opportunity to coedit a special issue about intersectionality, for all the hard work so many people have put into making it happen and supporting what we asked for, and for the Black women and other women of color who not only have taught me so much about intersectionality and therefore life generally but who also have called me in with love to be more self-reflective and critical. I participated in the Academics for Black Survival and Wellness training this past June, imagined and put together by Pearis Bellamy and Dr. Della Mosley, along with many other members of Academics for Black Lives (<https://www.academics4blacklives.com/>). This training was an incredible offering that demonstrates psychology's great potential to contribute to justice and liberation with a deep grounding in intersectionality. I benefited greatly from the training's call for critical self-reflection and accountability, which helped me to realize I have not practiced sufficiently in my life, particularly related to my whiteness and complicity with white supremacy, even while aiming to fight for justice. This experience built on and expanded a journey I have been on, in some ways for all of my life, especially since I was first exposed to Black feminist perspectives as an undergraduate, and particularly intensely over the past year or so during which I have transitioned to being tenured and have engaged in deeper mindfulness practice with BIPOC women and LGBTQA+ folx as teachers. Nicole has been a critical companion and guide for me in this journey since we met as postdocs, and I am beyond grateful for her.

Ever since I edited my graduate school personal statement to tone down my commitment to radical transformation of the world, I have been internalizing, conforming to, and replicating problematic aspects of academia and the field of psychology that uphold systems of oppression and cause harm. While I have always attempted to bring more radical ideas into psychology and all aspects of my work, I learned to do so in muted ways that limited the potential contribution. And, while I have always held deeply collectivist values, I learned to pursue personal professional achievements in ways that have done harm both to myself and others. In so many ways intersectionality is incompatible with our field (Settles et al., 2020) and the institutions we work within. And yet, many have long been offering alternative possibilities for what psychologists can contribute toward liberation and thriving (e.g., Comas-Díaz, 2020; Fanon, 1952; Freire, 1970; French et al., 2020; Martín-Baró, 1994; Mosley et al., 2020). Intersectionality offers infinite insights and possibilities for ourselves, our field, and the world, my understanding of which has expanded and shifted significantly since we began the process of working on this special issue. I am committed to continually deepening my intersectional understanding and praxis, including in better realizing and using my own power to contribute to liberation. While I take responsibility for its weaknesses and ways of sustaining the status quo, I also hope this special issue can help in our field's journey of grappling with intersectionality, as working on it has helped in my journey.

Reflections from Kim

My dreams for transforming psychology grew from my graduate experiences that were designed to tamp down my working-class activist spirit into “acceptable” scholarship (Case, 2017a). After diving into Black women’s literature (e.g., Zora Neal Hurston, Toni Morrison) as an undergraduate, I rebelled against my prescribed psychology graduate training and took an intersectionality course on Black women’s sexuality with Patricia Hill Collins, which led to earning my graduate certificate in women’s studies. My doctoral degree in experimental psychology required my own faith in and commitment to practices of control, manipulation, the study of (not with) subjects, and the researcher as a distant and objective knowledge-generator. To a great extent, I had to suppress my own internal struggle and discomfort with these power systems to ensure my own success in the field of psychology. Even as these power plays and systems of manipulation violated my working-class background communal values, I pushed it down to gain enough acceptance to get my degree, get published, and get tenure. As the reader can detect from this description, I operated in a pretty constant push and pull as an “insider without” in my own discipline (for the personal narrative, see Case, 2017a; Collins, 1990).

As a graduate student, my interest in studying white privilege awareness in connection with systemic power structures was dismissed as not worthy of study in psychology because “no one would be interested in that.” My white male advisor, who I maintain love and respect for years later, said if I pursued privilege as a topic on my own, he would not be interested in being involved. Yet when my work earned a poster award at APA (Division 45), my advisor objected that his name was not on the award. Utilizing his social and institutional power, he made an official complaint to the Department Chair claiming I had violated protocol by not including him on the work he originally labeled as unworthy. This moment hurt me, but I also felt like my whiteness protected me. When I discussed this with the Department Chair, a white man, he believed my explanation of what had occurred. If I had been a Black student or perhaps any student of color, how might my situation have turned out differently?

Another example of clear signals that my work was unworthy illustrates how psychology pushes out the work that may interrogate power or introduce an intersectional critique. Ten minutes before I defended my qualitative dissertation as an experimental psychology doctoral candidate (I know that sounds strange), a senior white male faculty member dropped by the defense room. Noticing the word “qualitative” on my title slide, he jumped back as if in shock and said “Qualitative! Well, a lot of people would say that’s a bunch of crap!” The fact that my title slide also said “white anti-racist identity” may have also irritated his traditional science sensibilities. In that moment, I chose not to silence my working-class training for snapping back when someone has crossed a line. I said, “A lot of people say quantitative research is a bunch of crap, too!” These moments of clear dismissal by psychology and its most powerful representatives stand out in my mind as moments I had to decide to stay and work for change from within.

My experiences with being marginalized within psychology solidified my own pedagogical and mentoring goals to use power to include and affirm traditionally dismissed students, scholars, and voices. However, the reality is that I continue to operate within power structures as the field has granted me more power over time. My exposure to intersectionality, critical race theory, and feminist theory provided a strong lens for critique of these power systems (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1995; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1981; Freire, 1970; Mohanty, 1984), but survival in my career prevented radical and revolutionary practice. In other words, once I gained power within the discipline, my (inherent) radical perspectives became more difficult to

hold and utilize to undo the core power structures of psychology. Holding onto and voicing my radical intersectional critique of power require me to perpetually turn the lens onto myself with purposeful intention and vulnerability.

To offer a concrete example from my own scholarship in this special issue, Kim writing this in 2020 would not design a social psychological experiment based on deception (Case et al., 2020). With forgiveness for past Kim in codesigning that study, my current analysis of power makes me uncomfortable with deception, and to some extent with experimental methods altogether. Although the experimental method is lauded as the highest status approach to “objective” (positivist) science and truth-seeking, intersectionality helped me resist and break apart these fundamental assumptions of psychology during my graduate school training. The control, manipulation, and false pretenses enact power in ways that are quite antithetical to intersectional liberation. The deception experiment focuses on individual behavior and small group interactions while denying any deep intersectional inquiry into power. In our call for aligning critical inquiry and praxis, Buchanan et al. (2020) urged psychology to embrace *intersectional cultural humility* as a path toward this integration of intersectional inquiry and praxis for radical epistemological and methodological change. The process of editing my most recent book and this special issue involved drawing on traditional social science practices while attempting to apply a critical intersectional lens to those same practices. Regardless of my own attempts to correct for the ways systems of power replicate similar patterns of inequity, the final outcomes will never meet my own standards for liberation or justice.

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